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THE INTRODUCTION.



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CONFESSIONS

Tom Knox

OF

CON. CREGAN,

THE IRISH GIL BLAS.

BY

CHARLES LEVER,

AUTHOR OF

CHARLES O'MALLEY," "HARRY LORREQUER," "ROLAND CASHEL," "JACK HINTON," "TOM BURKE," ETC.

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1851.

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CONFESSIONS

OF

CON CREGAN.

CHAPTER I.

A PEEP AT MY FATHER.

When we shall have become better acquainted, my worthy reader, there will be little necessity for my insisting upon a fact which, at this early stage of our intimacy, I deem it requisite to mention; namely, that my native modesty and bashfulness are only second to my veracity, and that, while the latter quality in a manner compels me to lay an occasional stress upon my own goodness of heart, generosity, candor, and so forth, I have, notwithstanding, never introduced the subject without a pang,—such a pang as only a sensitive and diffident nature can suffer or comprehend; there, now, not another word of preface or apology!

I was born in a little cabin on the borders of Meath and King's County: it stood on a small triangular bit of ground, beside a cross road; and although the place was surveyed every ten years or so, they were never able to say to which county we belonged; there being just the same number of arguments for one side as for the other: a circumstance, many believed, that decided my father in his original choice of the residence; for while, under the "disputed boundary question," he paid no rates or county cess, he always made a point of voting at both county elections! This may seem to indicate that my parent was of a naturally acute habit; and, indeed, the way he became possessed of the bit of ground will confirm that impression.

There was nobody of the rank of gentry in the parish, nor even "squireen;" the richest being a farmer, a snug old fellow, one Harry M'Cabe, that had two sons who were always fighting between themselves which was to have the old man's money. Peter, the elder, doing everything to injure Mat., and Mat. never backward in paying off the obligation. At last, Mat., tired out in the struggle, resolved he would bear no more. He took leave of his father, one night, and next day set off for Dublin, and 'listed in the "Buffs." Three weeks after, he sailed for India; and the old man, overwhelmed by grief, took to his bed, and never arose from it after.

Not that his death was any way sudden, for he lingered on for months long; Peter always teasing him to make his will, and be revenged on "the dirty spalpeen" that disgraced the family; but old Harry as stoutly resisting, and declaring that whatever he owned should be fairly divided between them.

These disputes between them were well known in the neighborhood. Few of the country people passing the house at night but had overheard the old man's weak reedy voice, and Peter's deep hoarse one, in altercation. When, at last—it was on a Sunday night—all was still and quiet in the house; not a word, not a footstep, could be heard, no more than if it were uninhabited, the neighbors looked knowingly at each other, and wondered if the old man was worse—if he were dead!

It was a little after midnight that a knock came to the door of our cabin. I heard it first, for I used to sleep in a little snug basket near the fire; but I didn't speak, for I was frightened. It was repeated still louder, and then came a cry—

"Con. Cregan; Con., I say, open the door! I want you."

I knew the voice well; it was Peter M'Cabe's; but I pretended to be fast asleep, and snored loudly. At last my father unbolted the door, and I heard him say—

"Oh, Mr. Peter, what's the matter?—is the ould man worse?"

"Faix that's what he is; for he's dead!"

"Glory be his bed! When did it happen?"

"About an hour ago," said Peter, in a voice that even I, from my corner, could perceive was greatly agitated. "He died like an ould haythen, Con., and never made a will!"

"That's bad," says my father, for he was always a polite man, and said whatever was pleasing to the company.

"It is bad," said Peter; "but it would be worse if we couldn't help it. Listen to me now, Corny, I want ye to help me in this business; and here's five guineas in goold, if ye do what I bid ye. You know that ye were always reckoned the image of my father, and before he took ill ye were mistaken for each other every day of the week."

"Anan!" said my father; for he was getting frightened at the notion, without well knowing why.

"Well, what I want is, for ye to come over to the house, and get into the bed."

"Not beside the corpse?" said my father, trembling.

"By no means; but by yourself: and you're to pretend to be my father, and that ye want to make yer will before ye die; and then I'll send for the neighbors, and Billy Scanlan, the schoolmaster, and ye'll tell him what to write, laving all the farm and everything to me—ye understand? And as the neighbors will see ye, and hear yer voice, it will never be believed but it was himself that did it."

"The room must be very dark," says my father.

"To be sure it will, but have no fear! Nobody will dare to come nigh the bed; and ye'll only have to make a cross with yer pen under the name."

"And the priest?" said my father.

"My father quarrelled with him, last week, about the Easter dues; and Father Tom said he'd not give him the 'rites:' and that's lucky now! Come along now, quick, for we've no time to lose: it must be all finished before the day breaks."

My father did not lose much time at his toilet, for he just wrapped his big coat 'round him, and slipping on his brogues, left the house. I sat up in the basket and listened till they were gone some minutes; and then, in a costume as light as my parent's, set out after them, to watch the course of the adventure. I thought to take a short cut, and be before them; but by bad luck I fell into a bog-hole, and only escaped being drowned by a chance. As it was, when I reached the house, the performance had already begun.

I think I see the whole scene this instant before my eyes, as I sat on a little window with one pane, and that a broken one, and surveyed the proceeding. It was a large room; at one end of which, was a bed, and beside it a table, with physic-bottles, and spoons, and tea-cups; a little farther off was another table, at which sat Billy Scanlan, with all manner of writing materials before him. The country people sat two, sometimes three, deep round the walls, all intently eager and anxious for the coming event. Peter himself went from place to place, trying to smother his grief, and occasionally helping the company to whiskey—which was supplied with more than accustomed liberality.

All my consciousness of the deceit and trickery could not deprive the scene of a certain solemnity. The misty distance of the half-lighted room; the highly wrought expression of the country people's faces, never more intensely excited than at some moment of this kind; the low, deep-drawn, breathings, unbroken, save by a sigh or a sob—the tribute of affectionate sorrow to some lost friend, whose memory was thus forcibly brought back: these, I repeat it, were all so real, that as I looked, a thrilling sense of awe stole over me, and I actually shook with fear.

A low faint cough, from the dark corner where the bed stood, seemed to cause even a deeper stillness; and then, in a silence where the buzzing of a fly would have been heard, my father said:

"Where's Billy Scanlan?—I want to make my will!"

"He's here, father!" said Peter, taking Billy by the hand and leading him to the bedside.

"Write what I bid ye, Billy, and be quick, for I hav'n't a long time afore me here. I die a good Catholic, though Father O'Rafferty won't give me the 'rites!'"

A general chorus of muttered "Oh, musha, musha," was now heard through the room; but whether in grief over the sad fate of the dying man, or the unflinching severity of the priest, is hard to say.

"I die in piece with all my neighbors, and all mankind!"

Another chorus of the company seemed to approve these charitable expressions.

"I bequeath unto my son, Peter,—and never was there a better son or a decente boy!—have you that down? I bequeath unto my son, Peter, the whole of my two farms of Killimundoonery and Knockshebooora, with the fallow meadows behind Lynch's house; the forge and the right of turf on the Dooran bog. I give him, and much good may it do him, Lanty Cassarn's acre, and the Luary field, with the lime-kiln; and that reminds me that my mouth is just as dry; let me taste what we have in the jug." Here the dying man took a very hearty pull, and seemed considerably refreshed by it. "Where was I, Billy Scanlan?" says he; "oh, I re-

member, at the kiln; I leave him—that's Peter, I mean—the two potato-gardens at Nooman's Well; and it is the elegant fine crops grows there."

"An't you gettin' wake, father darlin'?" says Peter; who began to be afraid of my father's loquaciousness; for, to say the truth, the punch got into his head, and he was greatly disposed to talk.

"I am, Peter, my son," says he; "I am getting awake; just touch my lips again with the jug. Ah, Peter, Peter, you watered the drink!"

"No, indeed, father! but it's the taste is leavin' you," says Peter; and again a low chorus of compassionate pity murmured through the cabin.

"Well, I'm nearly done now," says my father: "there's only one little plot of ground remaining; and I put it on you, Peter,—as ye wish to live a good man, and die with the same easy heart I do now,—that ye mind my last words to ye here. Are ye listening? Are the neighbors listening? Is Billy Scanlan listening?"

"Yes, sir, yes, father. We're all minding," chorused the audience.

"Well then, it's my last will and testament, and may—give me over the jug"—here he took a long drink—"and may that blessed liquor be poison to me if I'm not as eager about this as every other part of my will; I say then, I bequeath the little plot at the cross-roads to poor Con. Cregan; for he has a heavy charge, and is as honest and as hard-working a man as ever I knew. Be a friend to him, Peter, dear; never let him want while ye have it yourself; think of me on my death-bed whenever he asks ye for any trifle. Is it down, Billy Scanlan? the two acres at the cross to Con. Cregan, and his heirs in *secla seclorum*. Ah, blessed be the Saints! but I feel my heart lighter after that," says he, "a good work makes an easy conscience; and now I'll drink all the company's good health, and many happy returns——"

What he was going to add, there's no saying; but Peter, who was now terribly frightened at the lively tone the sick man was assuming, hurried all the people away into another room, to let his father die in peace.

When they were all gone, Peter slipped back to my father, who was putting on his brogues in a corner: "Con.," says he, "ye did it all well; but sure that was a joke about the two acres at the cross."

"Of course it was, Peter!" says he; "sure it was all a joke for the matter of that: won't I make the neighbors laugh hearty to-morrow when I tell them all about it!"

"You wouldn't be mean enough to betray me!" says Peter, trembling with fright.

"Sure ye wouldn't be mean enough to go against yer father's dying words!" says my father; "the last sentence ever ne spoke;" and here he gave a low wicked laugh, that made myself shake with fear.

"Very well, Con.!" says Peter, holding out his hand: "a bargain's a bargain; yer a deep fellow, that's all!" and so it end-d; and my father slipped quietly home over the bog, mighty well satisfied with the legacy he left himself.

And thus we became the owners of the little spot known to this day as Con.'s Acre; of which, more hereafter.

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER PEEP AT MY FATHER.

My father's prosperity had the usual effect it has in similar cases. It lifted him into a different sphere of companionship, and suggested new habits of life. No longer necessitated to labor daily for his bread, by a very slight exercise of industry he could cultivate his "potato-garden;" and every one who knows anything of Ireland, well knows that the potato and its corollary—the pig, supply every want of an Irish cottier household.

Being thus at liberty to dispose of himself and his time, my parent was enabled to practise a long desired and much coveted mode of life, which was to frequent "sheebeens" and alehouses, and all similar places of resort; not indeed for the gratification of any passion for drink,—for my father only indulged when he was "treated," and never could bring himself to spend a farthing in liquor himself, but his great fondness for these places took its origin in his passion for talk. Never, indeed, lived there a man—from Lord Brougham himself, downwards—who had a greater taste for gossip and loquaciousness than my father. It mattered little what the subject, he was always ready; and whether it were a crim. con. in the newspapers, a seizure for rent, a marriage in high life, or a pig in the pound—there he was, explaining away all difficult terms of law and jurisprudence; and many a difficulty that Tom Cafferty, the post-master, had attempted in vain to solve, was, by a kind of "writ of error," removed to my father's court for explanation and decision.

That he soon became a kind of authority in the neighboring town of Kilbeggan, need not excite any surprise. It is men of precisely his kind, and with talents of an order very similar to his, that wield influence in the great cities of the earth. It is your talking, pushing, forward men, seeming always confident of what they say—never acknowledging an error nor confessing a defeat, who take the lead in life. With average ability, and ten times the

average assurance, they reach the goal that bashful merit never even so much as gets within sight of.

His chief resort, however, was the Court of Quarter Sessions, where he sat from the first opening case to the last judgment, watching with an intense interest all the vacillating changes of the law's uncertainty, which unquestionably were not in any way diminished by the singular individual who presided in that seat of justice. Simon Ball—or as he was better known at the bar, Snow Ball—an epithet he owed to his white head and eyebrows, had qualified himself for the bench by improving upon the proverbial attribute of justice. He was not only blind, but deaf. For something like forty-five years he had walked the hall of the Four Courts, with an empty bag, and a head scarcely more encumbered, when one morning—no one could guess why—the "Gazette" announced that the Lord Lieutenant had appointed him to the vacant chairmanship of Westmeath—a promotion which had the effect of confounding all political animosity by its perfect unaccountableness.

It is a law of Nature that nothing ever goes to loss. Bad wine will make very tolerable vinegar; spoiled hay is converted into good manure; and so a very middling lawyer often drops down into a very respectable judge. Had the gods but acknowledged Mr. Ball's abilities some years earlier, doubtless he had been an exception to the theory. They waited, however, so long, that both sight and hearing were in abeyance when the promotion came. It seemed to rally him, however, this act of recognition, although late. It was a kind of corroboration of the self-estimate of a long life, and he prepared to show the world that he was very different from what they took him for. No men have the bump of self-esteem like lawyers; they live, and grow old, and die, always fancying that Holts, and Hales and Mansfields, are hid within the unostentatious exterior of their dusty garments; and that, the wit that dazzles, and the pathos that thrills, are all rusting inside, just for want of a little of that cheering encouragement by which their contemporaries are clad in silk and walk in high places. Snow Ball was determined to show the world its error, and with a smart frock and green spectacles, he took the field like a "fine old Irish barrister," with many a dry joke or sly sarcasm, curled up in the wrinkles beside his mouth. However cheap a man may be held by his fellows in the "Hall," he is always sure of a compensation in the provinces. There, the country gentlemen looked upon their chairman as a Blackstone: not alone a storehouse of law, but a great appeal upon questions of general knowledge and information. I should scarcely have ventured upon what some of my readers may regard as a mere digression, if it were not that the gentleman and the peculiar nature of his infirmities had led to an intimate relation with my father. My parent's fondness for law, and all appertaining to it, had attached him to the little inn where Mr. Ball usually put up at each season of his visit: and gradually, by tendering little services, as fetching an umbrella when it rained, hastening for a book of reference if called for, searching out an important witness, and probably by a most frequent and respectful use of the title "my lord," instead of the humble "your worship," he succeeded in so ingratiating himself with the judge, that without exactly occupying any precise station, or having any regular employment, he became in some sort a recognised appendage—a kind of "unpaid attache to the court" of Kilbeggan.

My father was one of those persons who usually asks only a "lift" from Fortune, and do not require to be continually aided by her. From being the humble attendant on the judge, he soon succeeded to being his privy councillor; supplying a hundred little secret details of the neighborhood and its local failings, which usually gave Mr. Ball's decisions on the bench an air approaching inspiration, so full were they of knowledge of individual life. As confidence ripened, my father was employed in reading out to the judge of an evening the various depositions of witnesses, the informations laid, and the affidavits sworn—opportunities from which he did not neglect to derive the full advantage: for while he usually accompanied the written document with a running commentary of his own to Mr. Ball; he also contrived to let the suitor feel how great was his knowledge of the case, and what a powerful influence behind the scenes he wielded over the fortunes of the cause, insomuch that it became soon well known that he who had Con. Cregan on his side, was better off than with the whole bench of county magistrates disposed to favor him.

My father's prudence did not desert him in these trying circumstances. Without any historical knowledge of the matter, he knew by a species of instinct, that pride was the wreck of most men, and that to wield real substantial power, it is often necessary to assume a garb of apparent inefficiency and incapacity. To this end, the greater the influence he possessed the humbler did he affect to be; disclaiming everything like power, he got credit for possessing a far greater share than he ever really enjoyed.

That the stream of justice did not run perfectly pure and clear, however, may not be a matter of surprise; for how many rocks, and shoals, and quicksands, are there in the channel! and certainly my father was a dangerous hand at the wheel. Litigation, it must be owned, lost much of its vacillation. The usual question about any case, was, "What

does Con. say? did Con. Cregan tell ye ye'll win?" That was decisive; none skeptical enough to ask for more!

At the feet of this Gemaliel I was brought up; nothing the more tenderly that a step-mother presided over the "home department." As I was a stout boy of some thirteen or fourteen at this period of my father's life, and could read and write pretty well, I was constantly employed in making copies of various papers used at the Sessions. Were I psychologically inclined, I might pause here to inquire, how far these peculiar studies had their influence in biassing the whole tenor of my very eventful life; what latent stores of artifice did I lay up from all these curious subtleties; how did I habituate my mind to weigh and balance probabilities, as evidence inclined to this side or that; above all, how gratified was I with the discovery, that there existed a legal right and wrong, perfectly distinct from the moral ones; a fact which served at once to open the path of life far wider and more amply before me.

I must, however, leave this investigation to the reader's acuteness, if he think it worth following out; nor would I now allude to it, save as it affords me the opportunity, once for all, for explaining modes of thinking and acting, which might seem, without some such clue, as unfitting and unseemly, in one reared and brought up as I was.

Whether the new dignity of his station had disposed him to it or not, I cannot say, but my father became far more stern in his manner, and exacting in his requirements, as he rose in life. The practice of the law seemed to impart some feature of its own peremptory character to himself, as he issued his orders in our humble household, with all the impressive solemnity of a writ—indeed, aiding the effect—by phrases taken from the awful vocabulary of justice.

If my step-mother objected to anything, the answer was, usually, she might "traverse in prox" at the next Sessions; while, to myself, every order was in the style of a "mandamus." Not satisfied with the mere terrors of the Bench, he became so enamored of the pursuit, as to borrow some features of prison discipline for the conduct of our household; thus, for the slightest infractions of his severe code, I was "put" upon No. 3, Penitentiary diet,—only reading potatoes *vice* bread.

There would seem to be something uncongenial to obedience in any form, in the life of an Irish peasant; something, doubtless, in the smell of the turf. He seems to imbibe a taste for freedom, by the very architecture of his dwelling, and the easy, unbuttoned liberty of his corduroys. Young as I was, I suppose the Celt was strong within me; and the 'Times" says, that will account for all delinquencies. I felt this powerfully; not the less, indeed, that my father almost invariably visited me with the penalty of the case, then before the Court; so that while copying out, at night, the details of the prosecution, I had time to meditate over the coming sentence. It was, perhaps, fortunate for me that capital cases do not come under the jurisdiction of a "sitting barrister," otherwise, I verily believe I might have suffered the last penalty of the law, from my parent's infatuation.

My sense of "equity" at last revolted. I perceived, that no matter who "sued," *I* was always "cast;" and I at length resolved on resistance. I remember well the night this resolution was formed; it was a cold and cheerless one of January; my father had given me a great mass of papers to copy, and a long article for the newspapers to write out, which the "Judge" was to embody in his address to the Bench. I never put pen to either, but sate with my head between my hands for twelve mortal hours, revolving every possible wickedness, and wondering whether, in my ingenuity, I could not invent some offences that no indictment could comprise. Day broke, and found me still unoccupied. I was just meditating whether I should avow my rebellion openly, and "plead" in mitigation, when my father came in.

My reader must excuse me if I do not dwell on what followed. It is enough to say, that the nature of my injuries are unknown to the criminal statute, and that although my wounds and bruises are familiar to the prize-ring, they are ignored by all jurisprudence out of the slave states. Even my step-mother confessed, that I was not fit to "pick out of the gutter," and she proved her words by leaving me where I lay.

Revenge must be a very "human" passion; my taste for it came quite naturally. I had never read "Othello" nor "Zanga;" but I conceived a very clear and precise notion that I had a debt to pay, and pay it I would. Had the obligation been of a pecuniary character, and some "bankrupt commission" been in jurisdiction over it, I had doubtless been called upon to discharge it in a series of instalments proportional to my means of life; being a moral debt, however, I enjoyed the privilege of paying it at once, and in full: which I did thus. I had often remarked that my father arose at night and left the cabin, crossing a little garden behind the house to a little shed, where our pig and an ass lived in harmony together; and here, by dint of patient observation, I discovered that his occupation lay in the thatch of the aforesaid shed, in which he seemed to conceal some object of value.

Thither I now repaired, some secret prompting suggesting that it might afford me the wished-for means of vengeance; my disappointment was indeed great, that no compact roll of bank-notes, no thick woollen

stocking close packed with guineas, or even crown-pieces, met my hand; a heavy bundle of papers and parchment were all I could find; and these bore such an unhappy family resemblance to the cause of all my misfortunes, that I was ready to tear them to pieces in very spite. A mere second's reflection suggested a better course. There was a certain attorney in Kilbeggan, one Morissy, my father's bitterest enemy; indeed, my parent's influence in the Session court had almost ruined, and left him without a client. The man of law and precedents in vain struggled against decisions, which a secret and irresponsible adviser contrived beforehand, and Morissy's knowledge and experience were soon discovered to be valueless. It was a game in which skill went for nothing.

This gentleman's character at once pointed him out as the fitting agent of vengeance on my father, and by an hour after daybreak did I present myself before him in all the consciousness of my injured state.

Mr. Morissy's reception of me was not over gracious.

"Well, ye spawn of the devil," said he, as he turned about from a small fragment of looking-glass, before which he was shaving: "what brings ye here? bad luck to ye; the sight of ye's made me cut myself."

"I am come, sir, for a bit of advice, sir," said I, putting my hand to my hat in salutation.

"Assault and battery!" said he, with a grin on the side of his mouth where the soap had been shaved away.

"Yes, sir; an aggravated case," said I, using the phrase of the sessions.

"Why don't ye apply to yer father? he's crown lawyer and Attorney-General; faith, he's more besides—he's judge and jury too."

"And more than that in the present suit, sir," says I; following up his illustration; "he's the defendant here."

"What? is that his doing?"

"Yes, sir; his own hand and mark," said I, laughing.

"That's an ugly cut, and mighty near the eye! but sure, after all, you're his child."

"Very true, sir; it's only paternal correction; but I have something else!"

"What's that, Con., my boy?" said he; for we were now grown very familiar.

"It is this, sir," said I; "this roll of papers, that I found hid in the thatch,—a safe place my father used to make his strong box."

"Let us see!" said Morissy, sitting down and opening the package; many were old summonses discharged, notices to quit withdrawn, and so on; but at last he came to two papers pinned together: at sight of which he almost jumped from his chair. "Con," says he, "describe the place you found them in." I went over all the discovery again. "Did ye yourself see yer father putting papers there?"

"I did, sir."

"On more than one occasion?"

"At least a dozen times, sir."

"Did ye ever remark any one else putting papers there?"

"Never, sir! none of the neighbors ever come through the garden."

"And it was always at night, and in secret, he used to repair there?"

"Always at night."

"That'll do Con.; that'll do, my son. You'll soon turn the tables on the old boy. You may go down to the kitchen and get your breakfast; be sure, however, that you don't leave the house to-day. Your father mustn't know where ye are till we're ready for him."

"Is it a strong case, sir?" said I.

"A very strong case,—never a flaw in it."

"Is it more than a larceny, sir?" said I.

"It is better than that."

"I'd rather it didn't go too far," said I: for I was beginning to feel afraid of what I had done.

"Leave that to me, Con.," said Mr. Morissy; "and go down to yer breakfast."

I did as I was bid, and never stirred out of the house the whole day, nor for eight days after; when one morning, Morissy bid me clean myself, and brush my hair, to come with him to the Court-house.

I guessed at once what was going to happen; and now, as my head was healed, and all my bruises cured, I'd very gladly have forgiven all the affair, and gone home again with my father; but it was too late. As Mr. Morissy said, with a grin, "The law is an elegant contrivance; a child's finger can set it in motion, but a steam-engine could not hold it back afterwards!"

The Court was very full that morning; there were five magistrates on the bench, and Mr. Ball in the middle of them. There were a great many farmers too, for it was market-day; and numbers of the towns-people, who all knew my father, and were not sorry to see him "up." Cregan *versus* Cregan stood third on the list of cases; and very little interest attached to the two that preceded it. At last it was called; and there I stood before the Bench, with five hundred pair of eyes all bent upon me; and two of them actually looking through my very brain—for they were my father's, as he stood at the opposite side of the table, below the Bench.

The case was called an assault, and very soon terminated; for, by my own admission, it was clear that I deserved punishment; though probably not so severely as it had been inflicted. The judge delivered a very impressive lesson to my father and myself, about our respective duties; and dismissed the case, with a reproof, the greater share of

which fell to me. "You may go now, sir," said he, winding up a fine peroration; "Fear God, and honor the King; respect your parents, and make your capitals smaller."

"Before your worship dismisses the witness," said Morissy, "I wish to put a few questions to him."

"The case is disposed of; call the next," said the judge, angrily.

"I have a most important fact to disclose to your worship; one which is of the highest importance to the due administration of justice; one, which if suffered to lie in obscurity, will be a disgrace to the law, and a reproach to the learned Bench."

"Call the next case, Crier," said the judge. "Sit down, Mr. Morissy."

"Your worship may commit me; but I will be heard——"

"Tipstaff! take that man into——"

"When you hear of a mandamus from the King's Bench—when you know that a case of compounding a felony——"

"Come away, Mr. Morissy; come, quiet, sir!" said the police sergeant.

"What were ye saying of a mandamus?" said the judge, getting frightened at the dreaded word.

"I was saying this, sir," said Morissy, turning fiercely round; "that I am possessed of information which you refused to hear; and which will make the voice of the Chief Justice heard in this court, which now denies its ear to truth."

"Conduct yourself more becomingly, sir," said one of the county magistrates, "and open your case."

Morissy, who was far more submissive to the gentry than to the chairman, at once replied in his blandest tone—

"Your worship, it is now more than a month since I appeared before you in the case of Nooman *versus* M'Quade and others; an aggravated case of homicide. I might go farther, and apply to it the most awful term the vocabulary of justice contains! Your worship will remember, that on that very interesting and important case a document was missing, of such a character that the main feature of the case seemed actually to hang upon it. This was no less than the death-bed confession of Nooman, formally taken before a justice of the peace, Mr. Styles, and written with all the accurate regard to circumstances the law exacts. Mr. Styles, the magistrate who took the deposition, was killed by a fall from his horse the following week; his clerk being ill, the individual who wrote the case was Con. Cregan. Your worship may bear in mind, that this man, when called to the witness-box, denied all knowledge of this dying confession; asserted that what he took down in writing were simply some brief and unsatisfactory notes of the affray—all to the advantage of the M'Quades—and swore that Mr. Styles, who often alluded to the document as a confession, was entirely in error, the whole substance of it being unimportant and vague; some very illegible, and ill-written notes corroborating which, were produced in court as the papers in question.

"Nooman being dead, and Mr. Styles also, the whole case rested on the evidence of Cregan, and although, your worship, the man's character for veracity was not of that nature among the persons of his own neighborhood to——"

"Confine yourself to the case, sir," said the judge, "without introducing matter of mere common report."

"I am in a position to prove my assertion," said Morissy, triumphantly, "I hold here in my hand the abstracted documents, signed and sealed by Mr. Styles, and engrossed with every item of regularity. I have more; a memorandum purporting to be a copy of a receipt for eighteen pounds ten shillings, received by Cregan, from Jos. M'Quade, the wages of his crime; and, if more were necessary, a promissory-note from M'Quade for an additional sum of seven pounds, at six months date. These are the papers which I am prepared to prove in court; this, the evidence, which a few minutes back I tendered in vain before you, and there," said he, turning with a vindictive solemnity to where my father was standing, pale, but collected, "there's the man, who, distinguished by your worship's confidence, I now arraign for the suppression of this evidence, and the composition of a felony!"

If Mr. Morissy was not perfectly correct in his law, there was still quite enough to establish a charge of misdemeanor against my father; and he was accordingly committed for trial at the approaching assizes, while I was delivered over to the charge of a police sergeant, to be in readiness when my testimony should be required.

The downfall of a dynasty is sure to evoke severe recrimination against the late ruler, and now my parent, who but a few days past could have tilted the beam of justice at his mere pleasure, was overwhelmed with, not merely abuse and attack, but several weighty accusations of crime were alleged against him. Not only was it discovered that he interfered with the due course of justice, but that he was a prime actor in, and contriver of, many of the scenes of insurrectionary disturbance, which for years back had filled the country with alarm and the jails with criminals.

For one of these cases, a night attack for arms, the evidence was so complete and unquestionable, that the crown prosecutor, disliking the exhibition of a son giving evidence against his parent, dispensed with my attend-

ance altogether, and prosecuting the graver charge, obtained a verdict of guilty.

The sentence was transportation for life, with a confiscation of all property to the crown. Thus my first step in life was to exile my father, and leave myself a beggar: a promising beginning, it must be owned

CHAPTER III.

A FIRST STEP ON LIFE'S LADDER.

It is among the strange and singular anomalies of our nature, that however pleased men may be at the conviction of a noted offender, few of those instrumental to his punishment are held in honor and esteem. If all Kilbeggan rejoiced, as they did, at my father's downfall, a very considerable share of obloquy rested on me; a species of judgment, I honestly confess, that I was not the least prepared for.

"There goes the little informer," said they, as I passed; "what did ye get for hanging," —a very admirable piece of Irish exaggeration,—"for hanging yer father, Con?" said one.

"Couldn't ye help yer old mother to a say voyage?"

"And then we'd be rid of yez all," chimed in a third.

"He's rich now," whined out an old beggar man, that often had eaten his potatoes at our fire-side. "He's rich now, the chap is; he'll marry a lady!"

This was the hardest to bear of all the slights, for not alone had I lost all pretension to my father's property, but the raggedness of my clothes, and the general misery of my appearance, might have saved me from the reproach of what is so forcibly termed "blood-money."

"Come over to me this evening," said Father Rush, and they were the only words of comfort I heard from any side. "Come over to me about six o'clock, Con., for I want to speak to you."

They were long hours that intervened between that and six. I could not stay in the town, where every one I met had some sneer or scoff against me; I could not go home, I had none! and so, I wandered out into the open country, taking my course towards a bleak common, about two miles off, where few, if any one, was like to be but myself.

This wild and dreary tract lay along side of the main road to Athlone, and was traversed by several footpaths, by which the country people were accustomed to make "short-cuts" to market, from one part of the road to another; for the way passing through a bog, took many a winding turn as the ground necessitated.

There is a feeling of lonely desolation in wide far-stretching wastes, that accords well with the purposeless vacuity of hopelessness; but somehow or other, the very similitude between the scene without, and the scene of desolation within, establishes a kind of companionship. Lear was speaking like a true philosopher when he uttered the words, "I like this rocking of the battlements."

I had wandered some hours "here and there" upon the common; and it was now the decline of day, when I saw at a little distance from me the figure of a young man, whose dress and appearance bespoke condition, running along at a brisk pace, but evidently laboring under great fatigue.

The instant he saw me he halted, and cried out, "I say, my boy, is that Kilbeggan yonder, where I see the spire?"

"Yes, sir."

"And where is the high road to Athlone?"

"Yonder, sir, where the two trees are standing."

"Have you seen the coach pass—the mail for Athlone?"

"Yes, sir, she went through the town about half an hour ago.'

"Are you certain, boy? are ye quite sure of this?" cried he, in a voice of great agitation.

"I am quite sure, sir; they always change horses at Moone's public-house, and I saw them 'draw up' there more than half an hour since."

"Is there no other coach passes this road for Dublin?"

"The night mail, sir, but she does not go to-night; this is Saturday."

"What is to be done?" said the youth, in deep sorrow, and he seated himself on a stone as he spoke, and hid his face between his hands.

As he sat thus, I had time to mark him well, and scan every detail of his appearance.

Although tall and stoutly knit, he could not have been above sixteen, or at most seventeen years of age; his dress, a kind of shooting-jacket, was made in a cut that affected fashion, and I observed on one finger of his very white hand a ring, which, even to my uneducated eyes, bespoke considerable value.

He looked up at last, and his eyes were very red, and a certain trembling of the lips showed that he was much affected. "I suppose, my lad, I can find a chaise or a carriage of some kind in Kilbeggan?" said he, "for I have lost the mail. I had got out for a walk, and by the advice of a countryman taken this path over the bog, expecting, as he told me, it would cut off several miles of way. I suppose I must have mistaken him, for I have been running for above an hour, and am too late after

all; but still, if I can find a chaise, I shall be in time yet."

"They're all gone sir," said I, "and sorry am I to have such tidings to tell. The Sessions broke up to-day, and they're away with the lawyers to Kinnegad."

"And how far is that from us?"

"Sixteen miles or more by the road."

"And how am I to get there?"

"Unless ye walk it——"

"Walk! impossible. I am dead beat already; besides, the time it would take would lose me all chance of reaching Dublin as I want."

"Andy Smith has a horse, if he'd lend it; and there's a short road by Hogan's boreen."

"Where does this Smith live?" said he, stopping me impatiently.

"Not a half-mile from here; you can see the house from this."

"Come along then, and show me the way, my boy," said he; and the gleam of hope seemed to lend alacrity to his movements.

Away we set together, and, as we went, it was arranged between us that if Andy would hire out his mare, I should accompany the rider as guide, and bring back the animal to its owner, while the traveler proceeded on his journey to town.

The negotiation was tedious enough; for, at first, Andy wouldn't appear at all; he thought it was a process server after him—a suspicion probably suggested by my presence, as it was generally believed that a rag of my father's mantle had descended to me. It was only after a very cautious and careful scrutiny of the young traveler through a small glass eye—it wasn't a window—in the mud wall, that he would consent to come out. When he did so, he treated the proposal most indignantly. "Is it he hire out his baste? as if she was a dirty garraun of Betty Nowlan's of the head inn; he wondered who'd ask the like!" and so on.

The youth, deterred by this reception, would have abandoned the scheme at once; but I, better acquainted with such characters as Andy, and knowing that his difficulties were only items in the intended charge, higgled, and bargained, and bullied, and blarnied, by turns; and, after some five-and-forty minutes of alternate joking and abusing each other, it was at last agreed on, that the 'baste' was to be ceded for the sum of fifteen shillings,—"two and sixpence more if his honor was pleased with the way she carried him." The turnpike and a feed of oats being also at the charge of the rider, as well as all repairs of shoes incurred by loss, or otherwise. Then there came a supplemental clause as to the peculiar care of the animal. How, "she wasn't to be let drink too much at once, for she'd get the cholic;" and if she needed shoeing, she was to have a "twitch" on her nose, or she'd kick the forge to "smithereens." The same precaution to be taken if the saddle required fresh girthing; a hint was given besides, not to touch her with the left heel, or she'd certainly kick the rider with the hind leg of the same side; and, as a last caution given, to be on our guard at the cross-roads at Toomes bridge, or she'd run away towards Croghan, where she once was turned out in foal. "Barring" these peculiarities, and certain smaller difficulties about mounting, "she was a lamb, and the sweetest tempered crayture ever was haltered."

In the very midst of this panegyric upon the animal's good and noble qualities he flung open the door of a little shed, and exhibited her to our view. I verily believe, whatever the urgency of the youth's reason for proceeding, that his heart failed him at the sight of the steed; a second's re-consideration seemed to rally his courage, and he said, "No matter, it can't be helped; saddle her at once, and let us be off."

"That's easier said nor done," muttered Andy to himself, as he stood at the door, without venturing a step farther. "Con.," said he at last, in a species of coaxing tone I well knew boded peril, "Con., a cushla! get a hould of her by the head, that's a fine chap; make a spring at the forelock."

"May be she'd kick——"

"Sorra kick! get up there now, and I'll be talking to ye all the while."

This proposition, though doubtless meant as encouraging, by no means reassured me.

"Come, come! I'll bridle the infernal beast," said the youth, losing all patience with both of us, and he sprang forward into the stable; but barely had he time to jump back, as the animal let fly with both hind legs together. Andy, well aware of what was coming, pulled us both back, and shut to the door, against which the hoofs kept up one rattling din of kicks, that shook the crazy edifice from roof to ground.

"Ye see what comes of startlin' her; the crayture's timid as a kid," said Andy, whose blanched cheek badly corroborated his assumed composure. "Ye may do what ye plaze, barrin' putting a bridle on her, she never took kindly to that!"

"But do ye intend me to ride her without one?" said the youth.

"By no manner of means, sir," said Andy, with a pausible slowness on each word, that gave him time to think of an expedient, "I wouldn't be guilty of the like; none that knows me would ever say it to me, I'm a poor man——"

"You're a devilish tiresome one," broke in the youth suddenly; "here we have been above half an hour standing at the door, and none the nearer our departure than when we arrived."

"Christy Moore could bridle her, if he was here," said Andy; "but he's gone to Moate, and won't be back till evening; may be that would do?"

A very impatient, and not very pious exclamation consigned Christy to an untimely fate. "Well, don't be angry any how, sir," said Andy, "there's many a thing a body would think of, if they wern't startled; see now, I have a way this minute, an elegant fine way too."

"Well, what is it? Confound your long-winded speeches!"

"There now, you're angry again! sure it's enough to give one quite a through-otherness, and not leave them time to reflect."

"Your plan, your plan!" said the young man, his lips trembling with anger.

"Here it is, then; let the 'gossoon,'" meaning me, "get up on the roof and take off two or three of the scraws, the sods of grass, till he can get through, and then steal down on the mare's back; when he's once on her, she'll never stir head nor foot, and he can slip the bridle over her quite easy."

"The boy might be killed; no, no, I'll not suffer that——"

"Wait, sir," cried I, interrupting, "it's not so hard after all; once on her back, I defy her to throw me."

"Sure I know that well; sorra better rider in the Meath hunt than little Con.," broke in Andy, backing me with a ready flattery he thought would deceive me.

It was not without reluctance that the youth consented to this forlorn hope, but he yielded at last; and so, with a bridle fastened round me like a scarf, I was hoisted on the roof by Andy; and under a volley of encouraging expressions, exhorted to "go in and win."

"There! there, a cushla!" cried Andy, as he saw me performing the first act of the piece with a vigor he had never calculated on; "'tisn't a coach and six ye want to drive through. Tear and ages! ye'll take the whole roof off." The truth was, I worked away with a malicious pleasure in the destruction of the old miser's roof; nor is it quite certain how far my zeal might have carried me; when suddenly one of the rafters—mere light poles of ash—gave way, and down I went, at first slowly, and then quicker, into a kind of funnel formed by the smashed timbers and the earthen sods. The crash, the din, and the dust appeared to have terrified the wicked beast below, for she stood trembling in one corner of the stable, and never moved a limb as I walked boldly up and passed the bridle over her head. This done, I had barely time to spring on her back, when the door was forced open by the young gentleman, whose fears for my fate had absorbed every other thought.

"Are you safe, my boy, quite safe?" he cried, making his was over the fallen rubbish.

"Oh! the devil fear him," cried Andy, in a perfect rage of passion; "I wish it was his bones was smashed, instead of the roof-sticks—see!—Och, murther, only look at this." And Andy stood amid the ruins, a most comical picture of affliction, in part real and in part assumed. Meanwhile the youth had advanced to my side, and with many a kind and encouraging word, more than repaid me for all my danger.

"'Tisn't five pound will pay the damage," cried Andy, running upon his fingers a sum of imaginary arithmetic.

"Where's the saddle, you old——" What the young man was about to add, I know not; but at a look from me—he stopped short.

"Is it abusin' me you're for now, afther wrecking my house and destroying my premises?" cried Andy, whose temper was far from sweetened by the late catastrophe. "Sure what marcy my poor beast would get from the likes of ye! sorra step she'll go in yer company; pay the damages ye done, and be off."

Here was a new turn of affairs, and judging from the irascibility of both parties, a most disastrous one: it demanded, indeed, all my skill—all the practiced dexterity of a mind trained, as mine had been by many a subtlety, to effect a compromise, which I did thus: my patron being cast in the costs of all the damages, to the amount of twenty shillings, and the original contract to be maintained in all its integrity.

The young man paid the money without speaking; but I had time to mark that the purse from which he drew it was far from weighty. "Are we free to go, at last?" cried he, in a voice of suppressed wrath.

"Yes, yer honor; all's right," answered Andy, whose heart was mollified at the sight of money; "a pleasant journey, and safe to ye; take good care of the beast, don't ride her over the stones, and——"

The remainder of the exhortation was lost to us, as we set forth in a short jog-trot, I running alongside.

"When we are once below the hill, yonder," said I to my companion, "give her the whip, and make up for lost time."

"And how are you to keep up, my lad?" asked he in some surprise.

I could scarcely avoid a laugh at the simplicity of the question, as if an Irish gossoon with his foot on his native bog, wouldn't be an overmatch in a day's journey for the best hack that ever rambled. Away he went, sometimes joking over, sometimes abusing the old miser, Andy, of whom, for my fellow-traveler's amusement, I told various little traits and stories, at which he laughed with a zest quite new to me to witness. My desire to be en-

tertaining then led me on to speak of my father and his many curious adventures—the skill with which he could foment litigation, and the wily stratagems by which he sustained it afterwards. All the cunning devices of the process-server I narrated with a gusto that smacked of my early training; how, sometimes, my crafty parent would append a summons to the collar of a dog, and lie in wait till he saw the owner take it off and read it, and then emerging from his concealment, cry out "sarved," and take to his heels; and again, how once he succeeded in "serving" old Andy himself, by appearing as a beggar-woman, and begging him to light a bit of paper to kindle her pipe. The moment, however, he took the bit of twisted paper, the assumed beggar-woman screamed out, "Andy, yer sarved; that's a process, my man!" The shock almost took Andy's life; and there's not a beggar in the barony dares to come near him since.

"Your father must be well off, then, I suppose," said my companion.

"He was a few weeks ago, sir; but misfortune has come on us since that." I was ashamed to go on; and yet I felt that strange impulse, so strong in the Irish peasant, to narrate anything of a character which can interest by harrowing and exciting the feelings.

Very little pressing was needed to make me recount the whole story, down to the departure of my father with the other prisoners sentenced to transportation.

"And whither were you going when I met you this morning on the common?" said my fellow-traveler, in a voice of some interest.

"To seek my fortune, sir," was my brief answer; and either the words, or the way they were uttered, seemed to strike my companion, for he drew up short and stared at me, repeating the phrase, "Seek your fortune!" "Just so," said I, warmed by an enthusiasm which then was beginning to kindle within me, and which for many a long year since, and in many a trying emergency, has cheered and sustained me. "Just so; the world is wide, and there's a path for every one, if they'd only look for it."

"But you saw what came of *my* taking a short cut, this morning," said my companion, laughing.

"And you'd have been time enough too, if you had been always thinking of what you were about, sir; but as you told me, you began a thinking and a dreaming of twenty things far away; besides, who knows what good turn luck may take, just at the very moment when we seem to have least of it."

"You're quite a philosopher, Con.," said he, smiling.

"So father Mahon used to say, sir," said I proudly, and in reality highly flattered at the reiteration of the epithet.

Thus chatting, we journeyed along, lightening the way with talk, and making the hours seem to me the very pleasantest I had ever passed. At last we came in sight of the steeple of Kinnegad, which lay in the plain before us, about a mile distant.

The little town of Kinnegad was all astir as we entered it. The "up mail" had just come down in the main street, sending all its passengers flying in various directions—through shop-windows; into cow-houses and piggeries; some, being proudly perched on the roof of a cabin, and others most ignobly seated on a dunghill. The most lamentable figure of all, being an elderly gentleman, who, having cut a somerset through an apothecary's window, came forth, cut by a hundred small vials, and bearing on his person unmistakable evidence of every odor from tar-water to asafœtida. The conveyance itself lay, like the ark after the deluge, quietly reposing on one side; while animals, male and female "after their kind," issued from within. Limping and disconsolate figures were being assisted into the inn; and black eyes and smashed faces were as rife as in a country fair.

I was not slow in appropriating the calamity to a good purpose; "See, sir," I whispered to my companion, "you said, a while ago, that nobody had such bad luck as yourself; think what might have happened you now, if you hadn't missed the coach."

"True enough, Con," said he; "there is such a thing as being too late for bad as well as for good fortune; and I experience it now. But the next question is, how to get forward; for, of course, with a broken axle, the mail cannot proceed further."

The difficulty was soon got over. The halt and the maimed passengers, after loudly inveighing against all coach-proprietors,—the man that made, and the man that horsed,—he that drove, and he that greased the wheels, of all public conveyances, demanded, loudly, to be forwarded to the end of their journey by various chaises, and other vehicles of the town. I at the same time making use of my legal knowledge to suggest that while doing so, they acted under protest; that it was "without prejudice" to any future proceedings they might deem fit to adopt for compensatory damages. If some laughed heartily at the source from which the hint came, others said I was a "devilish shrewd chap," and insinuated something about a joint-stock subscription of sixpences for my benefit; but the motion was apparently unseconded, and so, like many benefactors of my species, I had to apply to my conscience for my reward; or, safer still, had to wait till I could pay myself.

My young companion, who now, in a few words, told me that he was a student at Trinity College, and a "reader for honors," pulled out his purse to pay me. "Remem-

ber, my boy, the name of Henry Lyndsay; I am easily found, if you chance to come to Dublin; not that I can be of much service to any one, but I shall not forget the service you rendered me this day. Here, take this, pay for the mare's feeding, and when she has rested——"

I would not suffer him to proceed further, but broke in: "I'm not going back, sir! I'll never turn my footsteps that way again! Leave the mare in the inn; Andy comes every Saturday here for the market, and will find her safe. As for me, I must 'seek my fortune;' and when one has to search for anything, there's nothing like beginning early."

"You're a strange fellow, Con.," said he, looking at me; and I was shrewd enough to see that his features exhibited no small astonishment at my words. "And where do you intend to look for this same fortune you speak of?"

"No one place in particular, sir! I read in an old book once, that good luck is like sunshine, and is not found in all climates at the same time; so I intend to ramble about; and when I breakfast on the sunny side of the apple, never stay to dine off the green one."

"And you are the kind of fellow to succeed," said he, half to himself, and rather as though reflecting on my words than addressing me.

"So I intend, sir," replied I, confidently.

"Have you ever read Gil Blas, Con?"

"I have it almost by heart, sir."

"That's it!" said he, laughing; "I see whence you've got your taste for adventure. But remember, Con., Gil Blas lived in different times from ours, and in a very different land. He was, besides, a well educated fellow, with no small share of good looks and good manners.

"As for age and country, sir," said I, boldly, "Men and women are pretty much alike at all times, and in all places; in the old book I told you of, a while ago, I read that human passions, like the features of the face, are only infinite varieties of the same few ingredients. Then, as to education and the rest,—what one man can pick up, so can another. The will is the great thing, and I feel it very strong in me. And now, to give a proof of it, I am determined to go up to Dublin, and with your honor too; and you'll see if I won't have my way."

"So you shall, Con.!" replied he, laughing; "I'll take you on the top of the chaise; and although I cannot afford to keep a servant, you shall stay with me in College, until chance, in which you have such implicit faith, shall provide better for you. Come now, lead the mare into the stable, for I see my companions are packing up to be gone."

I was not slow in obeying the orders, and soon returned to assist my new master with his luggage. All was quickly settled; and a few minutes after, saw me seated on a portmanteau on the roof, on my way to Dublin.

CHAPTER IV.

"HOW I ENTERED COLLEGE, AND HOW I LEFT IT."

It was still dark, on a drizzling morning in January, as we reached the capital; the lamp shone faintly through the foggy, wet atmosphere; and the gloom was deepened as we entered the narrow streets at the west of the city. A few glimmering lights from five-stories' high, showed where some early-riser was awaking to his daily toil; while here and there some rough-coated policemen stood at the corner of a street to be rained on; except these, no sign of living thing appeared; and I own the whole aspect was a sad damper to the ardor of that enthusiasm which had often pictured the great metropolis as some gorgeous fairy-land.

The carriage stopped twice, to set down two of the travelers, in obscure, dingy streets, and then I heard Mr. Lyndsay say, "to the college;" and on we went through a long labyrinth of narrow lanes and thoroughfares, which gradually widened out into more spacious streets, and at length arrived at a great building, whose massive gates slowly opened to receive, and then solemnly closed after, us; we now stood in a spacious quadrangle, silent and noiseless as a church at midnight.

Mr. Lyndsay hastily descended, and ordering me to carry in some of the baggage, I followed him into a large, scantily-furnished room, beyond which was a bedchamber, of like accommodation. "This is my home, Con.," said he, with a melancholy attempt at a smile; "and here," said he, leading me to a small one-windowed room on the opposite side, "here is yours." A bed of that humble kind called a stretcher, placed against one wall, and a large chest for holding coals against the other,—a bottomless chair, and a shoe-brush of very scanty bristles, constituted the entire furniture.

It was some time after all the luggage was removed before Mr. Lyndsay could get rid of the postilion; like all poor men in a like predicament, he had to bargain, and reason, and remonstrate, submitting to many a mortification, and enduring many a sore pang, at the pitiless ribaldry which knows nothing so contemptible as poverty! at last, after various reflections on the presumption of people who travel and cannot afford it,—on their vanity, self-conceit, and so forth,—the fellow depart-

ed, with what my ears assured me was no contemptible share of my poor master's purse.

I was sitting alone in my den during this scene, not wishing by my presence to add anything to his mortification; and now all was still and noiseless, I waited for some time, expecting to be called,—to be told of some trifling service to execute, or, at least, to be spoken to: but no, not a sound, not a murmur was to be heard.

My own thoughts were none of the brightest; the ceaseless rain that streamed against the little window, and shut out all prospect of what was without; the cold and cheerless chamber, and the death-like silence, were like lead upon my heart.

I had often, in my reveries at home, fancied that all who were lifted above the cottier in life, must have neither care nor sorrow. That real want was unknown, save in their class; and that all afflictions of those more highly placed, were of a character too trifling to be deemed serious: and now suddenly, there came to me the thought, What, if every one had his share of grief? I vow the very suspicion thrilled through me, and I sat still, dwelling on the sad theme with deep intensity.

As I sat thus, a sigh, low, but distinct, came from the adjoining chamber. I suddenly remembered my young master, and crept noiselessly to the door; it stood ajar, and I could see in, and mark everything well. He was sitting at a table covered with books and writing-materials; a single candle threw its yellow glare over the whole, and lit up with a sickly tint, the travel-worn and tired features of the youth.

As I looked, he leaned his forehead down upon his arm, and seemed either overcome by sorrow or fatigue; when, suddenly, a deep booming bell sent forth a solemn peal, and made the very chamber vibrate with its din. Lyndsay started at the sound; a kind of shudder, like a convulsive throe, shook his limbs; and sitting up on his seat, he pushed back the falling hair from his eyes, and again addressed himself to his book. The heavy tolling sounds seemed no longer to distract, but rather to nerve him to greater efforts, for he read on with an intense persistence; turning from volume to volume, and repeatedly noting down on the paper as he read.

Of a sudden the bell ceased, and Lyndsay arose from the table, and passed into the bedroom; from which he almost instantaneously re-appeared, dressed in his cap and gown; a new and curious costume in my eyes, but which at the time was invested with a deep mysterious interest to me.

I retired silently now to my room, and saw him pass out into the wide court. I hastened to look out. Already some hundred others in similar costume were assembled there, and the buzz of voices, and the sound of many feet, were a pleasant relief to the desert-like silence of the court as I had seen it before. The change was, however, of very brief duration; in less than a minute the whole assemblage moved off, and entered a great building, whose heavy doors closed on them with a deep bang; and all was still once more.

I now set myself to think by what small services I could render myself acceptable to my young master. I arranged the scanty furniture into a resemblance—faint enough, certainly—to comfort, and made a cheerful fire with the remnant of the roomy coal-box. This done, I proceeded to put his clothes in order, and actually astonished myself with the skill I seemed to possess in my new walk. An intense curiosity to know what was going on without, led me frequently to the door which led into the court; but I profited little by this step. The only figures which met my eye, were now and then some elderly personage clad in his academic robes, gravely wending towards the "Hall," and the far less imposing cries of some "college women," as the hags are called, who officiate as the University housemaids.

It was at one of these visits that suddenly I heard the great door of the "Hall" burst open with a crash, and immediately down the steps poured the black tide of figures, talking and laughing in one multifarious din, that seemed to fill the very air. Cautiously withdrawing, I closed the door, and retired; but scarcely had I reached my room, when young Lyndsay passed through to his own chamber: his cheek was flushed, and his eyes sparkled with animation, and his whole air and gesture indicated great excitement.

Having removed his cravat, and bathed his temples with cold water, he once more sat down before his books, and was soon so immersed in study, as not to hear my footsteps as I entered.

I stood, uncertain, and did not dare to interrupt him for some minutes; the very intensity of his application awed me. Indeed I believe I should have retired without a word, had he not accidently looked up and beheld me. "Eh!—what!—how is this?" cried he, endeavoring to recal his mind from the themes before him; "I had forgotten you, my poor boy, and you have had no breakfast."

"And you, sir?" said I, in reality more interested for him than myself.

"Take this, Con," said he, not heeding my remark, and giving me a piece of silver from his purse; "get yourself something to eat: tomorrow, or next day, we shall arrange these things better; for at this moment my head has its load of cares."

"But will *you* not eat something?" said I; "*you* have not tasted food since we met."

"We are expected to breakfast with our

tutor on the examination mornings, Con," said he; and then, not seeming to feel the inconsistency of his acts with his words, he again bent his head over the table, and lost all remembrance of either me or our conversation. I stole noiselessly away, and sallied forth to seek my breakfast where I could.

There were few loiterers in the court; a stray student hurrying past, or an old slip shod hag of hideous aspect and squalid misery, were all I beheld; but both classes bestowed most unequivocal signs of surprise at my country air and appearance, and to my question, where I could buy some bread and milk, answers the most cynical or evasive were returned. While I was yet endeavoring to obtain from one of the ancient maidens alluded to, some information on the point, two young men, with velvet caps and velvet capes on their gowns, stopped to listen.

"I say, friend," cried one, seemingly the younger of the two, "when did *you* enter?"

"This morning," said I, taking the question literally.

"Do you hear that, Ward?" continued he to his companion. "What place did you take?"

"I was on the roof," replied I; supposing the querre bore allusion to the mode of my coming.

"Quite classical," said the elder, a tall, good-looking youth, "you came as did Cæsar into Gaul, '*summa diligentia*,' on the top of the Diligence."

They both laughed heartily at a very threadbare college joke, and were about to move away, when the younger, turning round, said, "Have you matriculated?"

"No, sir,—what's that?"

"It's a little ceremony," interposed the elder, "necessary, and, indeed, indispensable, to every one coming to reside within these walls. You've heard of Napoleon, I dare say?"

"Bony, is it?" asked I, giving the more familiar title by which he was better known to my circle of acquaintance.

"Exactly," said he, "Bony. Now Bony used to call a first battle the baptism of glory; so may we style, in like way, matriculation to be the baptism of knowledge. You understand me, eh?"

"Not all out," said I, "but partly."

"We'll illustrate by a diagram, then."

"I say, Bob," whispered the younger, "let us find out with whom he is;" then turning to me, said, "Where do you live here?"

"Yonder," said I, "where that lamp is."

"Mr. Lyndsay's chambers?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right," cried the younger; "we'll show you the secret of matriculation."

"Come along, my young friend," said the elder, in the same pompous tone he had used at first, "let us teach you to drink of that Pierian spring which '*Labitur et labetur in omne volubiles ævum.*'"

I believe it was the fluent use of the unknown tongue, which at once allayed any mi trust I might have felt of my new acquaintances; however that may be, there was something so imposing in the high-sounding syllables, that I yielded at once, and followed them into another and more remote quadrangle.

Here they stopped under a window, while one gave a loud whistle with his fingers to his lips; the sash was immediately thrown up, and a handsome. merry-looking face protruded. "Eh!—what!—Taylor and Ward," cried he, "what's going on?"

"Come down, Burton; here's a youth for matriculation," cried the younger.

"All right," cried the other. "There are eight of us here at breakfast;" and disappearing from the window, he speedily descended to the court, followed by a number of others, who gravely saluted me with a deep bow, and solemnly welcomed me within the classic precincts of old Trinity.

"Domine—what's his name?" said the young gentleman, called Burton.

"Cregan, sir," replied I, already flattered by the attentions I was receiving—"Con. Cregan, sir."

"Well, Domine Cregan, come along with us, and never put faith in a junior sophister.—You know what a junior sophister is, I trust?"

"No sir."

"Tell him, Ward."

"A junior sophister, Mr. Cregan, is one who, being in 'Locke' all day, is very often locked out all night, and who observes the two rubrics of the statute '*de vigilantibus et lucentibus*,' by extinguishing both lamps and watchmen."

"Confound your pedantry," broke in Burton; "a junior soph. is a man in his ninth examination."

"The terror of the porters," cried one.

"The Dean's milch cow," added another.

"A credit to his parents, but a debtor to his tailor," broke in a third.

"Seldom at Greek lecture, but no fellow-commoner at the Curragh," lisped out Taylor: and by this time we had reached a narrow lane, flanked on one side by a tall building of gloomy exterior, and on the other by an angle of the square.

"Here we are, Mr. Cregan; as the poet says, 'this is the place, the centre of the wood.'"

"Gentlemen sponsors, to your functions;" scarce were the words out, when I was seized by above a half-dozen pair of strong hands: my legs were suddenly jerked upwards, and, notwithstanding my attempts to resist, I was borne along for some yards at a brisk pace. I was already about to forbear my struggles,

and suffer them to play their,—as I deemed it, harmless joke in quiet, when straight in front of me, I saw an enormous pump, at which, and by a double handle, Burton and another were working away like sailors on a wreck: throwing forth, above a yard off, a jet of water almost enough to turn a mill.

The whole plot now revealed itself to me at once, and I commenced a series of kickings and plungings that almost left me free. My enemies, however, were too many and too powerful; on they bore me, and in a perfect storm of blows, lunges, writhings, and boundings, they held me fast under the stream, which played away in a frothy current over my head, face, chest, and legs—for, with a most laudable impartiality, they moved me from side to side, till not a dry spot remained on my whole body.

I shouted, I yelled, I swore, and screamed, for aid, but all in vain; and my diabolical tormentors seemed to feel no touch of weariness in their inhuman pastime; while I, exhausted by my struggles, and the continuous rush of the falling water, almost ceased to resist; when suddenly a cry of "The Dean! the Dean!" was heard: my bearers let go their hold,—down I tumbled upon the flags, with barely consciousness enough to see the scampering crew flying in all directions, while a host of porters followed them in hot pursuit.

"Who are you, sir? What brought you here?" said a tall old gentleman, I at once surmised to be the Dean.

"The devil himself, I believe!" replied I, rising with difficulty under the weight of my soaked garments.

"Turn him outside the gates, Hawkins!" said the Dean to a porter behind him. "Take care, too, that he never re-enters them."

"I'll take good care of it, sir," said the fellow, as with one strong hand on my collar, and the closed fingers of the other administering gentle admonitions to the back of my head, he proceeded to march me before him through the square: revolving as I went, thoughts, which, certes, evinced not one sentiment of gratitude to the learned university.

My college career was, therefore, more brief than brilliant; for I was "expelled" on the very same day that I "entered."

With the "world before me where to choose," I stepped out into the classic precincts of College Green, fully assured of one fact, that "Town" could scarcely treat me more harshly than "Gown." I felt, too, that I had passed through a kind of ordeal; that my ducking, like the ceremonies on crossing the line, was a kind of masonic ordinance, indispensable to my opening career; and, that thus, I had got successfully through one at least of my "trials."

A species of filial instinct suggested to me the propriety of seeing Newgate, where my father lay, awaiting the arrival of the convict ship that was to convey him to Van Dieman's Land: and thither I accordingly repaired,—not to enter, but simply to gaze, with a very awe-struck imagination, upon that doubly-barred cage of human ferocity and crime.

In itself, the circumstance has nothing worthy of record, nor should I mention it, save, that to the deep impression of that morning, do I owe a certain shrinking horror of all great crime: that impression has been of incalculable benefit to me throughout life.

I strained my eyes to mark, if, amid the faces close pressed against the strong bars, I could recognise that of my parent; but in vain: there was a terrible sameness in the features, as if the individual had sunk in the criminal, that left all discrimination difficult; and so, I turned away, satisfied that I had done a son's part most completely.

CHAPTER V.

A PEEP AT "HIGH AND LOW COMPANY."

I HAVE often heard it observed, that one has as little to do with the choice of his mode of life, as with the name he receives at baptism. I rather incline to the opinion that this is true. My own very varied, and somewhat dissimilar, occupations were certainly far less the result of any preconceived plan or scheme, than the mere "turn-up" of the rolling die of Fortune.

It was while revolving a species of fatalism in this wise, and calmly assuring myself that I was not born to be starved, that I strolled along Merrion Square on the same afternoon of my expulsion from Trinity and visit to Newgate.

There were brilliant equipages, cavaliers, and ladies on horseback; handsome houses, with balconies often thronged by attractive-looking occupants; and vast crowds of gaily-dressed persons promenaded within the square itself, where a military band performed; in fact, there was more than enough to interest and amuse one of higher pretensions in the scale of pleasure than myself.

While I was thus gazing on this brilliant panorama of the out-door life of a great city, and wondering and guessing what precise object thus brought people together—for no feature of a market, or a fair, or any festive occupation solved the difficulty—I was struck by a class of characters who seemed to play the subordinate parts of the drama—a set of ragged, ill fed, half-starved boys, who followed in crowds each new arrival on horseback, and eagerly sought permission to hold his horse when he dismounted. The contrast of those

mangy-looking attendants to the glossy-coated and handsomely-caparisoned steeds they led about, being too remarkable to escape notice. Although a very fierce rivalry prevailed amongst them, they seemed a species of organised guild, who constituted a distinct walk in life, and indignantly resented the attempt of some two or three "voluntaries" who showed a wish to join the fraternity.

I sat against the rails of the square, studying with some curiosity little details of their etiquette, and their strange conventionalities. A regular corps of them stood in front of me, canvassing with all the eager volubility of their craft for the possession of a handsome thorough-bred pony, from which a young officer, in a cavalry undress, was about to dismount.

"I'm your own boy, Captain! I'm Tim, sir!" cried one, with a leer of most familiar intimacy.

"'Tis me towld ye about Miss O'Grady, sir," shouted another, preferring another and a stronger claim.

"I'm the boy caught your mare the day ye was thrown, Captain!" insinuated a third, exhibiting a want of tact in the reminiscence that drew down many a scoff upon him from his fellows; for these ragged and starving curs had a most lively sense of the use of flattery.

"Off with you!—stand off!" said the young dragoon, in a threatening tone, "let that fellow take my mare;" and he pointed to me, as I sat, a patient but unconcerned spectator of the scene. Had a medical consultation been suddenly set aside on the eve of a great surgical operation, and the "knife" committed to the unpractised hand of a new bystander, the breach of etiquette and the surprise could scarce have been greater. The gang stared at me with most undisguised contempt, and a perfect volley of abuse and irony followed me as I hastened to obey the summons.

It has been very often my fortune in life, to take a position for which I neither had submitted to the usual probationary study, nor possessed the necessary acquirement; but I believe this my first step in the very humble walk of a "horse-boy," gave me more pain than ever did any subsequent one. The criticisms on my dress, my walk, my country look, my very shoes—my critics wore none—were all poignant and bitter; and I verily believe, such is the force of ridicule, I should have preferred the rags and squalor of the initiated, at that moment, to the warm gray frieze and blue worsted stockings of my country costume.

I listened attentively to the young officer's directions how I was to walk his mare, and where; and then assuming a degree of indifference to sarcasm I was far from feeling, moved away from the spot in sombre dignity. The Captain—the title is generic—was absent about an hour; and when he returned seemed so well pleased with my strict obedience to his orders, that he gave me a shilling, and desired me to be punctually at the same hour and the same place on the day following.

It was now dark; the lamplighter had begun his rounds, and I was just congratulating myself that I should escape my persecutors, when I saw them approaching in a body. In an instant I was surrounded, and assailed with a torrent of questions, as to who I was—where I came from—what brought me there—and lastly, and with more eagerness than all besides—what did "the Captain" give me? As I answered this query first, the others were not pressed; and it being voted that I should expend the money on the fraternity, by way of entrance-fee, or, as they termed it, "paying my footing," away we set in a body to a distant part of the town, remote from all its better and more spacious thoroughfares, and among a chaos of lanes and alleys, called the "Liberties." If the title were conferred for the excessive and unlimited freedoms permitted to the inhabitants, it was no misnomer. On my very entrance into it I perceived the perfect free and easy which prevailed.

A dense tide of population thronged the close, confined passages, mostly of hodmen, bricklayers' laborers, and scavengers, with old-clothes-men, beggars, and others, whose rollicking air and daring look bespoke more hazardous modes of life.

My companions wended their way through the dense throng, like practiced travellers, often cutting off an angle by a dive through the two doors of a whiskey shop, and occasionally making a great short-cut, by penetrating through a house and the court behind it—little exploits in geography expiated by a volley of curses from the occupants, and sometimes an admonitory brickbat in addition.

The uniform good temper they exhibited: the easy freedom with which they submitted to the rather rough jocularities of the passers by—the usual salute being a smart slap on the crown of the head, administered by the handicraft tool of the individual, and this sometimes being an iron trowel, or a slater's hammer—could not but exalt them in my esteem as the most patient set of varlets I had ever sojourned with. To my question as to why we were going so far, and whither our journey tended, I got for answer one short reply —"We must go to 'ould Betty's.'"

Now as I would willingly spare as much of this period's recital to my reader as I can, I will content myself with stating that "ould Betty," or Betty Cobbe, was an old lady who kept a species of ordinary for the unclaimed youth of Dublin. They were fed and educated at her seminary—the washing cost little and they were certainly "done" for at the very

smallest cost, and in the most remarkably brief space of time. If ever these faint memorials of a life should be read in a certain far-off land, more than one settler in the distant bush, more than one angler in the dull stream of Swan River, will confess how many of his first sharp notions of life and manners were imbibed from the training nurture of Mrs. Elizabeth Cobbe.

Betty's proceedings for some years before I had the honor and felicity of her acquaintance, had attracted towards her the attention of the authorities.

The Colonial Secretary had possibly grown jealous; for she had been pushing emigration to Norfolk Island on a far wider scale than ever a Cabinet dreamed of; and thus, had she acquired what, in the polite language of our neighbors, is phrased the "Surveillance of the Police"—a watchful superintendence and anxious protectorate, for which, I grieve to say, she evinced the very reverse of gratitude. Betty had, in consequence, and in requirement with the spirit of the times—the most capricious spirit that ever vexed plain old-fashioned mortals—reformed her establishment; and from having opened her doors, as before, to what, in the language of East Indian advertisements, are called "a few spirited young men," she had fallen down to that small fry who, in various disguises of vagrancy and vagabondage, infest the highways of a capital.

By these disciples she was revered and venerated—their devotion was the compensation for the world's neglect, and so she felt it. To train them up with a due regard to the faults and follies of their better-endowed neighbors was her aim and object, and to such teaching her knowledge of Dublin life and people largely contributed.

Her original walk had been minstrelsy; she was the famous ballad-singer of Drogheda-street, in the year of the rebellion of '98. She had been half a dozen times imprisoned—some said that she had even visited "Beresford's riding school," where the knout was in daily practice, but this is not so clear; certain it is, both her songs and sympathy had always been on the patriotic side. She was the terror of Protestant ascendancy for many a year long.

Like Homer, she sung her own verses; or if they were made for her, the secret of the authorship was never divulged. For several years previous to the time I now speak of, she had abandoned the Muses—save on some special and striking occasions, when she would come before the world with some lyric, which, however, did little more than bear the name of its once famed composer.

So much for the past. Now to the present history of Betty Cobbe.

In a large unceilinged room, with a great fire blazing on the hearth over which a huge pot of potatoes was boiling, sat Betty, in a straw chair. She was evidently very old, as her snow-white hair and lustreless eye bespoke; but the fire of a truculent, unyielding spirit still warmed her blood, and the sharp ringing voice told that she was decided to wrestle for existence to the last, and would never "give in" until fairly conquered.

Betty's chair was the only one in the chamber; the rest of the company disposed them classically in the recumbent posture, or sat, like primitive Christians, cross-legged. A long deal table, sparingly provided with wooden plates and a few spoons, occupied the middle of the room; and round the walls were several small bundles of straw, which I soon learned were the property of private individuals.

"Come along, till I show ye to ould Betty," said one of the varlets to me, as he pushed his way through the crowded room; for already several other gangs had arrived, and were exchanging recognitions.

"She's in a sweet temper, this evening," whispered another, as we passed. "The Polis was here a while ago, and took up 'Danny White,' and threatened to break up the whole establishment."

"The Devil a thing at all they'll take us of our institushans," said a bow-legged little blackguard, with the "Evening Freeman," written round his hat,—for he was an attaché of that journal.

"Ould Betty was crying all the evening," said the former speaker; by this time we had gained the side of the fire-place, where the old lady sat.

"Mother! mother, I say!" cried my guide, touching her elbow gently; then stooping to her ear, he added, "Mother Betty!"

"'Eh! Who's callin' me?" said the hag, with her hand aloft. "I'm here, my lord, neither ashamed nor afeared to say my name."

"She's wanderin'," cried another; "she thinks she's in Coort."

"Bette Cobbe! I say. It's me!" said my introducer, once more.

The old woman turned fiercely round, and her dimmed and glassy eyes, bloodshot from excess and passion, seemed to flare up into an angry gleam, as she said, "You dirty thief! is it you that's turnin' informer agin me; you, that I took up out of your mother's arms, in Green's-street, when she fainted at the cutting down of yer father? Your father," added she, "that murdered ould Meredith!"

The boy, a hardened and bold-featured fellow, became lividly pale, but never spoke.

"Yes, my lord," continued she, still following the theme of her own wild fancies; "it's James Butterley's boy! Butterley that was hanged!' and she shook and rocked with a fiendish exultation at the exposure.

"Many of us doesn't know what bekem of

our fathers!" said a sly-looking, old-fashioned creature, whose height scarcely exceeded two feet, although evidently near manhood in age.

"Who was yours, Mickey?" cried another.

"Father Glynn, of Luke-street," growled out the imp, with a leer.

"And yours?" said another, dragging me forward, directly in front of Betty.

"Con Cregan, of Kilbeggan," said I, boldly.

"Success to ye, my bouchal!" said the old hag; "and so you're a son of Con., the informer." She looked sternly at me for a few seconds, and then in a slower and more deliberate tone, added, "I'm forty years, last Lady-day, living this way, and keepin' company with all sorts of thieves, and rogues, and blaguards, and worse—ay, far worse besides; but may I never see glory if an informer, or his brat, was under the roof afore!"

The steadfast decision of look and voice as she spoke seemed to impress the bystanders, who fell back and gazed at me with that kind of shrinking terror which honest people sometimes exhibit at the contact of a criminal.

During the pause of some seconds, while this endured, my sense of abject debasement was at the very lowest. To be the Paria of such a society, was indeed a most distinctive infamy.

"Are you ashamed of your father? tell me that!" cried the hag, shaking me roughly by one shoulder.

"It is not here, and before the like of these," said I, looking round at the ragged, unwashed assemblage, "that I should feel shame! or if I did, it is to find myself among them!"

"That's my boy! that's my own spirited boy!" cried the old woman, dragging me towards her. "Faix, I seen the time we'd have made somethin' out of you. Howld yer tongues, ye vagabonds; the child's right,—yer a dirty mean crew! Them!" said she, pointing to me; "them was the kind of chaps I used to have, long ago; that wasn't afeard of all the Beresfords, and Major Sirr, and the rest of them. Singing every night on Carlisle Bridge, 'The wearin' of the green,' or 'Tralal-la, the French is coming;' and when they were big and worn men, ready to turn out for ould Ireland. Can ye read, avick?"

"Yes, and write," answered I, proudly.

"To be sure ye can," muttered she, half to herself: "is it an informer's child—not know the first rules of his trade!"

"Tear and ages, mother!" cried out the decrepit imp called Mickey; "we're starvin for the meat!"

"Sarve it up!" shouted the hag, with a voice of command; and she gave three knocks with her crutch on the corner of the table.

Never was command more promptly obeyed. A savory mess of that smoking compound, called "Irish stew," was ladled out on the trenchers, and speedily disposed around the table, which at once was surrounded by the guests—a place being made for myself by an admonitory stroke of Betty's crutch on the red head of a very hungry juvenile, who had jostled me in his anxiety to get near the table.

Our meal had scarcely drawn to its close, when the plates were removed, and preparations made for a new party; nor had I time to ask the reason, when a noisy buz of voices without, announced the coming of a numerous throng. In an instant they entered; a number of girls, of every age, from mere child to womanhood,—a ragged, tattered, reckless-looking set of creatures, whose wild high spirits not even direst poverty could subdue While some exchanged greetings with their friends of the other sex, others advanced to talk to Betty, or stood to warm themselves around the fire, until their supper, a similar one to our own, was got ready. My curiosity as to whence they came in such a body, was satisfied by learning that they were employed at the "Mendicity Institution" during the day, and set free at nightfall to follow the bent of their own, not over well-regulated, tastes. These creatures were the ballad-singers of the city; and sometimes alone, sometimes in company with one of the boys, they were wont to take their stand in some public thoroughfare; not only the character of the singer, but the poetry itself taking the tone of the street; so that while some daring bit of town scandal caught the cars of College Green, a "bloody murder," or a "dying speech," formed the attraction of Thomas-street and the "Poddle."

Many years afterwards in the chequered page of my existence, when I have sat at lordly tables and listened to the sharpened wit and polished raillery of the high-born and the gifted, my mind has often reverted to that beggar-horde, and thought how readily the cutting jest was answered, how soon repartee followed attack,—what quaint fancies, what droll conceits passed through those brains where one would have deemed there was no room for aught save brooding guilt and sad repining!

As night closed in, the assembly broke up. some issued forth to their stations as ballad singers; some in pure vagabond spirit to stroll about the streets; while others, of whom I was one, lay down upon the straw, to sleep, without a dream, till daylight.

CHAPTER VI.

"VIEWS OF LIFE."

When I woke the next morning, it was a few minutes before I could thoroughly re-

member where I was, and how I came there; my next thought was the grateful one that if the calling was not a very exalted one, I had at least secured a mode of living, and that my natural acuteness, and better still, my fixed resolve within me "to get forward in the world," would not permit me to pass my days in the ignoble craft of a "horse-boy."

I found that the "walk," like every other career, had certain guiding rules and principles by which it was regulated. Not only were certain parts of the town interdicted to certain gangs, but it was a recognised rule that when a particular boy was singled out, habitually, by any gentleman, that no other should endeavor to supplant him. This was the less difficult, as a perfect community of property was the rule of the order; and all monies were each night committed to the charge of "old Betty," with a scrupulous fidelity that would have have shamed many a "joint stock company."

The regular etiquette required that each youth should begin his career in the north side of the city, where the class of horsemen was of a less distinguished order, and the fees proportionably lower. Thence he was promoted to the Four Courts; from which as the highest stage, he arrived at Merrion-square and its neighborhood. Here the visitors were either the young officers of the garrison, the Castle officials, or a wealthy class of country gentlemen, all of whom gave sixpences; while, in the cold quarter of northern Dublin, penny-pieces were the only currency. If the public differed in these three places, so did the claims of the aspirant: a grave, quiet, almost sombre look, being the grand qualification in the one: while an air of daring effrontery was the best recommendation in the other. For while the master in chancery or the "six clerk" would only commit his bob-tailed pony to a discreet-faced varlet of grave exterior, the dashing aide-de-camp on his thoroughbred, singled out the wild imp with roguish eye and flowing hair, that kept up with him from the barrack in a sharp canter, and actually dived under a carriage-pole, and upset an apple-stall, to be "up" in time to wait on him; and while yet breathless and blown, was ready with voluble tongue to give him the current news of the neighborhood—who was in the Square, or out dining; who had arrived, or why they were absent. To do this task with dexterity and tact, was the crowning feature of the craft, and in such hasty journalism some attained a high proficiency, seasoning their scandal with sly bits of drollery, or quaint allusions to the current topics of the day. To succeed in this, it was necessary to know the leading characters of the Town, and the circumstances of their private history; and these I set myself to learn with the assiduity of a study. Never did a Bath Master of the Ceremonies devote himself more ardently to the investigation of the faults and foibles of his company—never did young lady, before coming out, more patiently pore over Debrett, than did I pursue my researches into Dublin life and manners; until at last, what between oral evidence and shrewd observation, I had a key to the secret mysteries of nearly every well-known house in the city.

None like me to explain why the father of the dashing family in Stephen's Green only appeared of a Sunday; how the blinds of No.18 were always drawn at three o'clock; and what meant the hackney-coach at the canal bridge every Thursday afternoon. From the gentleman that always wore a geranium leaf in his coat, to the lady who dropped her glove in the Square, I knew them all. Nor was it merely that I possessed the knowlege, but I made it to be felt. I did not hoard my wealth like a miser, but I came forth like a great capitalist to stimulate enterprise and encourage credit. Had I been a malicious spirit, there is no saying what amount of mischief I might have worked—what discoveries anticipated—what awkward meetings effected. I was, however, what the French call a "bon diable," and most generously took the side of the poor sinner against the strong spirit of right. How many a poor subaltern had been put in arrest for wearing "mufti," had I not been there to apprise him that town-major White was coming. How often have I saved a poor college-man from a heavy fine, who, with his name on the sick-list, was flirting in the "Square." How have I hastened, at the risk of my neck, between crashing carriages and prancing horses, to announce to a fair lady lounging in her britska, that the 'Counsellor,' her husband was unexpectedly returning from court an hour earlier than his wont. I have rescued sons from fathers, daughters from mothers; the pupil from his guardian, the debtor from his creditor; in a word, I was a kind of ragged guardian angel, who watched over the peccadiloes of the capital. My "amour propre,"—if such an expression of such a quality may be conceded to one like me,—was interested in the cause of all who did wrong. I was the Quixote of all deceivers.

With "Con. on the lookout," none feared surprise; and while my shrewdness was known to be first-rate, my honesty was alike unimpeachable. It may readily be believed how with acquirements and talents like these, I no longer pursued the humble walk of "horse-holder;" indeed I rarely touched a bridle, or if I did so, it was only to account for my presence in such localities as I might need an excuse to loiter in. I was at the head of my profession; and the ordinary salutation of the cavaliers, "Con., get me a fellow to hold this mare," showed that none presumed to expect the ignoble service at my own hands

To some two or three of my early patrons, men who had noticed me in my obscurity, I would still condescend to yield this attention; a degree of grateful acknowledgment on my part, which they always rewarded most handsomely. Among these was the young officer whose pony I had held on the first night of my arrival. He was an Honorable Captain De Courcy, very well-looking, well-mannered, and very poor,—member of the commander-in-chief's staff, who eked out his life by the aid of his noble birth and his wits together.

At the time I speak of, his visits to Merrion-square were devoted to the cause of a certain Mrs. Mansergh, the young and beautiful wife of an old, red-faced, fouled-mouthed Queen's Counsel, at least forty years her senior. The scandal was, that her origin had been of the humblest, and that, seen by accident on circuit, she had caught the fancy of the old lawyer, a well-known connoisseur in female beauty. However that might be, she was now about two years married, and already recognised as the reigning beauty of the vice-regal court and the capital.

The circumstances of her history—her low origin—her beauty, and the bold game she played—all invested her with a great interest in my eyes. I used to flatter myself there was a kind of similarity in at least our early fortunes; and I enlisted myself in her cause with an ardor that I could not explain to myself. How often, as she passed in her splendid barouche,—the best-appointed and handsomest equipage of the capital,—have I watched her, as, wrapped in her Cashmere, she reclined in all the voluptuous indolence of her queenly state; glorying to think that *she*—she, whose proud glance scarce noticed the obsequious throng that bowed with uncovered heads around her,—that she was perhaps not better nurtured than myself. Far from envious jealousy at her better fortune, I exulted in it; she was a kind of beacon set on a hill to guide and cheer me. I remember well, it was an actual triumph to me one day, as the Viceroy, a gay and dashing nobleman, not over scrupulous where the claim of beauty was present, stopped, with all its glittering staff, beside her carriage, and in playful raillery began to chide her for being absent from the last drawing-room. "We missed you sadly, Mrs. Mansergh," said he, smiling his most seductive smile; "pray tell my friend Mansergh, that he shows himself a most lukewarm supporter of the Government, who denies us the fairest smiles of the Capital."

"In truth, my Lord, he would not give me a new train, and I refused to wear the old one," said she, laughing.

"Downright disloyalty, upon my honor," said the Viceroy, with well got-up gravity.

"Don't you think so, my lord?" rejoined she, "so I even told him that I'd represent the case to your Excellency, who I'm sure would not refuse a velvet robe to the wife, while you gave a silk gown to the husband."

"It will be the very proudest of my poor prerogatives," said he, bowing, while a flash of crimson lit up his pleased features: "your favorite color is——"

"I should like to wear your lordship's," said she, with a look the most finished coquette might envy, so admirably blended were trust and timid bashfulness.

What he replied I could not catch. There was a flattering courtesy, however, in his smile, and in the familiar motion of the hand with which he bade "good-bye," that were enough to show me that he, the haughty mirror of his sovereign, did not think it beneath him to bandy compliments and exchange soft looks with the once humble beauty. From that time out, my whole thoughts day and night were centred in her; and I have passed hours long, fancying all the possible fortunes for which destiny might intend her. It seemed to me as though she were piloting out the course for me in life, and that her success was the earnest of my own. Often when a ball or a great reception was given by her, have I sat, cold, shivering, and hungry, opposite the house, watching with thrilling interest, all the equipages as they came, and hearing the high and titled names called aloud by the servants, and thinking to myself, "Such are *her* associates *now*. These great and haughty personages are here to do honor to *her*, their lovely hostess; and *she*, but a few years back, if report spoke truly, was scarcely better off than I was—I—myself."

Only they who have a sanguine, hopeful temperament will be able to understand how the poor, houseless, friendless boy—the very outcast of the world—the convict's child—could ever dare indulge in such day-dreams of future greatness. But I had set the goal before my eyes,—the intermediate steps to it, I left to fortune. The noble bearing and polished graces of the high and wealthy, which to my humble associates seemed the actual birthright of the great, I perceived could all be acquired. There was no prescriptive claim in any class to the manners of high breeding; and why should not I, if fortune favored, be as good a gentleman as the best? In other particulars, all that I had observed showed me no wondrous dissimilarity of true feeling in the two classes. The gentleman to be sure, did not swear, like the common fellow; but, on the race-course, or the betting-ground, I had seen, to the full, as much deceit as ever I witnessed in my 'own order.' There was faithlessness beneath Valenciennes lace, and velvet, as well as beneath brown stuff, and check; and a spirit of backbiting, that we ragged folk knew nothing of, seemed a current pastime in better circles.

What then should debar me from that class? Not the manners, which I could feign, nor the vices, which I could feel. To be like them, was only to be of them,—such, at least, was then my conviction and my theory.

Any one who will take the pains to reflect on and analyse the mode of thinking I have here mentioned, will see how necessarily it tends rather to depress those above, than to elevate those beneath. I did not purpose to myself any education in high and noble sentiments, but simply the performance of a part, which I deemed easy to assume. The result soon began to tell: I felt a degree of contemptuous hatred for the very persons I had once revered as almost demigods. I no longer looked up to the "Gentleman" as such to the right divine, but by accident; and I fostered the feeling by the writings of every radical newspaper I could come at. All the levelling doctrines of socialism—all the plausibilities of equality—became as great truths to me; and I found a most ready aptitude in my mind, to square the fruits of my personal observation to these pleasant theories. The one question recurred every morning as I arose, and remained unanswered each night as I lay down, "Why should I hold a horse, and why should another man ride one?" I suppose the difficulty has puzzled wiser heads; indeed, since I mooted it to myself, it has caused some trouble in the world, nor, writing now as I do in the year of grace '48, do I suppose the question is yet answered.

I have dwelt, perhaps, too long on this exposition of my feelings; but as my subsequent life was one of far more action than reflection, the indulgent reader will pardon the prosiness, not simply as explaining the history which follows, but also as affording a small breathing space in a career where there were few "halts."

I have said that I began to conceive a great grudge against all who were well off in life, and against none did I indulge this aversion more strongly than "the Captain," my first patron—almost my only one. Though he had always employed me—and none ever approached him save myself—he had never condescended to the slightest act of recognition beyond the tap on my head with his gold-mounted whip, and a significant nod where to lead his pony. No sign of his, no look, no gesture, ever confessed to the fact that I was a creature of his own species, that I had had a share in the great firm which, under the name of Adam & Co., has traded so long and industriously.

If I were sick, or cold, or hungry, it mattered not—my cheek might be sunk with want or care—my rags might drip with rain, or freeze with sleet—he never noticed them; yet, if the wind played too roughly with his Arab's mane, or the silky tasseled tail, he saw it at once. If her coat stirred with the chill breeze, he would pat and pet her. It was evident enough which had the better existence.

If these thoughts chafed and angered me at first, at least they served to animate and rouse my spirit. He who wants to rise in life must first feel the sharp spur of a wrong—there is nothing like it, to give vigor and energy to his motions. When I came to this conclusion, I did not wait long to put the feeling into action—and it was thus—but a new chapter of my life deserves a new chapter of my history

CHAPTER VII.

A BOLD STROKE FOR AN OPENING IN THE WORLD.

As regular as the day itself did I wait at the corner of Merrion-square, at three o'clock, the arrival of Captain De Courcy, who came punctual to the instant; indeed, the clatter of the pony's hoofs, as he cantered along, always announced the striking of the Post-office clock. To dismount, and fling me the bridle, with a short nod of the head, in the direction he wished me to walk the animal, was the extent of recognition ever vouchsafed me; and as I never ventured upon even a word with him, our intercourse was of the simplest possible kind. There was an impassive quietude about his pale cold features that awed me. I never saw him smile but once; it was when the mare seized me by the shoulder, and tore with her teeth a great piece of my ragged coat away; then, indeed, he did vouchsafe to give a faint, listless smile, as he said to his pampered nag, "Fie, fie! What a dirty feeder you are!"

Very little notice on his part—the merest act of recognition, a look, a monosyllable, would have been enough to satisfy me—anything in short, which might acknowledge that we were part of the same great chain; no matter how many links might lie between us.

I do not wish it to be inferred that I had any distinct right to such an acknowledgment, nor that any real advantage would have accrued to me from obtaining it—far from that; very little consideration might have induced me to be contented with my station; and, if so, instead of writing these notes in a boudoir with silk hangings, and—but this is anticipating with a vengeance! And now to go back.

After three hours of a cold wait, on a rainy and dreary afternoon, the only solace to my hunger being the imaginative one, of reflecting on the pleasure of those happy mortals

who were sitting down to dinner in the various houses along the Square, and fancying to myself the blessed state of tranquillity it must impart to a man's nature to see a meal of appetizing excellence, from which no call of business, no demand of any kind could withdraw him. And what speculations did I indulge as to the genial pleasantry that must abound: the happy wit, the joyous ease of such gatherings, when three or four carriages at a door, would bespeak the company at such a dinner party.

At last, out came my Captain, with a haste and flurry of manner quite unusual. He did not, as was his constant custom, pass his hand along the mare's neck, to feel her coat, nor did he mutter a single word of coaxing to her as he mounted. He flung himself with a jerk into the saddle, and rapping my knuckles sharply with the gold knob of his whip, pettishly cried, "Let her go, sirrah!" and cantered away. I stood for some moments motionless, my mind in that strange state when the first thought of rebellion has entered, and the idea of reprisal has occurred. I was about to go away, when the drawing-room window, straight above me, was opened, and a lady stepped out upon the balcony. It was too dark to discern either her features or her dress; but a certain instinct told me it was Mrs. Mansergh. "Are you Captain De Courcy's boy?" said she, in a sweet and subdued voice. I replied in the affirmative, and she went on, "You know his quarters, at the Royal Hospital? Well, go there at once,—as speedily as you can, and give him this note." She hesitated for a second, as if uncertain what to say, and then added, "It is a note he dropped from his pocket by accident."

"I'll do it, ma'am," said I; catching the letter and the half-crown—which she had half inserted in the envelope, to give it weight—"You may trust me perfectly." Before the words were well uttered, she had retired; the window was closed; the curtain drawn, and except the letter and the coin in my fingers nothing remained to show that the whole had not been a trick of my foolish brain.

My immediate impulse was to fulfil my mission. I even started off at full speed to do so; but as I turned the corner of the square, the glare of a bright gas lamp suggested the temptation of, at least, a look at my despatches; and what was my astonishment to find, that on this note, which had dropped by "accident" from the Captain's pocket, the superscription was scarcely dry—in the very act of catching I had blotted the words! This, of course, was no affair of mine; but it evinced deception—and deception at certain moments becomes a dangerous injury. There are times when the mind feels deceit to be an outrage. The stormy passions of the fury-driven mob—reckless and headstrong—show this—and the most terrible moment in all political convulsions is, when the people feel, or even suspect, that they have been tricked. My frame of mind was exactly in that critical stage. A minute before, I was ready to yield any obedience—tender any service; and now, of a sudden—without the slightest real cause, or from anything which could in the remotest way affect me—I had become a rebel. Let the reader forgive the somewhat tedious analysis of a motive, since it comes from one who has long studied the science of moral chemistry, and made most of his experiments—as the rule directs—in "ignoble bodies."

My whole resolve was changed. I would not deliver the note. Not that I had any precise idea wherefore, or that I had the least conception what other course I should adopt: I was a true disciple of revolt—I rebelled for very rebellion sake.

Betty Cobbe's was more than usually brilliant on that evening. A race, which was to come off at Kingstown the next day, had attracted a numerous company—in the various walks of horse boys, bill-carriers, and pickpockets—all of whom hoped to find a ready harvest on the morrow. The conversation was, therefore, entirely of a sporting character: anecdotes of the turf and the ring went round, and in the many curious devices of roguery and fraud might be read the prevailing taste of that select company. Combinations were also formed to raise the rate of payment, and many ingenious suggestions thrown out, about turning cattle loose, slacking girths, stealing curb chains, and so on, from that antagonistic part of the public who preferred holding their horses themselves, to entrusting them to the profession.

The race itself, too, engrossed a great share of interest; and a certain Fergusson was talked of with all the devotedness and affection of a dear friend. Nor, as I afterwards learned, was the admiration a merely blind one, as he was a most cunning adept in all the wily stratagems by which such men correct the wilful ways of Fortune.

How my companions chuckled over stories of "rotten ditches," that were left, purposely to betray the unwary: swinging gates, that would open at the least touch, and inevitably catch the horse that attempted to clear,—if the hoof but grazed them; bog holes, to swamp, and stone fences, to smash,—had their share of approval: but a drain dug eight feet deep, and that must certainly break the back of the horse, if not of the rider also, who made a "mistake" over it, seemed the triumph, which carried away the suffrages of the whole assembly.

Now, although I had seen far more of real sport and horsemanship than the others, these narratives were, for the most part, new to me; and I listened with a high interest to every

scheme and trick by which cunning can overreach and outmanœuvre simplicity. The admiration of adroit knavery is the first step on the road to fraud; and he who laughs heartily at a clever trick, seldom suspects how he is "booking himself" for the same road. For my own part, neither were my principles so fixed, nor my education so careful, that I did not conceive a very high respect for the rogue, and a very contemptuous disdain for his victim.

Morning came, and a bright sunny one it was, with a keen frost, and that kind of sharp air that invigorates and braces both mind and body. The crisp clear outline of every tree and building seen against the deep blue sky; the sparkling river, with its clean bed of bright gravel; and the ruddy faces one meets, are all of a nature to suggest pleasant and cheerful thoughts. Even we—we, with our frail garments, and chapped hands, felt it, and there was an alacrity of movement, and a bounding step, a gay laugh, and a merry voice everywhere. All set out for Kingstown, in the neighborhood of which the race was to come off. I alone remained behind, resisting every entreaty of my companions to join them,—I cannot yet say why I did so. It was partly that long habit had made my attendance upon "the Captain" a duty; partly, perhaps, that some vague notion that the letter, of which I still kept possession, should be delivered by me at last.

The town was quite empty on that day: not a carriage, nor a horseman to be seen. There were very few on foot, and the square was deserted of all, save its nursery population. I never felt a more tedious morning. I had full time, as I loitered along all alone, to contrast my solitude with the enjoyment my companions were at that same moment pursuing.

True to the instant, Captain de Courcy cantered up; his face I thought graver, and more stern than I had ever seen it before. As he dismounted, my hand, in holding his stirrup, soiled the brilliant polish of his lacquered boot; he perceived it, and rewarded my awkwardness with a smart cut of his whip. A minute before, I had made up my mind to give him the note: now, torture itself would not have torn it from me.

I followed him with my eyes till he entered the house—not over-distinctly, it is true, for they were somewhat blinded by tears, that would, in spite of me, come forth. The sensation was a most painful one; and I am heartily glad to confess, I have seldom experienced a recurrence of it. Scarcely was the hall-door closed on him, when I remembered that he would soon hear of the note, which I had failed to deliver, and that, in all likelihood, a heavy punishment awaited me. My offence was a grave one. What was to be done? turn the mare loose and fly, or patiently await my fate? Either were bad enough; the latter certainly the less advisable of the two. A third course soon suggested itself, doubtless inspired by that most mischief-working adage, which says, that one may be "as well hanged for the sheep as the lamb."

I therefore voted for the "larger animal," and to satisfy myself that I was honest to my own convictions, I immediately proceeded to act upon them. I led the mare quietly along to the angle of the Square, and then turning into the next street, I shortened the stirrups, mounted, and rode off.

"Set a beggar on horseback ——" says the proverb; and although the consequence is only meant figuratively, I have a suspicion that it might bear a literal reading. I rode away, at first, at a trot, and then, striking into a brisk canter, I took the road to Kingstown, whither, even yet, some horsemen were hastening.

Every stride of the bounding animal elevated my spirits and nerved my courage. The foot-passengers, that plodded wearily along, I looked down upon as inferior,—with the horsemen on either side I felt a kind of equality. How differently does one view life from the saddle and from the ground! The road became more thronged as I advanced, thicker crowds pressed eagerly forward, and numerous carriages obstructed the way. At another moment, perhaps, I should have attracted attention, but stranger sights were passing at every instant, and none troubled their heads about the "ragged urchin on the thorough-bred."

The crowd at last became so dense, that horsemen were fain to desert the high road, and take short cuts wherever an open gate, or an easily-crossed fence, opened the way. Following a group of well-mounted gentlemen, I cleared a low wall into a spacious grass field, over which we cantered; and beyond this, by leaping an easy ditch, into another of the same kind, till at length we saw the vast crowds that blackened a hill in front, and, beneath them, could distinguish the fluttering flags that marked the course, and the large floating standard of the winning-post.

What a grand sight was that! for what is so imposing a spectacle as vast myriads of people stirred by one interest, and animated by one absorbing passion? Every one has now-a-days seen something of the kind,—therefore I shall not linger to tell of the impression it made upon my youthful senses. The first race had already come off; but the second, and the great event of the day, was yet to take place.

It was a steeple-chase, by "gentlemen riders," over a very severe line of country; several fences of most break-neck character

having been added to the natural difficulties of the ground.

Mounted on my splendid barb, I rode boldly forward till I reached the field through which the first ditch ran,—a deep and wide trench, backed by a low rail,—a very formidable leap, and requiring both stride and strength to clear it.

"Some of 'em will fall off, when they sees that!" said an English groom, with a knowing wink; and the words were only out, when, at a "slapping canter," the riders were seen coming down the gently sloping hill. Three rode nearly abreast, then came a single horseman, and, after him, an indiscriminate mass, whose bright and parti-colored jackets glowed like a rainbow.

I watched them with a breathless interest: as they came nearer they widened the space between them, and each cast a rapid but stealthy glance at his neighbor. One—he rode a powerful black horse—took the lead, and dashing at the leap, his horse rose too soon, and fell, chested against the opposite bank, the rider under him; the next swerved suddenly round and balked; the third did the same; so that the leading horseman was now he who rode alone at first. Quickening his speed as he came on, he seemed actually to fly; and when he did take the fence, it was like the bound of a cannon-shot—up, and over, at once! Of the rest, some two or three followed well; others pulled short up: while the larger share, in various forms of accident and misfortune, might be seen either struggling in the brook, or endeavoring to rescue their horses from the danger of broken legs and backs.

I did not wait to watch them; my interest was in those who gallantly led onward, and who now, for some four in number, rode almost abreast. Among these, my favorite was the sky-blue jacket, who had led the way over the dyke, and him did I follow with straining eyes and palpitating heart. They were at this moment advancing towards a wall,—a high and strong one, and I thought, in the slackened space, and more gathered up stride, I could read the caution a difficult leap enforced.

A brown jacket with white sleeves was the first to charge it; and after a tremendous scramble, in which the wall, the horse, and the rider were all tumbling together, he got over; but the animal went dead lame, and the rider, dismounting, led him off the ground.

Next came blue jacket, and just at the very rise, his mare balked, and, at the top of her speed, ran away along the side of the wall. A perfect roar of angry disappointment arose from the multitude, for she was the favorite of the country people, who were loudly indignant at this mischance.

"The race is sold!" cried one.

"Beatagh"—this was the rider—"pulled her round himself! the mare never was known to refuse a fence!"

"I say you're both wrong!" cried a third; whose excited manner showed he was no indifferent spectator of the scene. "She never will take her first wall fairly; after that she goes like a bird!"

"What a confounded nuisance to think that no one will lead her over the fence! Is there no one here will show her the way?" said he, looking around.

"There's the only fellow I see, whose neck can afford it!" said another, pointing to me. "He, evidently, was never born to be killed by a steeple-chase!"

"Devilish well mounted he is, too!" remarked some one else.

"Holloa, my smart boy?" said he who before alluded to the mare as a bolter; "try your nag over that wall yonder—go it boldly. Let her have her head, and give her a sharp cut as she rises. Make way there, gentlemen! Let the boy have fair play, and I'll wager a five pound note he does it! You shall have half the stakes too if you win!" added he. These were the last words I heard, for the crowd clearing in front, opened for me to advance, and without a moment's hesitation of any kind, I dashed my heels to the mare's flanks, and galloped forward. A loud shout, and a perfect shower of whips on the mare's quarter from the bystanders, put all question of pulling up beyond reach of possibility. In a minute more I was at the wall, and, ere well I knew, over it. A few seconds after, the blue jacket was beside me. "Well done, my lad! You've earned twenty guineas if I win the race! Lead the way a bit, and let your mare choose her ground when she leaps." This was all he said; but such words of encouragement never fell on my ears before.

Before us were the others, now reduced to three in number, and evidently holding their stride and watching each other,—never for a moment suspecting that the most feared competitor was fast creeping up behind them. One fence separated us, and over this I led again, sitting my mare with all the composure of an old steeple-chaser. "Out of the way, now!" cried my companion, "and let *me* at them!" and he tore past me at a tremendous pace, shouting out as he went by the rest, "Come along, lads! I'll show the way!"

And so he did! With all their efforts, and they were bold ones, they never overtook him afterwards. His mare took each fence flying, and as her speed was much greater than the others, she came in full half a minute in advance. The others arrived altogether, crestfallen and disappointed; and like all beaten men, receiving the most insulting comments from the mob, who are somewhat keen critics on misfortune. I came last, for I had

dropped behind when I was ordered; but unable to extricate my mare from the crowd, was compelled to ride the whole distance with the rest. If the losing horsemen were hooted and laughed at, *my* approach was a kind of triumphal entry. "There's the chap that led over the wall! That little fellow rode the best of them all!" "See that ragged boy on the small mare, he could beat the field this minute!"

"'Tis fifty guineas in goold ye ought to have, my chap!" said another; a sentiment the unwashed on all sides seemed most heartily to subscribe to.

"Be my soul, I'd rather be lookin' at him than the gentlemen!' said a very tattered individual, with a coat like a transparency. These, and a hundred similar comments, fell like hail-drops around; and I believe, that in my momentary triumph, I actually forgot all the dangers and perils of my offence.

It is a great occasion for rejoicing among the men of rags and wretchedness, when a member of their own order has achieved anything like fame. The assertion of their ability to enter the lists with "their betters," is the very pleasantest of all flatteries. It is, so to say, a kind of skirmish before that great battle, which, one day or other, remains to be fought between the two classes which divide mankind—those who have, and those who have not.

I little suspected that I was, to use the cant, so popular at present, "the representative of a GREAT PRINCIPLE" in my late success. I took all the praises bestowed, most literally, myself, and shook hands with all the dirty and tattered mob, fully convinced that I was a very nice fellow.

"Mister Beatagh wants to see the boy that led him over the ditch," shouted out a huge, wide-shouldered, red-faced ruffian, as he shoved the crowd right and left, to make way for the approach of the gentleman who had just won the race.

"Stand up bowld, avic!" whispered one in my ear; "and don't be ashamed to ax for your reward."

"Say ten guineas!" muttered another.

"No; but twenty!" growled out a third.

"And lashings of drink besides, for the present company!" suggested a big-headed cripple about two feet high.

"Are you the lad that took the fence before me?" cried out a smart-looking, red-whiskered young man, with a white surtout loosely thrown over his riding costume.

"Yes, sir," I replied, half modestly and half assured.

"Who are you, my boy? and where do you come from?"

"He's one of Betty Cobbe's chickens?" shouted out an old savage-faced beggar-man, who was terribly indignant at the great misdirection of public sympathy; "and a nice clutch they are."

"What is it to you, Dan, where the crayture gets his bread!" rejoined an old newsvender, who, in all likelihood, had once been a parlor boarder in the same seminary.

"Never mind *them*, but answer *me*, my lad!" said the gentleman. "If you are willing to take service, and can find any one to recommend you——"

"Sure, we'll all go bail for him—to any amount!" shouted out the little crippled fellow, from his "bowl," and certainly a most joyous burst of laughter ran through the crowd at the sentiment.

"May be ye think I am not a householder," rejoined the fellow, with a grin of assumed anger; "but haven't I my own sugar hogshead to live in, and devil receave the lodger in the same premises!"

"I see there's no chance of our being able to settle anything here," said the gentleman. "These good people think the matter more their own than ours; so, meet me to-morrow, my lad, at Dycer's, at twelve o'clock, and bring me anything that can speak for your character." As he said these few words he brushed the crowd to one side with his whip, and forcing his way, with the air of a man who would not be denied, left the place.

"And he's laving the crayture without givin' him a farden!" cried one of the mob, who suddenly saw all the glorious fabric of a carouse, and a drunken bout, disappear like a mirage.

"Oh, the 'tarnal vagabone!" shouted another, more indignantly; "to desart the child that a-way! and he that won the race for him!"

"Will yez see the little crayture wronged?" said another, who appeared by his pretentious manner to be a practised street orator. "Will yez lave the dissolute orphan" he meant desolate—'to be chayted out of his pater money? Are yez men, at all? or are yez dirty slaves of the bloody 'stokessy 'that's murderin' ould Ireland."

"We'll take charge of the orphan, and of you too, my smart fellow, if you don't brush off pretty lively!" said a policeman, as, followed by two others, he pushed through the crowd with that cool determination that seems to be actually an instinct with them. Then laying a strong hand on my collar, he went on: "How did you come by that mare, my lad?"

"She belongs to Captain de Courcy, of the Royal Hospital," said I, doing my utmost to seem calm and collected.

"We know that already; what we want to hear is what brought you here with her? It wasn't Captain de Courcy's orders."

"No, sir. I was told to hold her for him. and—and——"

"And so you rode off with her—out with

it, it saves time, my lad. Now, let me ask you another question:—Have you any notion of the crime you have just committed? do you know that it amounts to horse-stealing? and do you know what the penalty is for that offence?"

"No, sir; I knew neither one nor the other," said I resolutely; "and if I did, it doesn't matter much. As well to live upon prison diet, as to starve in the streets!"

"He's a bad 'un, I told ye that!" remarked another of the policemen. "Take him off, Grimes?" And so amid a very general but subdued murmur of pity and condolence from the crowd, I was dragged away on one side, while the mare was led off on another.

It was a terrible tumble down, from being a hero to an embryo felon! From being cheered by the populace, to being collared by a policeman! As we went along towards Dublin, on a jaunting-car, I was regaled by interesting narratives of others, who had begun life like myself, and took an abrupt leave of it in a manner by no means too decorous. The peculiarity of anecdote which pertains to each profession was strongly marked in these officers of the law; and they appeared to have studied the dark side of human nature with eyes the keenest and most scrutinizing.

I wish I could even now forget the long and dreary hours of the night that ensued, as I lay, with some fifty others, in the gaol of the station-house. The company was assuredly not select, nor their manners at all improved by the near approach of punishment. It seemed as if all the disguises of vice were thrown off at once, and that iniquity stood forth in its own true and glaring livery. I do not believe that the heart can ever experience a ruder shock, than when an unfledged criminal first hears himself welcomed into the 'Masonry' of guilt; to be claimed by such associates as a fellow-laborer; to be received as one of the brethren into the guild of vice, is really an awful blow to one's self-esteem and respect; to feel yourself inoculated with a disease, whose fatal marks are to stamp you like this one or that, sends a shuddering terror through the heart, whose cold thrill is never, in a life-long afterwards, thoroughly eradicated!

There should be a quarantine for suspected guilt, as for suspected disease; and the mere doubt of rectitude should not expose any unfortunate creature to the chances of a terrible contagion! I do not affect by this to say that I was guiltless—not in the least; but my crime should scarcely have classified me with the associates by whom I was surrounded. Nor was a night in such company the wisest mode of restoring to the path of duty one who might possibly have only slightly deviated from the straight line.

When morning came, I was marched off, with a small phalanx of other mis-doers, to the College-street office, where a magistrate presided, whose bitterest calumniators could never accuse of any undue leanings towards mercy. By him I had the satisfaction of hearing a great variety of small offences decided with a railroad rapidity, only interrupted, now and then, by a whining lamentation over the 'lenity of the legislature," that never awarded one tithe of the suitable penalty, and bewailing his own inability to do more for the criminal than send him to prison for two months, with hard labor, and harder diet to sweeten it.

At last came my name; and as I heard it shouted aloud, it almost choked me with a nervous fulness in the throat. I felt as though I was the greatest criminal in the universe, and that the whole vast assemblage had no other object or aim there, than to see me arraigned for my offence.

I was scarcely ordered to advance, before I was desired to stand back again; the prosecutor, Captain de Courcy, not being in Court. While a policeman was, therefore, despatched by the magistrate to request that he would have the kindness to appear,—for the Captain was an Honorable and an Aid de Camp—titles which the sitting justice knew well how to respect,—other cases were called and disposed of. It was nigh three o'clock, when a great bustle in the outer court, and a tremendous falling back of the dense crowd, accompanied by an ostentatious display of police zeal, heralded a group of officers, who, with ging ling spurs and banging sabretashes, made their way to the bench, and took their seats beside the justice. Many were the courtesies interchanged between the Magistrate and the Captain,—one, averring that the delay was not in the slightest degree inconvenient, the other, professing the greatest deference for the rules of Court; neither bestowing a thought upon him most deeply concerned of all.

A very brief narrative, delivered by the Captain with a most military abruptness, detailed my offence; and although not exaggerated in the slightest degree, the occasional interruptions of the magistrate served very considerably to magnify its guilt: such as, "Dear me! a favorite mare—a pure Arab—a present from your noble father, Lord Littlemore—infamous treatment—abominable case—abandoned young scoundrel!" and so on; closing with the accustomed peroration of regret, that as hanging was now done away with, he feared that the Recorder could only award me a transportation for life!

"Have you anything to say, sirrah?" said he, at last, turning towards me; "or would you rather reserve your observations for another time? as I shall certainly commit you for trial at the commission."

"I have only to suggest," said I, with an air

of most insolent composure, "that you are probably mistaken in your law. The offence with which I stand charged amounts, at most, to the minor one of breach of trust."

"What! have we got a lawyer in the dock?" said the magistrate, reddening with fear and anger together.

"I have enjoyed some opportunities of legal study, your worship," said I, "and am happy to state that my opinion, in the present instance, will not discredit the assertion. The case stands thus:—I am employed by the Honorable Captain de Courcy to perform a particular duty, which is of the distinct nature of a trust; that trust, whose importance I do not seek to extenuate, in the slightest, I fail in. I will not plead the strong temptation of a race and a great spectacle. I will not allege, as perhaps I might, the example of my companions, then reveling in all the pleasures of the day. I will simply state, that no one fact can be adduced to favor the suspicion of a meditated robbery; and that my conduct, so palpably open and public, rejects the least assumption of the kind, and at the utmost can establish nothing beyond what I am willing to plead guilty to—a breach of trust."

"Listen to the Attorney-General! by the hokey, it's himself they've in the dock!" said one.

"That's the chap can give them chapter and varse!" cried another.

"Silence there! Keep silence in the Court!' said the Justice, now really warm with passion. "I'd have you to know, sirrah," said he, addressing me, "that your petti-fogging shrewdness is anything but favorable to you, in the unfortunate position in which you stand. I shall commit you for trial; and would advise you—it is the only piece of advice I'll trouble you with—to charge some more skilful advocate with your defence, and not entrust it to the knavish flippancy of conceit and chicanery."

"I mean to have counsel, your worship," said I, resolutely; for my blood was up, and I would have argued with the twelve Judges. "I mean to have one of the first and most eminent at the bar, for my defence. Mr. Manserg, of Merrion-square, will not refuse my brief, when he sees the fee I can offer."

A regular roar of laughter filled the Court; the impudence of my speech, and my thus introducing the name of one of the very first men at the bar, as likely to concern himself for such a miserable case and object, was too much for any gravity; and when the Magistrate turned to comment upon my unparalleled assurance and impertinence to Captain de Courcy, he discovered that the Honorable Captain had left his place.

Such was the fact! The dashing Aid-de-Camp was, at that moment standing in earnest converse with myself, beside the dock.

"May I speak with this boy in another room, your worship?" said he, addressing the Court.

"Certainly, Captain de Courcy! Sergeant Biles, show Captain de Courcy into my robing-room."

The Honorable Captain did not regain his composure immediately on finding himself alone with me; on the contrary, his agitation was such, that he made two or three efforts before he could utter the few words with which he first addressed me.

"What did you mean by saying that Mr. Manserg would defend you? and what was the fee you alluded to?" were the words.

"Just what I said, sir!" said I, with the steady assurance a confidence of victory gives. "I thought it was better to have able counsel, and as I know I have the means of recompensing him, the opportunity was lucky."

"You don't pretend that you could afford to engage one like him, my lad?" said he, affecting, but very poorly, an air of easy composure. "What could *you* give him?"

"A note, sir; and although it never issued from the Bank, one not without value!"

The Captain became deadly pale; he made one step towards the door, and in a low voice of ill-restrained anger, said, "I'll have you searched, sirrah! If anything belonging to me is found upon you ——"

"No fear, sir!" said I, composedly; "I have taken precautions against that; the note is safe!"

He threw himself upon a chair, and stared at me steadily for some minutes, without a word. There we were, each scanning the other, and inwardly calculating how to win the game we were playing.

"Well!" said he at last; "What are your terms? You see I give in."

"And so best," said I; "it saves time. I ask very little from your Honor; nothing more, in fact, than to have this charge dismissed. I don't mean to wear rags all my life, and consort with vagabonds, and so, I dislike to have it said hereafter that I was ever arraigned or committed for an offence like this. You must tell the justice that it was some blunder or mistake of your orders to me; some accidental circumstance or other: I don't much care what, or how, nor will he, if the explanation comes from *you!* This done, I'll place the note in your hands within half-an-hour, and we need never see much more of each other."

"But who is to secure me that you keep your promise?"

"You must trust to me," said I, carelessly; "I have no bail to give."

"Why not return now with the policeman, for the note, before I speak to the Justice?"

"Then, who is to go bail for *you?*" said I.

"You are a cool fellow, by Jove!" cried he, at the steady impudence which I maintained in the discussion.

"I had need be!" in a voice very different from the feigned hardihood of my assumed part. "The boy, who has neither a home, nor a friend in the world, has little else to rely on save the cold recklessness of what may befal him!"

I saw a curl of contempt on the Captain's lip at the energy of this speech; for now, when, for the first time between us, a single genuine sentiment broke from me, he deemed it "cant."

"Well!" cried he, "as you wish; I'll speak to the Justice, and you shall be free."

He left the room as he spoke, but in a few moments re-entered it, saying "All is right! You are discharged! Now, for *your* share of the bargain."

"Where will your Honor be in half-an-hour?'

"At the Club, Foster-place."

"Then I'll be there with the note," said I.

He nodded, and walked out. I watched him as he went; but he neither spoke to a policeman, nor did he turn his head round to see what became of me. There was something in this that actually awed me. It was a trait so unlike anything I had ever seen in others, that I at once perceived it was "the gentleman's" spirit enabling him to feel confidence even in a poor ragged street-wanderer, as I was. The lesson was not lost on me. My life has been mainly an imitative one, and I have more than once seen the inestimable value of "trusting."

No sooner was I at large than I speeded to Betty's, and was back again long before the half-hour expired. I had to wait till near five, however, before he appeared; so sure was he of my keeping my word, that he never troubled himself about me! "Ha!" said he, as he saw me; "long here?"

"Yes, sir, about an hour;" and I handed him the note as I spoke.

He thrust it carelessly into his sabretash, and pulling out a crown piece, chucked it towards me, saying, "Good bye, friend; if they don't hang you, you'll make some noise in the world yet."

"I mean it, sir," said I, with a familiar nod; and so, genteelly touching my cap in salute, I walked away.

CHAPTER VIII.

"A QUIET CHOP" AT "KILLEEN'S," AND A GLANCE AT A NEW CHARACTER.

I LOOKED very wistfully at my broad crown piece, as it lay with its honest platter-face in the palm of my hand, and felt by the stirring sensation it excited within me, some inklings of his feelings who possesses hundreds of thousands of them. Then there arose in my mind the grave question how it was to be spent; and such a strange connexion is there between what economists call supply and demand, that, in place of being, as I esteemed myself a few minutes back, "passing rich," I at once perceived that I was exceeding poor, since to effect any important change in my condition, five shillings was a most inadequate sum. It would not buy me more than a pair of shoes; and what use in repairing the foundation of the edifice, when the roof was in ruin? not to speak of my other garments, to get into which, each morning, by the same aperture as before, was a feat that might have puzzled a harlequin.

I next bethought me of giving an entertainment to my brethren at Betty's; but after all, they had shown little sympathy with me in my last misfortune, and seemed rather pleased to be rid of a dangerous professional rival. This, and a lurking desire to leave the fraternity, decided me against the plan.

Then came the thought of entertaining myself, giving myself a species of congratulatory dinner on my escape; and, in fact, commemorating the event by anticipating the most fashionable mode now in use.

I canvassed the notion, with all the skill and fairness I could summon, starting the various objections against it, and answering them with what seemed to myself a most judicial impartiality.

"Who does a man usually entertain," said I, "but his intimate friends?" Those whose agreeability is pleasing to him, or whose acquaintance is valuable from their station and influence. Now, with whom had I such an unrestrained and cordial intercourse as myself? Whose society never wearied—whose companionship always interested—my own! and who of all the persons I had ever met with, conceived a sincere and heartfelt desire for my welfare, preferring it to all others? "Con. Cregan, it is you," said I enthusiastically. "In you my confidence is complete. I believe you incapable of ever forgetting me; come, then, and let us pledge our friendship over a flowing bowl."

Where, too, was the next doubt. With a crown to spend I was not going to descend to some subterranean den among coal-heavers, news-venders, and umbrella hawkers; but how was I to gain access to a better class ordinary?—that was the difficulty—who would admit the street-runner in his rags, into even a brief intimacy with his silver forks and spoons? and it was precisely to an entertainment on such a scale as a good tavern could supply that I aspired. It was to test my own feelings under a new stimulant. Just

as I have often since seen grave people experiment upon themselves with laughing gas, and magnetism, and the fumes of æther.

"It may be too much for you, Con.," said I, as I went along: "there's no knowing what effect it may have on your nerves."

"Remember that your system is not attuned to such variations. Your vagaries may prove extravagant; and the too sudden elevation may disturb your naturally correct judgment." Against these doubts I pleaded the necessity of not being ungrateful to myself—not refusing a very proper acknowledgment of my own skill and astuteness; and, lastly, I suggested a glancing kind of hope, that, like those famed heroes, who dated their great fortuue to having gone to sleep beneath the shadow of some charmed tree, or near the ripple of a magic fountain, that I too, should arise from this banquet, with some brilliant view of life, and see the path to success, bright and clear before me, through the hazy mists of fancy.

As I reasoned thus, I passed various ordinaries, stopping with a kind of instinct at each, to gaze at the luscious rounds of beef, so daintily tricked out with sprigs of parsley—the lean appetizing old sirloins, so beautifully stratified with fat and lean—with hams that might tempt a Rabbi—not to speak of certain provocative little paragraphs, about "Ox-tail and Gravy, ready at all hours." "Queer world, it is," said I; "and there are passing at every instant, by tens and twenties, men and women, and children, famishing and hungry, who see all these things separated from them by a pane of window-glass; and yet, they only gather their rags more closely together, clinch their thin lips tighter, and move on. Not that alone; but here am I, with means to buy what I want, and yet, I must not venture to cross that threshold, as though my rags should be an insult to their broadcloth." "Move on, youngster," quoth a policeman at this moment, and thus put an end to my soliloquy.

Wearied with rambling, and almost despairing of myself, I was about to cross Carlisle Bridge, when the blazing effulgence of a great ruby-colored lamplight attracted my attention, over which, in bright letters, ran the words, "Killeens' Tavern and Chop House," and beneath,—"Steak, potatoes, and a pint of stout, one shilling and fourpence." Armed with a bold thought, I turned and approached the house. Two or three waiters, in white aprons, were standing at the door, and showed little inclination to make way for me as I advanced.

"Well!" cried one, "who are you? Nobody sent for you."

"Tramp my smart fellow," said the other, this ain't your shop."

"Isn't this Killeens'?" said I, stoutly.

"Just so," said the first, a little surprised at my coolness.

"Well, then, a young gentleman from the college sent me to order dinner for him at once, and pay for it at the same time."

"What will he have?"

"Soup, and a steak, with a pint of port," said I; just the kind of dinner I had often heard the old half-pay officers talking of at the door of the Club in Foster-place.

"What hour did he say?"

"This instant. He's coming down; and as he starts by the mail at seven, he told me to have it on the table when he came."

"All right; four and six," said the waiter, holding out his hand for the money.

I gave him my crown-piece, and as he fumbled for the sixpence I insinuated myself quietly into the hall.

"There's your change, boy," said the waiter, "you needn't stop."

"Will you be so good, sir," said I, "to write 'paid' on a slip of paper for me, just to show the gentleman?"

"Of course," said he, taken possibly by the flattering civility of my address, and he stepped into the bar, and soon re-appeared with a small scrap of paper, with these words: "Dinner and pint of port, 4*s.* 6*d.*—paid."

"I'm to wait for him here, sir," said I, most obsequiously.

"Very well, so you can," replied he, passing on to the coffee-room.

I peeped through the glass door, and saw that in one of the little boxes into which the place was divided, a table was just spread, and a soup-tureen and a decanter placed on it. "This," thought I, "is for me;" for all the other boxes were already occupied, and a great buzz of voices and clashing of plates and knives going on together.

"Serve the steak, sir," said I, stepping into the room and addressing the head-waiter, who, with a curse to me to "get out of that," passed on to order the dish; while I, with an adroit flank movement, dived into the box, and, imitating some of the company, spread my napkin like a breast-plate across me. By a great piece of fortune, the stall was the darkest in the room, so that when seated in a corner, with an open newspaper before me, I could, for a time at least, hope to escape detection.

"Anything else, sir?" cried a waiter, as he uncovered the soup, and deposited the dish of smoking beefsteak.

"Nothing," responded I, with a voice of most imposing sternness, and manfully holding up the newspaper between us.

The first three or four mouthfuls I ate with a faint heart; the fear of discovery, exposure, and expulsion almost choked me. A glass of port rallied, a second one cheered, and a third

emboldened me, and I proceeded to my steak in a spirit of true ease and enjoyment. The port was most insidious; place it where I would on the table, it invariably stole over beside me, and in spite of me, as it were, the decanter would stand at my elbow. I suppose it must be in reality a very gentlemanlike tipple; the tone of sturdy self reliance, the vigorous air of command, the sense of absolutism it inspires, smack of Toryism; and as I sipped, I felt myself rising above the low prejudices I once indulged in against rank and wealth, and insenisbly comprehending the beauty of that system which divides and classifies mankind.

The very air of the place, the loud, overbearing talk, the haughty summons to the waiter, the imperious demand for this or that requisite of the table, all conspired to impress me with the pleasant sensation imparted to him who possesses money. Among the various things called for on every side I remarked that mustard seemed in the very highest request. Every one eat of it. There was a perpetual cry,—"Mustard! I say, waiter, bring me the mustard;" while one very choleric old gentleman, in a drab surtout and a red nose, absolutely seemed bursting with indignation, as he said, "You don't expect me to eat a steak without mustard, sir?"—a rebuke at which the waiter grew actually purple.

Now this was the very thing I had myself been doing, actually eating "a steak without mustard!" What a mistake, and for one who believed himself to be in every respect conforming to the choicest usages of high life! What was to be done? the steak had disappeared: no matter, it was never too late to learn, and so I cried out, "Waiter! the mustard here!" in a voice that almost electrified the whole room.

I had scarcely concealed myself beneath my curtain—"The Times,"—when the mustard was set down before me, with a humble apology for forgetfulness. I waited till he withdrew, and then helping myself to the unknown delicacy, proceeded to eat it, as the phrase is, "neat." In my eagerness I swallowed two or three mouthfuls before I felt its effects, and then, a sensation of burning and choking seized upon me. My tongue seemed to swell to thrice its size; my eyes felt as if they would drop out of my head; while a tingling sensation, like "frying," in my nostrils, almost drove me mad; so that, after three or four seconds of silent agony, during which I exp rienced about ten years of torture, unable to endure more, I screamed out that "I was poisoned," and with wide-open mouth, and staring eyes, ran down the coffee-room.

Never was seen such an uproar! had an animal from a wild beast menagerie appeared among the company, the consternation could scarce be greater; and in the mingled laughter and execrations, might be traced the different moods of those who resented my intrusion "Who is this fellow? how did he get in? what brought him here? what's the matter with him?" poured in on all sides; difficulties the head waiter thought it better to deal with by a speedy expulsion than by any lengthened explanation.

"Get a policeman, Bob!" said he to the next in command; and the order was given loud enough to be heard by me.

"What the devil threw him amongst us?" said a testy-looking man in green spectacles.

"I came to dine, sir,' said I; "to have my steak and my pint of wine, as I hoped in comfort, and as one might have it in a respectable tavern."

A jolly burst of laughter stopped me, and I was obliged to wait for its subsidence to continue.

"Well, sir! I paid for my dinner——"

"Is that true, Sam?" said a shrewd-looking man to the waiter.

"Quite true, sir! he paid four and sixpence, saying that the dinner was for a College gentleman."

"I have been in College,' said I, coolly; "but no matter, the thing is simple enough; I am here, in a house of public entertainment, the proprietors of which have accepted my money for a specific purpose; and putting aside the question whether they can refuse admission to any well-conducted individual, (see Barnes *versus* Mac Tivell, in the 8th volume Term Reports; and Hobbes against Blinkerton, Soaker, and others, in the Appendix,) I contend that my presence here is founded upon contract."

Another and still louder roar of mirth again stopped me, and before I could resume, the company had gathered round me in evident delight at my legal knowledge; and in particular, he of the spectacles, who was a well-known attorney of the Court of Conscience.

"That fellow's a gem!" said he. "Hang me if he's not equal to Bleatem! Sam, take care what you do; he's the chap to have his action against you! I say, my man, come and sit down here, and let us have a little chat together."

"Most willingly, sir," responded I. "Waiter, bring my wine over to this table." This was the signal for another shout, of which I did not deign to take the slightest notice.

"I'll wager a hundred oysters," exclaimed one of the party among whom I now seated myself, "that I have seen him before! Tell me, my lad, didn't you ride over the course yesterday, and cut out the work for Mr. Beatagh?"

I bowed an assent. "Who the devil is he?" cried two or three together; and my appearance and manner did not check the audible expression of this sentiment.

"A few words will suffice, gentlemen,"

said I, "on that head. My father was an estated gentleman, of small, but unincumbered fortune, which he lost by an unfortunate speculation; he accordingly went abroad——"

"To Norfolk Island!" suggested one, with a wink.

"Exactly," responded I; "a Colonial appointment; leaving me, like Norval not exactly on the Grampian Hills, but in a worse place, in the middle of the bog of Allen; my sole dependence being in certain legal studies I had once made, and a natural taste for getting forward in life; which, with a most enthusiastic appreciation of good company," here I bowed politely all round, "are, I flatter myself, my chief characteristics."

After a little, but most good-humored, quizzing about my present occupation and future prospects, they, with far more politeness than might be expected, turned the conversation upon other matters, and kindly permitted me to throw in from time to time my observations; remarks which I could see, from their novelty at least, seemed often to surprise them.

At length the hour of separating arrived, and I arose to bid the company good-night, which I performed with a very fair imitation of that quiet ease I had often studied in the young guardsmen about town.

"What do you bet that he has neither home to shelter him, nor bed to sleep on this night?" whispered one to his neighbor.

"What are you writing there, Cox?" said another to the keen-eyed man, who was penciling something on a card.

"There; that's my address, my boy; 12 Stafford-street: Jeremiah Cox. Come to me about ten to-morrow."

Another, while he was speaking, made an effort to slip a half-crown into my hand; a measure I felt it becoming to decline, with a prompt but courteous refusal. Indeed, I had so identified myself with the part I was performing, that I flung down my only sixpence on the table for the waiter, and with a last salutation to the honorable company, walked out. I have a perfect memory of every circumstance of the evening, and I recollect that my swaggering exit was as free from any semblance of concern or care, as though a carriage waited for me outside to convey me to a luxurious home!

It has often been a fancy of mine through life, to pass the entire of a summer night out of doors; to wander either through the moonlit roads of some picturesque country, or in the still more solitary streets of a great city. I have always felt on these occasions as though one were "stealing a march" upon the sleeping world—gaining so many more hours of thought and reflection, which the busy conflict of life renders so often difficult.

The hours of the night seem to typify so many stages of existence,—only reversing the natural order of age, and making the period of deep reflection precede the era of sanguine hope; for if the solemn closing in of the darkness suggests musing, so do the rosy tints and fresh air of breaking day inspire the warm hopefulness of youth. If "the daylight sinking" invites the secret communing of the heart, "the dawning of morn" glows with energetic purpose and bold endeavor.

To come back to myself. I left the tavern without a thought whither I should turn my steps. It was a calm night, with a starry sky, and a mild, genial air, so that to pass the hours until morning without shelter, was no great privation. One only resolve I had formed—never to go back to Betty's. I felt that I had sojourned over-long in such companionship; it was now time some other, and more upward path should open before me.

Following the course of the Liffey, I soon reached the Quay called the North Wall, and at last arrived at the bluff extremity which looks out upon the opening of the river into the Bay of Dublin. The great expanse was in deep shadow, but so calm the sea, that the two lighthouses were reflected in long columns of light in the tranquil water. The only sound audible was the low, monotonous plash of the sea against the wall, or the grating noise of a chain cable, as the vessel it held surged slowly with the tide. The sounds had something plaintive in them, that soon imparted a tone of sadness to my mind: but it was a melancholy not unpleasing; and I sat down upon a rude block of stone, weaving strange fancies of myself and my future.

As I sat thus, my ear, grown more acute by habit, detected the light clank of a chain, and something like a low thumping sound in the water beneath me; and on peering down, I discovered the form of a small boat, fastened to a ring in the wall, and which, from time to time, grated against the strong masonry. There it lay, with a pair of light oars run under the thwarts, and its helm flapping to and fro, inert and purposeless, like myself! so at least I fancied it; and soon began conceiving a strange parallel between it and me. I was suddenly startled from these musings by the sound of feet rapidly approaching.

I listened, and could hear a man coming towards me at full speed. I sat down beneath the shadow of the wall, and he passed me unnoticed, and then springing up on the parapet, he gave a loud shrill whistle; waiting a few seconds as if for the reply, he was silent, and then repeated it; but still in vain, no answer came. "Blast them!" muttered he, "the scoundrels will not show a light!" A third time did he whistle, but though the sounds might be heard a mile off, neither sight nor sound ever responded to them

"And that rascal, too, to have left the boat at such a moment." Just as he uttered these words, he sprang down from the wall, and caught sight of me, as I lay, affecting sleep, coiled up beneath it.

With a rude kick of his foot on my side, he aroused me, saying, "D—n the fellow, is this a time for sleeping? I told you to keep a sharp look-out for me here! What! who are you?" cried he, as I stood upright before him.

"A poor boy, sir, that has no roof to shelter him," said I, plaintively.

He bent his head and listened; and then, with a horrible curse, exclaimed, "Here they are! here they come! Can you pull an oar, my lad?"

"I can, sir," answered I.

"Well, jump down into the punt there, and row her round the point to the stairs. Be quick! down with you! I have cut my hand, and cannot help you. There, that's it, my lad! catch the ring; swing yourself a little more to the right; her gunwale is just beneath your foot; all right now! well done! Be alive now! give way! give way!" And thus encouraging me, he walked along the parapet above me, and in a few moments stood fast, calling out, but in a lower and more cautious voice, "There! close in, now a strong pull—that's it!"—and then hastily descending a narrow flight of steps, he sprang into the boat, and seated himself in the stern. "Hush! be still!" cried he, "do not stir! they'll never see us under the shadow of the wall!"

As he spoke, two dark figures mounted the wall, straight above our heads, and stood for some seconds as it were peering into the distance.

"I'll swear I saw him take this way," cried one, in a deep low voice.

"If he were the Devil himself, he could not escape us here," said the other, with an accent of vindictive passion.

"And he is the Devil," said the former speaker.

"Pooh, nonsense, man! any fellow who can win at dice, or has a steady finger with a pistol, is a marvel for you. Curses on him! he has given us the slip somehow."

"I'd not wonder, Harry, if he has taken the water; he swims like a duck!"

"He could not have sprung from a height like that without a plash, and we were close enough upon his heels to hear it: flash off some powder in a piece of paper; it is dark as pitch here."

While the men above were preparing their light, I heard a slight stir in the stern of the boat. I turned my head and saw my companion coolly fitting a cap on his pistol; he was doing it with difficulty, as he was obliged to hold the pistol between his knees, while he adjusted the cap with his left hand; the right hand he carried in the breast of his coat. Nothing could be more calm and collected than his every movement, up to the instant when having cocked the weapon, he lay back in the boat, so as to have a full stare at the two dark figures above us.

At last, the fuze was ready, and being lighted, it was held for a few seconds in the hand, and then thrown into the air. The red and lurid glare flashed full upon two savage-looking faces, straight above our heads, and for an instant showed their figures with all the distinctness of noon-day. I saw them both, as if by a common impulse, lean over the parapet and peer down into the dark water below; and I could have almost sworn that we were discovered; my companion evidently thought so too, for he raised his pistol steadily, and took a long and careful aim. What a moment was that for me, expecting at every instant to hear the report, and then the heavy fall of the dead man into the water! my throat was full to bursting. The bit of burning paper of the fuze had fallen on my companion's pistol-hand, but though it must have scorched him, he never stirred, nor even brushed it off. I thought that by its faint flicker, also, we might have been seen; but no, it was plain they had not perceived us; and it was with a delight I cannot describe, that I saw one and then the other descend from the wall, while I heard the words, "There's the second time above five hundred pounds has slipped from us. D—n the fellow! but if I hang for him, I'll do it yet!"

"Well, you've spoiled his hand for hazard for a while, any how, Harry!" said the other. "I think you must have taken his fingers clean off!"

"The knife was like a razor," replied the other, with a laugh; "but he struck it out of my hand with a blow above the wrist; and I can tell you, I'd as soon get the kick of a horse as a short stroke of the same closed fist."

They continued to converse as they moved away, but their words only reached me in broken unconnected sentences. From all I could glean, however, I was in company with one of enormous personal strength, and a most reckless intrepidity. At last, all was still; not a sound to be heard on any side; and my companion, leaning forward, said, "Come, my lad, pull me out a short distance into the offing; we shall soon see a light to guide us!"

In calm still water I could row well. I had been boat-boy to the Priest at all his autumn fishing excursions on the Westmeath Lake, so that I acquitted myself creditably, urged on, I am free to confess, by a very profound fear of the large figure who loomed so mysteriously in the stern. For a time, we proceeded in deep silence, when at last he said, "What vessel do you belong to, boy?"

"I was never at sea, sir," replied I.

"Not a sailor! how comes it then, you can row so well?"

"I learned to row in fresh water, sir."

"What are you? How came you to be here to-night?"

"By merest chance, sir. I had no money to pay for a bed. I have neither home nor friends. I have lived by holding horses, and running errands, in the streets."

"Picking pockets occasionally, I suppose, too, when regular business was dull!"

"Never!" said I, indignantly.

"Don't be shocked, my fine fellow!" said he, jeeringly; "better men than ever you'll be have done a little that way. I have made some lighter this evening myself, for the matter of that!"

This confession, if very frank, was not very reassuring, and so I made no answer, but rowed away with all my might.

"Well!" said he, after a pause, "luck has befriended me twice to-night, and sending you to sleep under that wall, was not the worst turn of the two. Ship your oars there, boy, and let us see if you are as handy a surgeon as you are a sailor! Try and bind up these wounded fingers of mine, for they begin to smart with the cold night air."

"Wait an instant," cried he, "we are safe now, so you may light this lantern;" and he took from his pocket a small and most elegantly-fashioned lantern, which he immediately lighted.

I own it was with a most intense curiosity I waited for the light, to scan the features of my singular companion; nor was my satisfaction inconsiderable when, instead of the terrific-looking fellow—half Bravo, half Pirate, I expected—I perceived before me a man of apparently thirty-one or two, with large but handsome features, and gentlemanly appearance. He had an immense beard and moustache, which united at either side of the mouth; but this, ferocious enough to one unaccustomed to it, could not take off the quiet regularity and good-humor of his manly features. He wore a large-brimmed slouched felt hat, that shaded his brows, and he seemed to be dressed with some care, beneath the rough exterior of a common pilot-coat; at least he wore silk stockings and shoes, as if in evening dress. These particulars I had time to note, while he unwound from his crippled hand the strips of a silk handkerchief, which, stiffened and clotted with blood, bespoke a deep and severe wound.

If the operation were often painful, even to torture, he never winced, or permitted the slightest expression of suffering to escape him. At last, the undressing was completed, and a fearful gash appeared, separating the four fingers almost entirely from the hand. The keenness of the cut showed that the weapon must have been, as the fellow averred, sharp as a razor. Perhaps the copious loss of blood had exhausted the vessels, or the tension of the bandage had closed them, for there was little bleeding, and I soon succeeded, with the aid of his cravat, in making a tolerable dressing of the wound, and by filling up the palm of the hand, as I had once seen done by a country surgeon in a somewhat similar case. The pain was relieved by the gentle support afforded.

"Why, you are a most accomplished vagrant!" said he, laughing, as he watched the artistic steps of my proceeding. "What's your name? I mean, what do you go by at present? for of course a fellow like you has a score of aliases."

"I have had only one name up to this," said I, "Con. Cregan."

"Con. Cregan! sharp and shrewd enough it sounds, too!" said he; "and what line of life do you mean to follow, Master Con.?—for I suspect you have not been without some speculations on the subject."

"I have thought of various things, sir; but how is a poor boy like me to get a chance? I feel as if I could pick up a little of most trades, but I have no money, nor any friends."

"Money—friends!" exclaimed he, with a burst of bitterness, quite unlike his previous careless humor. "Well, my good fellow! I had both one and the other—more than most people are supposed to have of either—and what have they brought me to?" He held up his maimed and blood-clotted hand, as he spoke with a withering scorn in every accent.

"No, my boy! trust one who knows something of life—the lighter you start, the easier your journey! He that sets his heart on it, can always make money; and friends, as they are called by courtesy, are still more easily acquired."

This was the first time I had ever heard any one speak of the game of life, as such; and I cannot say what intense pleasure the theme afforded me. I am certain I never stopped to consider whether his views were right or not, whether the shrewd results of a keen observer, or the prejudices of a disappointed man. It was the subject, the matter discussed, delighted me.

My companion appeared to feel that he had a willing listener, and went freely on canvassing the various roads to success, and with a certain air of confidence in all he said, that to me seemed quite oracular. "What a fellow am I," said he at last, "to discourse in this strain to a street urchin, whose highest ambition is to outrun his ragged competitors, and be first 'in,' for the sixpence of some cantering cornet. Pull a-head, lad, there's the light, at last; and hang me if they're not two miles out."

The contemptuous tone of the last few words effectually repressed any desire I

might have had for any further colloquy; and I rowed away in silence, putting forth all my strength and skill, so that the light skiff darted rapidly and steadily through the water.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR DUDLEY BROUGHTON.

STEADILY, and with all the vigor I could command, I pulled towards the light. My companion sat calmly watching the stars, and apparently following out some chain of thought to himself; at last he said, "There, boy, breathe a bit, there's no need to blow yourself; we're all safe long since; the Fire-fly is right a-head of us, and not far off either. Have you ever heard of the yacht?"

"Never, sir."

"Nor of its owner, Sir Dudley Broughton?"

"No, sir, I never heard the name."

"Well, come," cried he, laughing, "that is consolatory. I am not half so great a reprobate as I thought myself! I did not believe till now that there was an urchin of your stamp living who could not have furnished at least some anecdotes for a memoir of me! Well, my lad, yonder, where you see the blue light at the peak, is the 'Fire-fly,' and here, where I sit, is Sir Dudley Broughton. Ten minutes more will put us alongside, so, if you're not tired, pull away."

"No, Sir Dudley," said I, for I was well versed in the popular tact of catching up a name quickly, "I'm able to row twice as far."

"And now, Master Con.," said he, "we are going to part, are you too young a disciple of your craft for a glass of grog? or are you a follower of that new-fangled notion of pale-faced politicians, who like bad coffee and reason better than whiskey and fun?"

"I'll take nothing to drink, Sir Dudley," said I. "I have dined, and drank well to-day, and I'll not venture further."

"As you please; only I say you're wrong not to victual the ship whenever you stand in shore. No matter, put your hand into this vest pocket,—you'll find some shillings there, take them, whatever they be. You'll row the boat back with one of my people; and all I have to say is, if you do speak of me, as no doubt you will and must, don't say anything about these smashed fingers; I suppose they'll get right one of these days, and I'd rather there was no gossiping about them."

"I'll never speak of it—I——"

"There, now, that's enough, no swearing, or I know you'll break your promise. Back water a little,—pull the starboard oar; so, here we are alongside."

Sir Dudley had scarce done speaking, when a hoarse voice from the yacht challenged us. This was replied to by a terrific volley of imprecations on the stupidity of not sooner showing the light, amid which Sir Dudley ascended the side, and stood upon the deck. "Where's Halkett?" cried he imperiously. "Here, sir," replied a short thick-set man, with a sailor-like shuffle in his walk. "Send one of the men back with the gig, and land that boy. Tell the fellow, too, he's not to fetch Waters aboard, if he meets him; the scoundrel went off and left me to my fate this evening, and it might have been no pleasant one, if I had not found that lad yonder."

"We have all Sam Waters' kit on aboard, Sir Dudley," said Halkett, "shall we send it ashore?"

"No. Tell him I'll leave it at Demarara for him, and he may catch the yellow fever in looking after it," said he, laughing. While listening to this short dialogue I had contrived to approach a light which gleamed from the cabin window, and then took the opportunity to count over my wealth, amounting, as I supposed, to some seven or eight shillings. Guess my surprise, to see that the pieces were all bright yellow gold,—eight shining sovereigns!"

I had but that instant made the discovery, when the sailor who was to put me on shore, jumped into the boat and seated himself.

"Wait one instant," cried I. "Sir Dudley—Sir Dudley Broughton!"

"Well, what's the matter?" said he, leaning over the side.

"This money you gave me——"

"Not enough, of course! I ought to have known that," said he, scornfully. "Give the whelp a couple of half-crowns, Halkett, and send him adrift."

"You're wrong, sir," cried I, with passionate eagerness; "they are gold pieces—sovereigns."

"The devil they are!" cried he, laughing; "the better luck yours. Why didn't you hold your tongue about it."

"You bid me take some shilings, sir," answered I.

"How d—d honest you must be; do you hear that, Halkett? the fellow had scruples about taking his prize-money. Never mind, boy, I must pay for my blunder,—you may keep them now."

"I have pride, too," cried I; "and hang me if I touch them."

He stared at me, without speaking, for a few minutes, and then said, in a low voice, "Come on deck, lad." I obeyed; and he took a lighted lantern from the binnacle, and held it up close to my face, and then moved it, so that he made a careful examination of my whole figure.

"I'd give a crown to know who was your father," said he, dryly.

"Con. Cregan, of Kilbeggan, sir."

"Oh, of course, I know all that. Come, now, what say you to try a bit of life afloat? Will you stay here?"

"Will you take me, sir?" cried I in ecstacy.

"Halkett, rig him out," said he, shortly. "Nip the anchor with the ebb, and keep your course down channel." With this he descended the cabin stairs and disappeared, while I, at a signal from Halkett, stepped down the ladder into the steerage. In the meanwhile, it will not be deemed digressionary if I devote a few words to the singular character into whose society I was now thrown, inasmuch as to convey any candid narrative of my own career, I must speak of those, who, without influencing the main current of my life, yet, certainly gave some impulse and direction to its first meanderings.

Sir Dudley Broughton was the only son of a wealthy Baronet, who, not from affection or over-kindness, but out of downright indolent indifference, permitted him, first as an Eton boy, and afterwards as a gentleman commoner of Christ Church, to indulge in every dissipation that suited his fancy. An unlimited indulgence, a free command of whatever money he asked for, added to a temper constitutionally headstrong and impetuous, soon developed what might have been expected from the combination. He led a life of wild insubordination at school, and was expelled from Oxford. With faculties above rather than beneath mediocrity, and a certain aptitude for acquiring the knowledge most in request in society, he had the reputation of being one, who, if he had not unhappily addicted himself to dissipation, would have made a favorable figure in the world. After trying in vain to interest himself in the pursuits of a country life, of which the sporting was the only thing he found attractive, he joined a well-known light cavalry regiment, celebrated for numbering among its officers more fast men than any other corps in the service. His father dying about the same time, left him in possession of a large fortune, which, with all his extravagance, was but slightly encumbered. This fact, coupled with his well-known reputation made him popular with his brother officers, most of whom having run through all they possessed, saw with pleasure a new Crœsus arrive in the regiment. Such a man as Broughton was just wanted. One had a charger to get off; another wanted a purchaser for his four-in-hand drag. The senior Captain was skilful at billiards; and every one played "Lansquenet," and hazard.

Besides various schemes against his purse, the Colonel had a still more serious one against his person. He had a daughter, a handsome, fashionable-looking girl, with all the manners of society, and a great deal of that tact only to be acquired in the very best foreign society. That she was no longer in the fresh bloom of youth, nor with a reputation quite spotless, were matters well known in the regiment; but as she was still eminently handsome, and "the Count Radchoffsky," had been recalled by the Emperor, from the embassy of which he was Secretary, Lydia Delmar was likely, in the opinions of keen judging parties, to make a good hit, with "some young fellow who didn't know town."—Broughton was exactly the man Colonel Delmar wanted,—good family, a fine fortune, and the very temper a clever woman usually contrives to rule with absolute sway.

There would be, unfortunately, no novelty in recording the steps by which such a man is ruined. He did every thing that men do, who are bent upon testing fortune to the utmost. He lent large sums to his "friends;"—he lost larger ones to them. When he did win, none ever paid him, except by a good-humored jest upon his credit at Coutts'.—"What the devil do *you* want with money, Sir Dudley?" was an appeal he could never reply to. He ran horses at Ascot, and got "squeezed!"—he played at "Crocky's," and fared no better; but he was the favorite of the corps. "We could never get on without Dudley," was a common remark, and it satisfied him, that, with all his extravagance, he had made an investment in the hearts at least of his comrades. A few months longer of this "fast" career would, in all likelihood, have ruined him: he broke his leg, by a fall in a steeple-chase, and was thus driven, by sheer necessity, to lay up, and keep quiet for a season. Now came Colonel Delmar's opportunity; the moment the news reached Coventry, he set off with his daughter to Leamington. With the steeple-chasing, hazard-playing, betting, drinking, yachting, driving Sir Dudley, there was no chance of even time for their plans; but with a sick man on the sofa, bored by his inactivity, hipped for want of his usual resources, the game was open. The Colonel's visit, too, had such an air of true kindness!

Broughton had left quarters without leave, but instead of reprimands, arrests, and heaven knows what besides, there was Colonel Delmar—the fine old fellow, shaking his finger in mock rebuke, and saying, "Ah, Dudley, my boy, I came down to give you a rare scolding, but this sad business has saved you!" And Lydia, also, against whom he had ever felt a dislike—that prejudice your boisterous, noisy kind of men ever feel to clever women, whose sarcasms they know themselves exposed to,—why, she was gentle good nature, and easy sister-like kindness itself! She did not, as the phrase goes, "nurse him;" but she seldom left the room where he lay; she read aloud, selecting, with a marvellous instinct, the very kind of books

he fancied. Novels, tales of every-day life, things of whose truthfulness he could form some judgment; and sketches, wherein the author's views were about on a level with his own. She would sit at the window too, and amuse him with descriptions of the people passing in the street; such smart, shrewd pictures were they of watering-place folks and habits,—Dudley never tired of them? She was unsurpassed for the style with which she could dress up an anecdote, or a bit of gossip: and if it verged upon the free, her French education taught her the nice perception of the narrow line that separates "Libertinage" from indelicacy.

So far from feeling impatient at his confinement to a sofa, therefore, Broughton affected distrust in his renovated limb, for a full fortnight after the Doctor had pronounced him cured. At last, he was able to drive out, and soon afterwards to take exercise on horseback; Lydia Delmar and her father occasionally accompanying him.

People will talk at Leamington, as they do in other places; and so the gossips said that the rich—for he was still so reputed in the world—the "rich" Sir Dudley Broughton was going to marry Miss Delmar.

Gossip is half-brother to that all-powerful director called "Public Opinion," so that when Sir Dudley heard, some half-dozen times every day, what it was reputed he would do, he began to feel that he ought to do it.

Accordingly they were married; the world—at least the Leamington section of that large body—criticising the match precisely as it struck the interests and prejudices of the class they belonged to.

Fathers and mothers agreed in thinking that Colonel Delmar was a shrewd old soldier, and had made an excellent hit." Young ladies pronounced Liddy—for a girl who had been out eight years, decidedly lucky.—Lounging men at club doors looked knowingly at each other as they joked together in half-sentences, "No affair of mine, but I did not think Broughton would have been caught so easily." "Yes, by Jove!" cried another, with a jockey-like style of dress, "He'd not have made as great a mistake on the "Oaks," as to run an aged nag for a two-year-old!"

"I wonder he never heard of that Russian fellow!" said a third.

"Oh, yes!" sighed out a dandy, with an affected drawl; "Poor dear Liddy did indeed catch a 'Tarta!'"

Remarks such as these were the pleasant sallies the event provoked; but so it is in higher and greater things in life! At the launch of a line of battle ship, the veriest vagrant in rags fancies he can predict for her defeat and shipwrek!

The Broughtons were now the great people of the London season, at least to a certain "fast" set, who loved dinners at the Clarendon, high play, and other concomitant pleasures. *Her* equipages were the most perfect; *her* diamonds the most splendid; while *his* dinners were as much reputed by one class, as *her* toilet by another.

Loans at ruinous interest; sales of property for a tithe of its value;—bills renewed at a rate that would have swamped Rothschild;—purchases made at prices proportionate to the risk of non-payment;—reckless waste everywhere:—robbing solicitors;—cheating tradesmen, and dishonest servants! but why swell the list, or take trouble to show how the ruin came. If one bad leak will cause a shipwreck, how is the craft to mount the waves with every plank riven asunder?

If among the patriarchs who lend at usury, Broughton's credit was beginning to ebb; in the club sat the west end,—the betting ring,—at Crockford's—and at Tattersalls, he was in all the splendor of his former fame. Anderson would trust him with half his stable. Howell and James would send him the epergne designed for a Czar. And so he lived: with rocks and breakers ahead, he only "carried on" the faster and the freer.

Not that he knew, indeed, the extent, or anything approaching the extent, to which his fortune was wrecked. All that he could surmise on the subject was founded on the increased difficulty he found in raising money; a circumstance his pliant solicitor invariably explained by that happy phrase, the "tightness of the money-market." This completely satisfied Sir Dudley, who, far from attributing it to his own almost exhausted resources, laid all the blame upon some trickery of foreign statesmen, some confounded disturbance in Ireland, something that the foreign Secretary had done, or would not do; and that thus the money folk would not trust a guinea out of their fingers. In fact, it was quite clear, that to political intrigue and cabinet scheming, all Sir Dudley's difficulties might fairly be traced!

It was just at this time that the Count Radchoffsky arrived once more in London, in charge of a special mission. No longer the mere Secretary of Embassy, driving about in his quiet cab, but an Envoy Extraordinary, with cordons and crosses innumerable. He was exactly the kind of man for Broughton's "set," so that he soon made his acquaintance, and was presented by him to Lady Broughton, as a most agreeable fellow, and something very distinguished in his own country.

She received him admirably, remembered to have met him, she thought, at Lord Edenbury's, but he corrected her, by saying it was at the Duke of Clifton's. A difference of testimony at which Broughton laughed heartily, saying, in his usual rough way, "Well, it is pretty clear you didn't make much impression on each other."

The Russian noble was a stranger to the turf. In the details of arranging the approaching race, in apportioning weights, and ages, and distances, Broughton passed his whole mornings for a month, sorely puzzled at times by the apathy of his northern friend, who actually never obtruded an opinion, or expressed a wish for information on the subject.

Sir Dudley's book was a very heavy one, too; what "he stood to win" was a profound secret; but knowing men said, that if he lost, it would be such a "squeeze" as had not been known at Newmarket since the Duke of York's day.

Such an event, however, seemed not to enter into his own calculations; and so confident was he of success, that he could not help sharing his good fortune with his friend Radchoffsky, and giving him something in his own book. The Count professed himself everlastingly grateful, but confessed that he knew nothing of racing matters; and that, above all, his Majesty the Emperor would be excessively annoyed if a representative of his in any way interfered with the race; in fact, the honor of the Czar would be tarnished by such a proceeding. Against such reasonings there could be no opposition, and Broughton only took to himself all the benefits he had destined for his friend.

At last the eventful day came, and although Sir Dudley had arranged that Lady Broughton should accompany him to the course, she was taken with some kind of nervous attack, that prevented her leaving her bed. Her husband was provoked at this ill-timed illness, for he was still vain of her appearance in public; but knowing that he could do nothing for hysterics, he sent for Doctor Barham; and then, with all speed, he started for the race.

Among the friends who were to go along with him, the Count had promised to make one; but despatches—that admirable excuse of diplomatists, from the great secretary to the humblest unpaid attaché—despatches had just arrived, and if he could manage to get through his business early enough, "he'd certainly follow."

Scarcely had Sir Dudley reached the ground, when a carriage drove up to the stand, and a gentleman descended in all haste. It was Mr. Taperton, his solicitor—his trusty man of loans and discounts for many a day.

"Eh, Tapy!" cried Broughton, "come to sport a fifty on the filly?"

"Walk a little this way, Sir Dudley," said he, gravely; and his voice soon convinced the hearer that something serious was in the wind.

"What's the matter, man? You look as if 'Cardinal' was dead lame."

"Sir Dudley, you must start from this at once. Holdsworth has taken proceedings on the bills; Lord Corthern has foreclosed; and the whole body of the creditors are up, and you'll be arrested before you leave the field!"

If the threat had conveyed the ignominious penalty of felony, Broughton could not have looked more indignant. "Arrested! You don't mean that we cannot raise enough to pay these rascals?"

"Your outstanding bills are above twenty thousand, sir."

"And if they be; do you tell me that with my estate——"

"My dear Sir Dudley, how much of it is unencumbered? what single portion, save the few hundreds a year of Lady Broughton's jointure, is not sunk under mortgage? But this is no time for discussion; get into the chaise with me; we'll reach London in time for the mail; to-morrow you can be in Boulogne, and then we shall have time, at least, for an arrangement."

"The race is just coming off! how can I leave? I'm a steward: besides, I have a tremendous book. Do you know how many thousands I stand to win here?"

"To lose, you mean," said the solicitor. "You're sold!" the words were whispered so low as to be almost inaudible, but Broughton actually staggered as he heard them.

"Sold! how? what? impossible, man! who could sell me?"

"Only one man, perhaps; but he has done it! Is it true you have backed Calliope?"

"Yes!" said he, staring wildly.

"She was found ham-strung this morning in the stable, then," said Taperton; "if you want to hear further particulars, you must ask your friend, the Count Radchoffsky!"

"The scoundrel! the black-hearted villain! I see it all!" cried Broughton. "Come, Taperton, let us start! I'll go with you; by Jove, you have found a way to make me eager for the road!"

The lawyer read in the bloodshot eye, and flushed face, the passion for vengeance that was boiling within him; but he never spoke as they moved on and entered the carriage.

It was full three hours before the expected time of his return, when the chaise in which they travelled drew up at the Clarendon, and Broughton, half-wild with rage, dashed up stairs to the suite of splendid rooms he occupied.

"Oh dear, Sir Dudley!" cried the maid, as she saw him hastening along the corridor; "Oh, I'm sure, sir, you'll alarm my lady, if she sees you so flurried!"

"Stand out of the way, woman!" said he, roughly, endeavoring to push her to one side, for she had actually placed herself between him and the door of the drawing-room.

"Surely, sir, you'll not terrify my lady! Surely, Sir Dudley——"

Despite her cries, for they had now become such, Broughton pushed her rudely from the spot, and entered the room.

Great was his astonishment to find Lady Broughton, whom he had left so ill, not only up, but dressed as if for promenade; her face was flushed, and her eye restless and feverish; and her whole manner exhibited the highest degree of excitement.

Broughton threw down his hat upon the table, and then returning to the door, locked and bolted it.

"Good heavens, Dudley!" exclaimed she, in a voice of terror. "What has happened?"

"Everything!" said he; "utter ruin! the whole crew of creditors are in full chase after me, and in a few hours we shall be stripped of all we possess."

She drew a long, full breath as she listened; and had her husband been in a mood to mark it, he might have seen how lightly his terrible tidings affected her.

"I must fly! Taperton,—he's in the carriage below,—says France, at least for some weeks, till we can make some compromise or other; but I have one debt that must be acquitted before I leave."

There was a terrible significance in the words, and she was sick to the heart as she asked, "What, and to whom?"

"Radchoffsky!" cried he, savagely; "that scoundrel, whom I trusted like a brother!"

Lady Broughton fell back, and for a moment her motionless limbs, and pallid features, seemed like fainting; but with a tremendous effort, rallying herself, she said, "Go on!"

"He betrayed me! told every circumstance of my book! and the mare I had backed for more than thirty thousand, is dying this instant!—so that I am not only ruined, but dishonored!"

She sat with wide-staring eyes, and half-open lips, while he spoke, nor did she seem, in the fearful confusion of her fear, to understand fully all he said.

"Have I not spoken plainly?" said he, angrily; don't you comprehend me, when I say that to-morrow I shall be branded as a defaulter, at the settling? But enough of this. Tell Millar to get a portmanteau ready for me. I'll start this evening; the interval is short enough for all I have to do." As he spoke, he hastened to his bed-room; and providing himself with a case containing his dueling pistols, he hurried down stairs; ordering the postilion to drive to the Russian Embassy.

The carriage was scarce driven from the door, when Lady Broughton, taking a key from her pocket, opened a small door which led from the drawing-room into her dressing-room, from which the Count walked forth—his calm features unruffled and easy as though no emotion had ever stirred them.

"You heard what Broughton said?" whispered she, in an accent of faltering agitation.

"*Oui parbleu*, every word of it!" replied he, laughing gently. "The people of the house might almost have heard him."

"And is it true?" asked she, while a cold sickness crept over her, and her mouth was shaken convulsively.

"I believe so," said he, calmly.

"Oh, Alexis, do not say so!' cried she, in an agony of grief; "or, least of all, in such a voice as that."

He shrugged his shoulders, and then, after a moment's pause, said, "I confess myself quite unprepared for this show of affection, Madame——"

"Not so, Alexis. It is for *you* I am concerned; for your honor as a gentleman; for your fair fame among men——"

"Pardon, Madame, if I interrupt you; but the defence of my honor must be left to myself——"

"If I had but thought this of you——"

"It is never too late for repentance, Madame. I should be sorry to think I could deceive you."

"Oh, it is too late! far too late!" cried she, bursting into tears. "Let us go! I must never see him again! I would not live over that last half-hour again to save me from a death of torture!"

"Allow me, then," said he, taking her shawl, and draping it on her shoulders. "The carriage is ready." And with these few words, spoken with perfect calm, he presented his arm, and led her from the room.

To return to Sir Dudley. On arriving at the Russian Embassy, he could learn nothing of the whereabouts of him he sought; a young secretary, however, with whom he had some intimacy, drawing him to one side, whispered, "Wait here a moment, I have a strange revelation to make you, but in confidence, remember, for it must not get abroad." The story was this:—Count Radchoffsky had been, on his recall from the Embassy, detected in some Polish intrigue, and ordered to absent himself from the capital, and preserve a life of strict retirement, under police 'surveillance;' from this, he had managed to escape and reach England, with forged credentials of Envoy Extraordinary. The mission, being an invention of his own, to gain currency in the world, and obtain for him loans of large sums from various houses in the 'city.' "As he knows," continued Brighton's informant, "from his former experience, the day of our courier's expected arrival, he has up to this lived fearlessly and openly; but the despatch having

reached us through the French cabinet, sooner than he expected, his plot is revealed. The great difficulty is to avoid all publicity; for we must have no magisterial interference, no newspaper or police notoriety; all must be done quietly, and he must be shipped off to Russia without a rumor of the affair getting abroad."

Broughton heard all this with the dogged satisfaction of a man who did not well know whether to be pleased or otherwise, that an object of personal vengeance had been withdrawn from him.

But not accustomed to dwell long on any subject where the main interest of his own line of action was wanting, he drove home to his hotel to hasten the preparations for his departure. On his arrival at the Clarendon, a certain bustle and movement in the hall and on the stairs attracted his attention, and before he could inquire the cause, a half-whisper, "There he is; that's Sir Dudley," made him turn round; the same instant a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a man said, "I arrest you, Sir Dudley Broughton, at the suit of Messrs. Worrit and Sneare, Lombard street."

"Be calm: don't make any resistance," whispered Taperton in his ear; "come up stairs." They passed on, and entered the drawing-room, where everything appeared in disorder. As for Broughton, he was bewildered and stupified by all he had gone through, and sat in a chair, staring vacantly at the groups around him, evidently unable through the haze of his disordered faculties to see clearly how, and in what, he was interested in the affair.

"Where's my lady?" whispered Taperton to the valet, who stood almost as spell-bound as his master.

"Gone, sir; she's gone," said the man, in a faint voice.

"Gone where?" said Sir Dudley, jumping up and seizing him by the throat with both hands, while he roared out the words with a savage vehemence that startled all the room.

"Gone away, Sir Dudley," said the half-choking man; "I saw her drive off in a chaise and pair with Count Rodchoffsky."

Broughton let go his hold, and fell heavily upon his face to the ground. A surgeon was called in, who at once perceived that the attack was one of apoplexy. For that night and part of the next day, his recovery was almost hopeless; for, though repeatedly bled, he gave no signs of returning animation, but lay, heaving at intervals, long heavy sighs, and respiring with an effort that seemed to shake the strong frame in convulsions.

Youth and bold remedies, however, favored him, and on the third morning he awoke, weak and weary, like one who had just reached convalescence after a long and terrible fever. His features, his gestures, his very voice, were all altered; there was a debility about him—mental and physical—that seemed like premature decay; and they who knew the bold, high-spirited man of a few days before, could never have recognised him in the simple-looking, vacant, and purposeless invalid, who sat there, to all seeming, neither noticing nor caring what happened around him It is true, indeed, few essayed the comparison. Of those who visited him, the greater number were creditors, curious to speculate on his recovery: there were a couple of reporters too, for gossiping newspapers, desirous of coining a paragraph to amuse the town; but no friends,—not a man of those who dined, and drank, and drove, and played with him. In fact, his fate was soon forgotten even in the very circles of which he had been the centre; nor did his name ever meet mention, save in some stale report of a bankruptcy examination, or a meeting of creditors to arrange for the liquidation of his debts.

The wasteful, heedless extravagance of his mode of living, was urged even to vindictiveness by his creditors; so that for three years he remained a prisoner in the Fleet; and it was only when they saw he had no feeling of either shame or regret at his imprisonment, that an arrangement was at last agreed to, and he was liberated; set free to mix in a world in which he had not one tie to bind, or one interest to attach him!

From that hour forth, none ever knew how far his memory retained the circumstances of his past life; he never certainly mentioned them to any of those with whom he formed companionship; nor did he renew acquaintance with one among his former friends. By great exertions on the part of his lawyers, almost a thousand a year was secured to him from the wreck of his great fortune, the proceeds of a small estate that had belonged to his mother.

On this income he lived some time in total seclusion, when, to the astonishment of all, he was again seen about town, in company with men of the most equivocal character: noted gamblers at hells, "Legs of Newmarket," and others, to whom report attributed bolder and more daring feats of iniquity. While it was a debated point among certain fashionables of the clubs, how far he was to be recognised by them, he saved them all the difficulty, by passing his most intimate friends without a bow, or the slightest sign of recognition. A stern repulsive frown never left his features; and he whose frank, light-hearted buoyancy had been a proverb, was grave and silent, rarely admitting anything like an intimacy, and avoiding whatever could be called a friendship.

After a while he was missed from his accustomed haunts, and it was said that he

had purchased a yacht, and amused himself by sea excursions. Then there came a rumor of his being in the Carlist insurrection in Spain, some said, with a high command; and afterwards he was seen in a French voltigeur regiment serving in Africa. From all these varied accidents of life, he came back to London, frequenting, as before, the same play resorts, and betting sums whose amount often trenched upon the limits of the Bank. If, in his early life, he was a constant loser, now, he invariably won, and he was actually the terror of hell-keepers, whose superstitious fears of certain "lucky ones," are a well-known portion of their creed.

As for himself, he seemed to take a kind of fiendish sport in following up this new turn of fortune. It was like a Nemesis on those who had worked his ruin! One man in particular, a well-known Jew money-lender, of great wealth, he pursued with all the vindictive perseverance of revenge. He tracked him from London to Brighton, to Cheltenham, to Leamington, to Newmarket, to Goodwood; he followed him to Paris, to Brussels: wherever in any city the man opened a table for play, there was Broughton sure to be found.

At last, by way of eluding all pursuit, the Jew went over to Ireland,—a country where of all others fewest resources for his traffic presented themselves; and here again, despite change of name, and every precaution of secrecy, Broughton traced him out; and, on the night when I first met him, he was on his return from a hell on the Quays, where he had broken the Bank, and risen a winner of above two thousand pounds.

The peculiar circumstances of that night's adventure are easily told. He was followed from the play-table by two men, witnesses of his good fortune, who saw that he carried the entire sum on his person; and from his manner—a feint I found he often assumed—they believed him to be drunk. A row was accordingly organised at the closing of the play, the lights were extinguished. and a terrible scene of tumult and outrage ensued, whose sole object was to rob Broughton of his winnings.

After a desperate struggle, in which he received the wound I have mentioned, he escaped by leaping from a window into the street, a feat too daring for his assailants to imitate The remainder is already known; and I have only again to ask my reader's indulgent pardon for this long episode, without which, however, I felt I could not have asked his companionship on board the "Fire-fly."

CHAPTER X.

"THE VOYAGE OUT."

The crew of the "Fire-fly" consisted of twelve persons, natives of almost as many countries. Indeed, to see them all muster on deck, it was like a little congress of European rascality,—such a set of hang-dog, sullen, reckless wretches were they. Halkett, the Englishman, being the only one whose features were not a criminal indictment; and he, with his nose split by the slash of a cutlass, was himself no beauty. The most atrocious of all however, was a Moorish boy, about thirteen years of age, called El Jarasch (the fiend,) and whose diabolical ugliness did not belie the family name. His functions on board were to feed and take care of two young lion whelps, which Sir Dudley had brought with him from an excursion in the interior of Africa. Whether from his blood, or the nature of his occupation, I know not, but I certainly could trace in his features all the terrible traits of the creatures he tended. The wide distended nostrils, the bleared and bloodshot eyes, the large, full-lipped mouth, drawn back by the strong muscles at its angles, and the great swollen vessels of the forehead, were developed in him, as in the wild beasts. He imitated the animals, too, in all his gestures, which were sudden and abrupt; the very way he eat, tearing his food and rending it in fragments, like a prey, showed the type he followed. His dress was handsome, almost gorgeous; a white tunic of thin muslin reached to the knees, over which he wore a scarlet cloth jacket, open, and without sleeves,—this was curiously slashed and laced by a wonderful tissue of gold thread, so delicately traceried as to bear the most minute examination; a belt of burnished gold, like a succession of clasps, supported a small scimitar, whose scabbard of ivory and gold was of exquisite workmanship, the top of the handle being formed by a single emerald of purest color; his legs were bare, save at the ancles, where two rings of massive gold encircled them; on his feet he wore a kind of embroidered slippers, curiously studded with precious stones. A white turban of muslin, delicately sprigged with gold, covered his head, looped in front by another large emerald, which glared and sparkled like an eye in the centre of his forehead.

This was his gala costume; but his everyday one resembled it in everything save the actual value of the material. Such was "El Jarasch," who was to be my companion and my messmate—a fact which seemed to afford small satisfaction to either of us.

Nothing could less resemble his splendor than the simplicity of my costume. Halkett, when ordered to "rig me out," not knowing

what precise place I was to occupy on board, proceeded to dress me from the kit of the sailor we had left behind in Dublin; and although, by rolling up the sleeves of my jacket, and performing the same office for the legs of my trowsers, my hands and feet could be rendered available to me, no such ready method could prevent the clothes bagging around in every absurd superfluity, and making me appear more like a stunted monster than a human being. Beside my splendidly costumed companion, I made, indeed, but a sorry figure, nor was it long dubious that he himself thought so; the look of savage contempt he first bestowed on me, and then, the gaze of ineffable pleasure he accorded to himself afterwards, having a wide interval between them. Neither did it improve my condition, in his eyes, that I could lay claim to no distinct duty on board. While I was ruminating on this fact, the morning after I joined the yacht, we were standing under easy sail, with a bright sky and a calm sea, the south-eastern coast of Ireland on our lee, the heaving swell of the blue water, the fluttering bunting from gaff and peak, the joyous bounding motion, were all new and inspirating sensations, and I was congratulating myself on the change a few hours had wrought in my fortune, when Halkett came to tell me that Sir Dudley wanted to speak with me in his cabin. He was lounging on a little sofa when I entered, in a loose kind of dressing-gown, and before him stood the materials of his yet untasted breakfast. The first effect of my appearance was a burst of laughter, and although there is nothing I have ever loved better to hear than a hearty laugh, his was not of a kind to inspire any very pleasant or mirthful sensations. It was a short, husky, barking noise, with derision and mockery in every cadence of it.

"What the devil have we here! Why, boy, you'd disgrace a stone lighter at Sheerness. Who rigged you in that fashion?"

"Mr. Halkett, sir."

"Halkett, if you please; I know no 'misters' among my crew. Well, this must be looked to; but Halkett might have known better than to send you here in such a guise."

I made no answer; and, apparently, for some minutes, he forgot all about me, and busied himself in a large chart, which covered the table. At last he looked up; and then, after a second or two spent in recalling me to his recollection, said, "Oh, you're the lad I took up last night; very true; I wanted to speak with you. What can you do, besides what I have seen; for I trust surgery is an art we shall seldom find use for—can you cook?"

I was ashamed to say that I could boil potatoes, and fry rashers, which were all my culinary gifts, and so I replied, that "I could not."

"Have you ever been in any service, or any kind of employment?"

"Never, sir."

"Always a vagabond?"

"Always, sir."

"Well, certes, I have the luck of it!" said he, with one of his low laughs. "It is, perhaps, all the better. Come, my boy, it does not seem quite clear to me what we can make of you; we have no time, nor indeed, any patience, for making sailors of striplings; we always prefer the ready-made article, but you must pick up what you can; keep your watches when on board, and when we go ashore, anywhere, you shall be my scout; therefore, don't throw away your old rags, but be ready to resume them when wanted—you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"So far! Now, the next thing is, and it is right you should know it, though I keep a yacht for my pleasure and amusement, I sometimes indulge myself in a little smuggling—which is also a pleasure and amusement—and, therefore, my people are liable, if detected, to be sentenced to a smart term of imprisonment—not that this has yet happened to any of them, but it may, you know—so it is only fair to warn you."

"I'll take my chance with the rest, sir."

"Well said, boy! There are other little ventures, too, I sometimes make, but you'd not understand them, so we need not refer to them. Now, as to the third point—discipline. So long as you are on board, I expect obedience in everything; that you agree with your messmates, and never tell a lie. On shore, you may cut each others throats to your hearts' content. Remember then, the lesson is easy enough; if you quarrel with your comrades, I'll flog you, if you ever deceive me by an untruth; I'll blow your brains out!" The voice in which he spoke these last few words grew harsher and louder; and, at the end, it became almost a shout of angry denunciation.

"For your private governance, I may say, you'll find it wise to be good friends with Halkett, and if you can, with Jarasch. Go now, I've nothing more to say."

I was about to retire, when he called me back.

"Stay! you've said nothing to me, nor have I to you, about wages."

"I want none, sir. It is enough for me if I am provided in all money could buy for me."

"No deceit, sir! No trickery with *me!*" cried he fiercely, and he glared savagely at me.

"It is not deceit nor trick either," said I boldly, "but I see, sir, it is not likely you'll ever trust one whom you saw in the humble condition you found me. Land me, then, at the first port you put into. Leave me to follow out my fortune my own way."

"What, if I take you at your word," said

he, "and leave you among the red Moors on the coast of Barbary?"

I hung my head in shame and dismay.

"Aye, or dropped you with the Tongo chiefs, who'd grill you for breakfast?"

"But we are nigh England now, sir."

"We shall not long be so," cried he joyfully. "If this breeze last, you'll see Cape Clear, by sunrise, and not look on it again, at sunset. There, away with you! Tell Halkett I desire that you should be mustered with the rest of the fellows, learn the use of a cutlass, and to load a pistol without blowing your fingers off."

He motioned me now to leave, and I withdrew, if I must own it, only partially pleased with my new servitude. One word here to explain my conduct, which, perhaps, in the eyes of some, may appear inconsistent or improbable. It may be deemed strange and incomprehensible why I, poor, friendless, and low-born, should have been indifferent, even to the refusal of all wages. The fact is this: I had set out upon my "life-pilgrimage" with a most firm conviction that one day or other, sooner or later, I should be a "gentleman"—that I should mix on terms of equality with the best and the highest, not a trace or a clue to my former condition being in any respect discoverable. Now, with this one paramount object before me, all my endeavors were, gradually to conform, so far as might be, all my modes of thought and action to that sphere, wherein yet I should move. To learn, one by one, the usages of gentle blood, so that, when my hour came, I should step into my position ready suited to all its requirements, and equal to all its demands. If this explanation does not make clear the reasons of my generosity, and my other motives of honorable conduct, I am sorry for it, for I have none other to offer.

I have said that I retired from my interview with Sir Dudley not at all satisfied with the result. Indeed, as I pondered over it, I could not help feeling that gentlemen must dislike any traits of high and honorable motives in persons of my own station, as though they were assuming the air of their betters. What could rags have in common with generous impulses—how could poverty and hunger ever consort with high sentiments and noble aspirations? They forgive us, thought I, when we mimic their dress, and pantomime their demeanor, because we only make *ourselves* ridiculous by the imitation; but when we would assume the features that regulate their own social intercourse, they hate us, as though we sullied, with our impure touch, the virtues of a higher class of beings.

The more I thought over this subject, the more strongly was I satisfied that I was correct in my judgment; and, sooth to say, the less did I respect that condition in life which could deem any man too poor to be high-minded.

Sir Dudley's anticipations were all correct. The following evening, at sunset, the great head-lands of the south of Ireland were seen, at first, clear, and, at last, like hazy fog-banks; while our light vessel scudded along, her prow pointing to where the sun had just set, behind the horizon, and then did I learn that we were bound for North America.

Our voyage, for some weeks, was undistinguished by any feature of unusual character. The weather was uniformly fine; steady breezes from the northeast, with a clear sky and a calm sea, followed us as we went, so that, in the pleasant monotony of our lives, one day exactly resembled another. It will therefore, suffice if, in a few words, I tell how the hours were passed. Sir Dudley came on deck after breakfast, when I spread out a large white bear's skin for him to lie upon; reclined on which, and with a huge meerschaum of great beauty in his hand, he smoked and watched the lions at play. These gambols were always amusing, and never failed to assemble all the crew to witness them. "Jarasch," dressed in a light woollen tunic, with legs, arms, and neck bare, led them forth by a chain; and, after presenting them to Sir Dudley, from whose hands they usually received a small piece of sugar, they were then set at liberty, a privilege they soon availed themselves of, setting off at at full speed around the deck, sometimes one in pursuit of the other, sometimes by different ways, crossing and recrossing each other; now, with a bold spring, now, with cat-like stealthiness, creeping slowly past. The exercise, far from fatiguing, seemed only to excite them more and more, since all this time they were in search of the food which "Jarasch," with a cunning all his own, knew how, each day, to conceal in some new fashion. Baffled and irritated by delay, their eyes grew red and lustrous, their tails stiffened, and were either carried high over the back, or extended straight backward; they contracted their necks, too, till the muscles were gathered up in thick massive folds, and then, their great heads seemed actually fastened on the fore part of the trunk. When their rage had been sufficiently whetted by delay, Jarasch would bring forth the mess in a large "grog-tub," covered with a massive lid, on which seating himself, and armed with a short stout bludgeon, he used to keep the beasts at bay. This, which was the most exciting part of the spectacle, presented every possible variety of combat. Sometimes he could hold them in check for nigh half an hour; sometimes the struggle would scarcely last five minutes. Now, he would, by a successful stroke, so intimidate one of his assailants, that he could devote all his energies against the other,

Now, by a simultaneous attack, the savage creatures would spring upon and overthrow him, and then, with all the semblance of ungovernable passion, they would drag him some distance along the deck, mouthing him with frothy lips, and striking him about the head with their huge paws, from which they would not desist till some of the sailors, uncovering the mess, would tempt them off by the savor of the food. Although, in general, these games passed off with little other damage than a torn tunic, or a bruise more or less severe, at others Jarasch would be so sorely mauled as to be carried off insensible; nor would he again be seen for the remainder of the day. That the combat was not quite devoid of peril, was clear, by the fact that several of the sailors were always armed, some with staves, others with cutlasses, since, in the event of a bite, and blood flowing, nothing but immediate and prompt aid could save the boy from being devoured. This he knew well, and the exercises were always discontinued whenever the slightest cut, or even a scratch, existed on any part of his person. Each day seemed to heighten the excitement of these exhibitions; for as Jarasch became more skilful in his defence, so did the whelps in the mode of attack; beside that, their growth advanced with incredible rapidity, and soon threatened to make the amusement no longer practicable. This display over, Sir Dudley played at chess with Halkett, while I, seated behind him, read aloud some book—usually one of voyages and travels. In the afternoon he went below, and studied works in some foreign language, of which he appeared most eager to acquire a knowledge, and I was then ordered to copy out, into a book, various extracts of different routes in all parts of the world; sometimes, the mode of crossing a Syrian desert; now the shortest and safest way through the wild regions on the shores of the Adriatic. At one time, the theme would be the steppes of Tartary, or the snowy plains of the Ukraine; at another, the dangerous passes of the Cordilleras, or the hunting-grounds of the Mandans. What delightful hours were these to me; how full of the very highest interest! the wildest adventures were here united with narratives of real events and people—presenting human life in aspects the strangest and most varied. How different from my old clerkship with my father—with the interminable string of bastard and broken law Latin! I believe that in all my after life, fortunate as it has been in so many respects, I have never passed hours more happy than these were.

In recompense for my secretarial functions, I was free of the middle watch; so that, instead of turning into my berth at sundown, to snatch some sleep before midnight, I could lounge about at will; sometimes dropping into the steerage to listen to some seaman's "yarn" of storm and shipwreck, but far oftener, book in hand, taking a lesson in French from the old cook, for which I paid him in being "aide-de-cuisine;" or, with more hardy industry, assisting our fat German mate to polish up his Regensburg pistols, by which I made some progress in that tongue of harsh and mysterious gutturals.

Through all these occupations, the thought never left me—what could be the object of Sir Dudley's continued voyaging? No feature of pleasure was certainly associated with it; as little could it be attributed to the practice of smuggling—the very seas he had longest cruised in forbade that notion. It must be, thought I, that other reason to which he so darkly alluded on the day he called me to his cabin; and what could that be? Never was ingenuity more tortured than mine by this ever-recurring question. Since it is needless to tell the reader I was not then, nor indeed for a very long time afterward, acquainted with those particulars of his history I have already jotted down. This intense curiosity of mine would, doubtless, have worn itself out at last, but for a slight circumstance occurring to keep it still alive within me. The little state-room in which I used to write, lay at one side of the cabin, from which it was entered—no other means of getting to it existing; a heavy silk curtain supplied the place of a door between the two; and this, when four o'clock came, and my day's work was finished, was let down till the following morning, when it was drawn aside, that Sir Dudley, from time to time, might see, and, if needful, speak with me. Now, one day, when we had been about three weeks at sea, the weather being intensely hot and sultry, Sir Dudley had fallen asleep in his cabin, while I sat writing away vigorously within. Suddenly I heard a shout on deck—"The whales! a shoal of whales ahead!" and immediately the scuffling of feet, and the heavy hum of voices, proclaimed the animation and interest the sight created. I strained myself to peep through the little one-paned window beside me; but all I could see was the great blue heaving ocean, as, in majestic swell, it rolled along. Still the noise continued; and, by the number and tone of the speakers, I could detect that all the crew were on deck—every one, in fact, save myself. What a disappointment! full as my mind was of every monster of land and water; burning to observe some of the wonderful things I had read so much about, and now destined actually to be denied a sight on which my comrades were then gazing! I could endure the thought no longer; and although my task was each morning allotted to me, and carefully examined the next day

by Sir Dudley, I stepped lightly out, on tiptoe, and letting fall the curtain, so that if he awoke I should not be missed, I stole up "the companion" and reached the deck.

What a sight was there! the whole sea around us was in motion with the great monsters, who, in pursuit of a shoal of herrings, darted at speed through the blue water, spouting, blowing and tossing in all the wildest confusion; here, every eye was bent on a calm still spot in the water, where a whale had "sounded"—that is, gone down quite straight into the depths of the sea; here, another was seen, scarcely covered by the water, his monstrous head and back alternately dipping below or emerging above it; harpoons and tackle were sought out, fire-arms loaded, and every preparation for attack and capture made, but none dared to venture without orders, nor was any hardy enough to awake him and ask for them. Perhaps the very expectancy on our part increased the interest, for certainly the excitement of the scene was intense—so much so, that I actually forgot all about my task; and, without a thought of consequences, was hanging eagerly over the taffrail in full enjoyment of the wild scene, when the tinkle of the captain's bell started me, and to my horror I remembered it was now his dinner-hour, and that, for the rest of the day, no opportunity would offer of my reaching my state-room to finish my writing.

I was so terrified that I lost all interest in the spectacle, whereof, up to that time, my mind was full. It was my first delinquency, and had all the poignancy of a first fault. The severity I had seen practised on others, for even slight infractions of duty, was all before me, and I actually debated with myself whether it would not be better to jump overboard at once than meet the anger of Sir Dudley. With any one else, perhaps, I should have bethought me of some cunning lie, to account for my absence, but he had warned me about trying to deceive him, and I well knew he could be as good as his word. I had no courage to tell any of the sailors my fault, and ask their advice; indeed I anticipated what would be the result; some brutal jest over my misfortune, some coarse allusion to the fate they had often told me, portended me, since "no younker had ever gone from land to land, with Sir Dudley, without tasting his hemp fritters." I satdown, therefore, beside the bowsprit, where none should see me, to commune alone with my grief; and, if I could, to summon courage to meet my fate.

Night had closed in some time, and all was tranquil on board, when I saw Halkett, as was his custom, going aft to the cabin, where he always remained for an hour or more each evening. It was just then, I know not how the notion occurred, but it struck me that if I could lower myself over the side, I might be able to creep through the little window into the state room, and carry away the paper to finish it before morning. I lost little time in setting about my plot, and having made fast a rope to one of the clues, I lowered myself, fearlessly, over the gunwale, and pushing open the little sash, which was unfastened, I soon managed to insert my head and shoulders, and without any difficulty dragging my body slowly after, entered the state-room. So long as the danger of the enterprise, and its difficulty lasted, so long my courage was high, and my heart fearless; but, when I sat down in the little dark room, scarcely venturing to breathe, lest I should be overheard, almost afraid to touch the papers on the table, lest their rustling noise should betray me! how was this terror increased, when I actually heard the voices of Sir Dudley and Halkett as plainly as though I were in the cabin beside them!

"And so, Halkett," said Sir Dudley, "you think this expedition will be as fruitless as the others?"

"I do, sir," said the other, in a low, dogged tone.

"And yet you were the very man who encouraged me to make it!"

"And what of that! Of two things, I thought it more likely that he should be the leader of a band to a regiment in Canada, than be a Faquino on the Mole of Genoa. A fellow like him could scarcely fall so low as that."

"He shall fall lower, by heaven, if I live!" said Sir Dudley, in a voice rendered guttural with deep passion.

"Take care you fall not with him, sir," said Halkett, in a tone of warning.

"And if I should—for what else have I lived these three last years? In that pursuit have I periled health and life, satisfied to lose both if I but succeed at last."

"And how do you mean to proceed? for, assuredly, if he be attached to the regiment at Kingstown he'll hear of you, from some source or other. You remember when we all but had him at Torlosk, and yet he heard of our coming before we got two posts from Warsaw; and again, at 'Forli,' we had scarce dropped anchor off Rimini when he was up and away."

"I'll go more secretly to work this time, Halkett; hitherto I have been slow to think the fellow a coward. It is so hard to believe anything so base, as a man bereft of every trait of virtue: now I see clearly that he is so. I'll track him, not to offer him the chances of a duel—but to hunt him down as I would a wild beast. I'll proceed up the river in the disguise of an itinerant merchant,—one of those pedlar fellows of which this land is full, —taking that Irish dog along with me."

"Of whom, remember, you know nothing, sir," interposed Halkett.

"Nor need to know," said he, impatient at the interruption. "Let him play me false, let me only suspect that he means it, and my reckoning with him will be short. I have watched him closely, of late, and I see the fellow's curiosity is excited about us; he is evidently on the alert to learn something of our object in this voyage; but the day he gains the knowledge, Tom, will be his last to enjoy it. It is a cheap process if we are at sea—a dark night and an eighteen-pound shot! If on shore, I'll readily find some one to take the trouble off my hands."

It may be imagined with what a sensation of terror I heard these words, feeling that my actual position at the moment would have decided my fate, if discovered; and yet, with all this, I could not stir, nor make an effort to leave the spot; a fascination to hear the remainder of the conversation had thoroughly bound me as by a spell; and in breathless anxiety I listened, as Sir Dudley resumed:

"You, with Heckenstein and the Greek, must follow, ready to assist me when I need your aid; for, my plan is this: I mean to entice the fellow, on pretence of a pleasure excursion, a few miles from the town, into the bush, there, to bind him hand and foot, and convey him, by the forest tracks, to the second 'portage,' where the batteaux are stationed, by one of which,—these Canadian fellows are easily bribed—we shall drop down to Montreal; there the yacht shall be in waiting, all ready for sea. Even without a wind, three days will bring us off the Island of Orleans, and as many more, if we be but fortunate, to the gulf. The very worst that can happen is discovery and detection, and if that ensue, I'll blow his brains out."

"And if we should succeed in carrying him off, Sir Dudley, what then?"

"I have not made up my mind, Halkett, what I'll do. I've thought of a hundred schemes of vengeance; but, confound it, I must be content with one only, though fifty deaths would not satisfy my hate."

"I'd put a bullet through his skull, or swing him from the yard-arm, and make an end of it," said Halkett, roughly.

"Not I, faith; he shall live: and if I can have my will, a long life too. His own Government would take charge of him at "Irkutsk," for that matter, at the quicksilver mines; and they say, the diseased bones, from the absorption of that poison, is a terrible punishment. But I have a better notion still. Do you remember that low island off the east shore of the Niger, where the negro fellows live in log huts, threshing the water all day, to keep the caymans from the rice-grounds."

"The devil!" exclaimed Halkett, "you'll not put him there."

"I have thought of it very often," said Sir Dudley, calmly. "He'd see his doom before him every day, and dream of it each night too. One cannot easily forget that horrid swamp, alive and moving with those reptiles! It was nigh two months ere I could fall asleep at night without starting up in terror at the thought of them." Sir Dudley arose as he said this, and walked the cabin with impatient steps; sometimes as he passed, his arm would graze the curtain, and shake its folds, and then my heart leaped to my mouth in very terror. At last, with an effort, that I felt as the last chance for life, I secured the papers in my bosom, and, standing up on the seat, crept through the window, and, after a second's delay, to adjust the rope, clambered up the side, and gained the deck unobserved. It could not have been real fatigue, for there was little or no exertion in the feat; but yet such was my state of exhaustion, that I crept over to the boat that was fastened midships, and lying down in her, on a coil of cable, slept soundly till morning. If my boyish experience had familiarized my mind with schemes of vengeance as terrible as ever fiction fabricated, I had yet to learn that "gentlemen" cherished such feelings; and I own the discovery gave me a tremendous shock. That some awful debt of injury was on Sir Dudley's mind was clear enough, and that I was to be, in some capacity or other, an aid to him in acquitting it, was a fact I was more convinced of, than pleased at. Neither did I fancy his notions of summary justice,—perhaps it was my legal education had prejudiced me in favor of more formal proceedings; but I saw, with a most constitutional horror, the function of judge, jury, and executioner, in the hands of one single individual.

So impressed was I with these thoughts, that had I not been on the high seas, I should inevitably have run for it. Alas, however, the banks of Newfoundland—which, after all I had heard mentioned on our voyage, I imagined to be grassy slopes, glittering with daisies, and yellow with daffodils—are but sand-heaps, some two hundred fathoms down in "the ocean blue;" and all one ever knows of them is, the small geological specimens brought up on the tallowed end of the deep-sea lead. Escape therefore, was, for the present out of the question; but the steady determination to attempt it was spared me, by a circumstance that occurred about a week later.

After some days of calm, common enough in these latitudes, a slight but steady breeze set in from the north-east, which bore us up the gulf with easy sail, till we came in sight of the long, low island of Anticosti, which, like some gigantic monster, raises its dark, misshapen beach above the water. Not the slightest trace of foliage or verdure to give it

a semblance to the aspect of land! Two dreary-looking log houses, about eighteen miles apart, remind one that a refuge for the shipwrecked is deemed necessary in this dangerous channel; but, except these, not a trace exists to show that the foot of man had trod that dreary spot.

The cook's galley is sure to have its share of horrors when a ship "lies too" near this gloomy shore; scarcely a crew exists, where some one belonging to it has not had a messmate wrecked there: and then, the dreadful narratives of starvation, and strife, and murders, were too fearful to dwell on. Among the horrors recorded on every hand, all agreed in speaking of a terrible character, who had never quitted the island for upwards of forty years. He was a sailor, who had committed a murder under circumstances of great atrocity, and dared not revisit the mainland, for fear of the penalty of his guilt. Few had ever seen him; for years back, indeed, he had not been met with at all, and rumor said that he was dead. Still no trace of his body could be found, and some inclined to the opinion that he might at last have made his escape.

He was a negro, and was described as possessing the strength of three or four men; and although the proverbial exaggeration of sailors might, and very probably did, color these narratives, the sad fate of more than one party who had set out to capture him, gave the stories a terrible air of truth. The fear of him was such, that although very liberal terms had been offered to induce men to take up their abode in the island, to succor the crews of wrecked vessels, none could be found to accept the post; and even at the period when I visited these seas, and after a long lapse of years since the Black Boatswain had been seen, no one would venture.

The story went that his ghost still wandered there, and that at night, when the storm was high, and the waves of the Gulf sent the spray over that low and dreary island, his cries could be heard, calling aloud to "shorten sail, to brace round the yards, close the hatchways," mingled with blasphemies that made the very hair stand on end.

If the reader, armed with the triple mail of incredulity, so snugly ensconced in his easy chair, before a sea-coal fire, can afford to scoff at such perils, not so did I, as I sat in a corner of the galley, gathering with greedy ears the horrors that fell on every side, and now and then stealing out to cast a glance over the bulwarks at the long low bank of sand, which seemed more like an exhalation from the water, than a solid mass of rock and shingle.

I have said that a feeling of rivalry existed between the Moorish boy, El Jarasch, and myself, and although I endured his scoffs and sneers, at first, with a humility my own humble garb and anomalous position enforced, I soon began to feel more confidence in myself, and that species of assurance a becoming dress seems somehow to inspire; for I was now attired like the rest of the crew, and wore the name of the yacht in gold letters on my cap, as well as on the breast of my waistcoat.

The hatred of El Jarasch increased with every day, and mutual scoffs and gibes were the only intercourse between us. More than once, Halkett, who had always befriended me, warned me of the boy, and said that his Moorish blood was sure to make his vengeance felt; but I only laughed at his caution, and avowed myself ready to confront him when and however he pleased. Generosity was little wasted on either side, so that when one day, in a fierce encounter with the lions, El Jarasch received a fall which broke one of his ribs, and was carried in a state of insensibility to his berth, I neither pitied him nor regretted his misfortune. I affected even to say that his own cowardice had rendered the creatures more daring, and that had he preserved a bolder front, the mischance had never occurred. These vauntings of mine, coupled with an avowed willingness to take his place, came to Sir Dudley's ears on the third evening after the accident, and he immediately sent for me to his cabin.

"Is it true, sirrah?" said he, in a harsh unpleasant voice, "that you have been jesting about Jarasch, and saying that you were ready to take charge of the whelps in his stead?"

"It is," said I, answering both questions together.

"You shall do so to-morrow, then!" replied he, solemnly: "take care that you can do something as well as boast!" and with this he motioned me to leave the cabin.

I at once repaired to the steerage to report my interview to the men, who were all more friendly with me than with the "Moor." Many were the counsels I received about how I should conduct myself the next morning; some asserting that, as it was my first time, I could not be too gentle with the animals, avoiding the slightest risk of hurting them, and even suffering their rough play without any effort to check it. Others, on the contrary, advised me at once to seek the mastery over the beasts, and by two or three severe lessons, to teach them caution, if not respect. This counsel, I own, chimed in with my own notions, and also better accorded with what, after my late vauntings, I felt to be my duty.

It was altogether a very anxious night for me; not exactly through fear, because I knew, as the men were always ready with their arms loaded, life could not be periled, and I did not dread the infliction of a mere sprain or fracture; but I felt it was an ordeal wherein my fame was at stake. Were I to acquit myself well, there would be an end for ever of those insulting airs of superiority the

Moorish boy had assumed towards me. Whereas, if I failed, I must consent to bear his taunts and sarcasms without a murmur.

In one point only the advice of all the crew agreed, which was, that the female cub, much larger and more ferocious than the male, should more particularly demand my watchfulness. "If she scratch you, boy, mind that you desist," said an old Danish sailor, who had been long on the African coast. This caution was re-echoed by all, and resolving to follow its dictates, "I turned in" to my hammock, to dream of combats and battles till morning.

I was early astir,—waking with a sudden start,—I had been dreaming of a lion-hunt, and fancied I heard the deep-mouthed roaring of the beasts in a jungle; and true enough; a low monotonous kind of howl came from the place where the animals lay, for it was now the fourth morning of their being confined without having been once at liberty.

I had just completed my dressing—the costume was simply a short pair of loose trousers, hands, arms, and feet bare, and a small Fez cap on my head,—when Halkett came down to me to say, that he had been speaking to Sir Dudley about the matter, and that as I had never yet accustomed myself to the whelps, it was better that I should not begin the acquaintance after they had been four days in durance. "At the same time," added Halkett, "he gives you the choice; you can venture if you please."

"I've have made up my mind," said I. "I'm sure I'm able for anything the black fellow can do!"

"My advice to you, boy," said he, "is, to leave them alone; those Moorish chaps are the creatures' countrymen, and have almost the same kind of natures; they are stealthy, treacherous, and cruel. They never trust anything—man or beast!"

"No matter!" said I, "I'm as strong as he is, and my courage is not less."

"If you will have it so, I have nothing to say; indeed I promised Sir Dudley I'd give you no advice one way or other; so now get the staff from Jarasch, and come on deck."

The staff was a short thick truncheon of oak, tipped with brass at each end, and the only weapon ever used by the boy in his encounters.

"So you're going to take my place!" said the black fellow, while his dark eyes were lighted up like coals of fire, and his white teeth glanced between his purple lips. Don't hurt my poor pet cubs, be gentle with them."

"Where's the staff?" said I, not liking the tone in which he spoke, or well knowing if he affected earnest or jest.

"There it is," said he; "but your white hands will be enough without that. You'll not need the weapon the coward used!" And as he spoke, a kind of shuddering convulsion shook his frame from head to foot.

"Come, come!" said I, stretching out my hand; "I ought not to have called you a coward, Jarasch; that you are not! I ask you to forgive me; will you?"

He never spoke, but nestled lower down in the hammock, so that I could not even see his face.

"There, they're calling me already. I must be off! Let us shake hands and be friends this time at least. When you're well and up, we can fight it out about something else!"

"Kiss me, then," said he: and though I had no fancy for the embrace, or the tone it was asked in, I leaned over the hammock, and while he placed one around my neck, and drew me towards him, I kissed his forehead, and he mine, in true Moorish fashion; and not sorry to have my peace with my only enemy, I stepped up the ladder with a light heart and a firm courage.

I little knew what need I had for both! When Jarasch had put his arm around my neck, I did not know that he had inserted his hand beneath the collar of my shirt, and drawn a long streak of blood, from his own veins, across my back between my shoulders. When I arrived on deck, it was to receive the congratulation of the crew, who all were struck with my muscular arms and legs, and who unanimously pronounced that I was far fitter to exercise the whelps than the Moor.

Sir Dudley said nothing; a short nod greeted me as I came toward him, and then he waved me back with his hand, a motion, which, having something contemptuous in it, pained me acutely at the moment. I had not much time, however, to indulge such feelings. The whelps were already on deck, and springing madly at the wooden bars of their cage for liberty. Eager as themselves, I hastened to unbolt the door, and set them free.

No sooner were they at large than they set off, down one side of the deck and up the other, careering at full speed, clearing with a bound whatever stood in their way, and when by any chance meeting each other, stopping for an instant to stare with glaring eyes and swelling nostrils, and then, either passing stealthily and warily past, or, one would crouch, while the other cleared him at a spring, and so off again. In all this I had no part to play; I could neither call them back, like Jarasch, whose voice they knew, nor had I his dexterity in catching them as they went, and throwing all manner of gambols, over and upon them, as he did.

I felt this poignantly, the more as I saw, or thought I saw, Sir Dudley's eyes upon me, more than once, with an expression of disdainful pity. At last, the great tub which contained the creatures' food was wheeled forward; and no sooner had the men retired,

than the quick-scented animals were on the spot,—so rapidly, indeed, that I had barely time to seat myself, cross-legged, on the lid, when they approached, and with stately step walked around the vessel, staring, as it were, in surprise, at the new figure who disputed their meal with them.

At last, the male placed one paw upon the lid, and with the other, tapped me twice or thrice on the shoulder, with the kind of gentle, pattering blow a cat will sometimes use with a mouse. It was a sort of mild admonition to "leave that," nothing of hostility whatever being announced.

I replied by imitating the gesture, so far as a half-closed fist would permit, and struck him on the side of the head. He looked grave at this treatment, and slowly descending from his place, he lay down, about a yard off. Meanwhile the female, who had been smelling and sniffing round and round the tub, made an effort to lift the lid with her head, and failing, began to strike it in sharp, short blows with her paw; the excitement of her face, and the sturdy position of the hind legs, showing that her temper was chafed at the delay. To increase her rage, I pushed the lid a few inches back; and as the savory steam arose, the creature grew more eager, and at last attracted the other to the spot.

It was quite clear that hunger was the passion uppermost with them, and that they had not yet connected me with the cause of their disappointment; for they labored by twenty devices, to insert a paw, or to smash the lid, but never noticed me in the least. Wearied of my failures to induce them to play, and angry at the indifference they manifested to me, I sprang from the lid, and lifting it from the tub, flung it back. In an instant they had each their heads in the mess; the female had even her great paw in the midst of the tub, and was eating away in that low, gurgling growl peculiar to the wild beast.

Dashing right between them, I seized one by the throat with both hands, and hurled him back upon the deck. A shout of "Bravo!" burst from the crew at the boldness of the feat, and with a bound the fellow made at me. I dropped suddenly on one knee as he came, and struck him with the staff on the fore legs. Had he been shot, he could not have fallen more rapidly; down he went, like a dead mass, on the deck. To spring on his back, and hold him fast down, was the work of a second, while I belabored him about the head with my fists.

The stunning effect of his first fall gave me the victory for a moment, but he soon rallied, and attacked me boldly. It was now a fair fight, for, if I sometimes succeeded in making him shake his huge head, or drop his paw with pain, more than once he staggered me with a blow, which, had it been only quickly followed, would soon have decided the struggle. At last, after a scuffle in which he had nearly vanquished me, he made a leap at my throat; I put in a blow of such power with the staff on the forehead, that he gave a loud roar of pain, and with drooping tail, slunk to hide away himself beneath a boat.

Up to this moment, the female had never stirred from the mess of food, but continued eating and snarling, as though every mouthful was a battle: scarcely, however, had the roar of the other cub been heard, than she lifted her head, and slowly turning round, stared at me with an expression which, even now, my dreams will recall.

I had not yet recovered from the exhaustion of my late encounter, and was half-sitting, half-kneeling on the deck, as the whelp stood glowering at me, with every vein in her vast forehead swollen, and her large red eyes seeming to dilate as she looked. The attitude of the creature must have been striking, for the crew cheered with a heartiness that showed how much they admired her.

So long as I sat unmoved, she never stirred; but when I prepared to arise, she gave one bound, and striking me with her head, hurled me back upon the deck: her own impulse had carried her clean over me, and when she returned, I was already up, on my knees, and better prepared to receive her. Again she tried the same manœuvre; but this time I leaped to my feet, and springing on one side, struck her a heavy blow on the top of the head. Twice or thrice the same attack, with the same result, followed; and at each blow, a gallant cheer from the men gave me fresh courage.

The beast was now excited to a dreadful degree, but her very passion favored me, for her assaults were wilder and less circumspect than at first. At length, just as I was again making the side leap by which I had escaped, my foot slipped, and I fell. I was scarcely down ere she was upon me, not, as before, to strike with her paws, but with a rude shock, she threw herself across me, as if to crush me by her weight; while her huge head, and terrific mouth, frothy, and steaming, lay within a few inches of my face.

Halkett and two others advanced to my rescue: but I bade them go back, and leave me to myself, for I was not conquered. For some minutes we lay thus; when at length, having recovered strength once more, I grasped the whelp's throat with both hands, and then, by a tremendous effort, threw her back, and rolled myself uppermost. She soon shook herself free, however, and turned upon me; I was now on my knees and with the staff I dealt her a fierce blow on the leg. A terrific howl followed, and she closed with me in full fury. Seizing my shirt, she tore it away from my breast, and with her paw upon the fragment,

ripped it in a hundred pieces. I endeavored to catch her by the throat once more, but failed, and rolled over on my face, and, in doing so, disclosed the bloody streak between my shoulders; she saw it, and at the same instant sprang on me. I felt her teeth, as they met in my neck, while her terrible cry—the most appalling ears ever heard, rang through my brain.

"Save him!—save him! she's killing him!" were now heard on every side; but none dared to fire, for fear of wounding me, and the terrible rage of the animal deterred all from approaching her. The struggle was now a life-and-death one; and alternately falling and rolling, we fought I cannot tell how—for the blood blinded me, as it came from my wound in my forehead; and I only felt one firm purpose in my heart—"If I fall, she shall not survive me." Several of the sailors came near enough to strike her with their cutlasses, but these wounds only increased her rage, and I cried to them to desist.

"Shoot her! put a bullet through her!" cried Halkett.

"Let none dare to shoot her!" cried Sir Dudley, loudly. I just heard these words, as, after a fierce struggle, in which she had seized me by the shoulder, I fell against the bulwark. With a last effort I staggered to my knees, flung open the gangway; and then, with an exertion that to myself seemed my very last on earth, I seized her by the throat, and hurled her backwards into the sea. On hands and knees I leaned forward to see her, as the rapid gulf-stream, hurrying onward to the ocean, bore her away; and then, as my sight grew fainter, I fell back upon the deck, and believed I was dying.

CHAPTER XI.

"MEANS AND MEDITATIONS."

It was the second evening after my lion adventure, and I was stretched in my hammock in a low, half-torpid state, not a limb nor a joint in all my body that had not its own peculiar pain; while a sharp wound in my neck, and another still deeper one in the fleshy part of my shoulder, had just begun that process called "union"—one which I am bound to say, however satisfactory in result, is often very painful in its progress. The slightest change of position gave me intolerable anguish; as I lay, with closed eyes and crossed hands, not a bad resemblance of those stone saints one sees upon old tombstones.

My faculties were clear and acute, so that, having abundant leisure for the occupation, I had nothing better to do than take a brief retrospect of my late life. Such reviews are rarely satisfactory, or rather, one rarely thinks of making them, when the "score of the past" is in our favor. Up to this moment, it was clear I had gained but little experience; I had started light, and I had acquired nothing, save a somewhat worse opinion of the world, and a greater degree of confidence in myself. I had but one way of balancing my account with Fortune, which was by asking myself, "Would I undo the past, if in my power? would I wish once more to be back in my 'father's mud edifice,' now digging a drain, now drawing an indictment,—a kind of pastoral pettifogger, with one foot in a potato furrow, and the other in petty sessions?" I stoutly said, "No!" a thousand times "no!" to this question.

I could not ask myself as to my preference for a university career, for my college life had concluded abruptly, in spite of me; but still, during my town experiences, I saw enough to leave me no regrets at having quitted the Muses. The life of a "skip," as the Trinity men have it,—*vice* gyp., for the Greek word, signifying a "vulture"—is only removed by a thin sheet of silver paper from that of a cabin boy in a collier; copious pummeling and short prog, being the first two articles of your warrant; while in some respects the marine has a natural advantage over him on shore. A skip is invariably expected to invent lies at "discretion," for his master's benefit, and is always thrashed when they are either discovered, or turn out adverse. On this point his education is perfectly "Spartan;" but unhappily, too, he is expected to be a perfect mirror of truth on all other occasions. This is somewhat hard, inasmuch as it is only in a man's graduate course, that he learns to defend a paradox, and support, by good reasons, what he knows to be false.

Again, "a skip" never receives clothes, but is flogged at least once a week for disorders in his dress, and for general untidiness of appearance; this, too, is hard, since he has as little intercourse with soap, as he has with conic sections.

Thirdly, a good skip invariably obtains credit for his master at "Foley's" chop-house; while, in his own proper capacity, he would not get trust for a cheese-paring.

Fourthly, a skip is supposed to be born a valet, as some are born poets—to have an instinctive aptitude for all the details of things he has never seen, or heard of before; so that when he applies Warren's patent to French leather boots, polishes silver with a Bath brick, blows the fire with a quarto, and cuts candles with a razor, he finds it passing strange that he should be "had up" for punishment. To be fat without food, to be warm without fire, to be wakeful without sleep, to be clad without clothes, to be known as a vagabond, and to pass current for unblemished honesty, to

be praised as a liar, and then thrashed for lying,—is too much to expect at fifteen years.

Lastly, as to Betty's, I had no regrets. The occupation of horse-boy, like the profession of physic, has no "avenir." The utmost the most aspiring can promise to himself, is to hold more horses than his neighbors, as the doctor's success is to order more "senna." There is nothing beyond these; no higher path opens to him who feels the necessity for an "upward course." It is a ladder with but one round to it! No, no; I was right to "sell out" there.

My steeple-chase might have led to something, that is, I might have become a jockey; but then again, one's light weight, like a "contr' alto" voice, is sure to vanish after a year or two; and then, from the heyday of popularity, you sink down into a bad groom or a fourth-rate tenor, just as if, after reaching a silk gown at the bar, a man had to begin life again as crier in the Exchequer! Besides, in all these various walks, I should have had that worst of all "trammels," a patron. Now, if any resolve had thoroughly fixed itself in my mind, it was this,—never to have a patron —never to be bound to any man, who, because he had once set you on your legs, should regulate the pace you were to walk through a long life. To do this, one should be born without a particle of manhood's spirit —absolutely without volition—otherwise you go through life a living lie, talking sentiments that are not yours, and wearing a livery in your heart as well as on your back!

Why do we hear such tirades about the ingratitude of men, who, being once assisted by others—their inferiors in everything save gold—soar above the low routine of toadyism, and rise into personal independence? Let us remember that the contract was never a fair one, and that a whole life's degradation is a heavy sum to pay for a dinner with his Grace, or a cup of tea with her Highness. "My lord," I am aware, thinks differently; and it is one of the very pleasant delusions of his high station, to fancy that little folk are dependent upon him,—what consequence they obtain among their fellows by his recognition in public, or by his most careless nod in the street. But "my lord" does not know that this is a paper currency, that represents no capital, that it is not convertible at will, and is never a legal tender, and consequently, as a requital for actual *bona fide* services, is about as honest a payment as a flash-note.

"It was no breach of my principle that I accepted Sir Dudley's offer; our acquaintance began by rendering him a service; and I was as free to leave him that hour, and, I own, as ready to do so, if occasion permitted, as he could be to get rid of me; and it was not long before the occasion presented itself for exercising these views.

As I lay thus, ruminating on my past fortunes, Halkett descended the steerage ladder, followed by Felborg, the Dane; and approaching my hammock, held a light to my face for a few seconds. "Still asleep!" said Halkett. "Poor boy! he has never awoke since I dressed his wound this morning. I'm sure it's better, so let us leave him so."

"Ay, ay," said the Dane, "let him sleep; bad tidings come soon enough, without one's being awoke to hear them. But do you think he'll do it?" added he, with lower and more anxious tone.

"He has said so, and I never knew him fail in his promise when it was a cruel one.

"Have you no influence over him, Halkett? could you not speak for the boy?"

"I have done all I could, more than perhaps it was safe to do. I told him I couldn't answer for the men, if he were to shoot him on board: and he replied to me short, "I'll take the fellow ashore with me, alone,—neither you nor they have any right to question what you are not to witness."

"Well! when I get back to Elsinore, it's to a prison and heavy irons I shall go for life, that's certain; but I'd face it all, rather than live the life we've done now for twenty months past."

"Hush! speak low!" said the other. "I suppose others are weary of it as well as you. Many a man has to live a bad life just because he started badly."

"I'm sorry for the boy!" sighed the Dane; "he was a bold and fearless fellow."

"I'm sorry for him, too. It was an evil day for him when he joined us. Well, well, what would he have become if he had lived a year or two on board?"

"He has no father nor mother," said the Dane, "that's something. I lost mine, too, when I was nine years old, and it made me the reckless devil I became ever after. I wasn't sixteen when the crew of the Tre-Kroner mutinied, and I led the party that cut down the first lieutenant. It was a moonlight night, just as it might be now, in the middle watch, and lieutenant Œldenstrom was sitting aft, near the wheel, humming a tune. I walked aft, with my cutlass in one hand, and a pistol in the other,—but just as I stepped up the quarter deck, my foot slipped, and the cutlass fell with a clank on the deck."

"'What's that?' cried the lieutenant.

"'Felborg, sir, mate of the watch,' said I, standing fast where I was. 'It's shoaling fast a-head, sir.'

"'D—n?' said he, 'what a coast!'

"'Couldn't you say a bit of something better than that,' said I, getting nearer to him slowly.

"'What do you mean?' said he, jumping up angrily; but he was scarce on his legs when he was down again at his full length on

the plank, with a bullet through his brain, never to move again!"

"There, there, avast with that tale; you've told it to me every night that my heart was heavy this twelvemonth past. But I've hit on a way to save the lad,—will you help me?"

"Ay, if my help doesn't bring bad luck on him; it always has on every one I befriended since—since—"

"Never mind that. There's no risk here, nor much room for luck, good or bad." He paused a second or two, then added,—

"I'm thinking we can't do better than shove him ashore in the island yonder."

"On Anticosti!" said Felborg, with a shudder.

"Ay, why not? There's always a store of biscuit and fresh water in the log-houses, and the cruisers touch there every six or seven weeks to take people off. He has but to hoist the flag to show he's there."

"There's no one there now," said the Dane.

"No. I saw the flag-staff bare yesterday; but what does that matter? A few days or a few weeks alone, are better than what's in store for him here."

"I don't think so. No! Beym, ella Deyvelm! I'd stand the bullet at three paces, but I'd not meet that negro chap alone."

"Oh, he's dead and gone this many a year," said Halkett. "When the *Rodney* transport was wrecked there, two years last fall, they searched the island from end to end, and couldn't find a trace of him. They were seven weeks there, and it's pretty clear if he were alive——"

"Ay, just so—if he were alive."

"Nonsense, man,—you don't believe those yarns they get up to frighten the boys in the cook's galley."

"It's scarce mercy, to my reckoning," said Felborg, "to take the lad from a short and quick fate and leave him yonder; but if you need my help, you shall have it."

"That's enough," said Halkett, "go on deck, and look after the boat. None of our fellows will betray us, and in the morning we'll tell Sir Dudley that he threw himself overboard in the night, in a fit of frenzy. He'll care little whether it's true or false."

"I say, Con.—Con., my lad," said Halkett, as soon as the other had mounted the ladder, "wake up, my boy, I've something to tell you."

"I know it," said I, wishing to spare time, which I thought might be precious, "I've been dreaming all about it."

"Poor fellow, his mind is wandering," muttered Halkett to himself. "Come, my lad, try and put on your clothes—here's your jacket;" and with that he lifted me from my hammock, and began to help me to dress.

"I was dreaming, Halkett, said I, "that Sir Dudley sent me adrift in the punt, and fired at me with the swivel, but that you rowed out and saved me."

"That s just it!" said Halkett, with an energy that showed how the supposed dream imposed upon him.

"You put me ashore on Anticosti, Halkett," said I, "but wasn't that cruel?" The Black Boatman is there."

"Never fear the Black Boatman, my lad, he's dead years ago; and it strikes me you'll steer a course in life, where old wives' tales never laid down the soundings."

"I can always be brave when I want it, Halkett," said I, letting out a bit of my peculiar philosophy; but I saw he didn't understand my speech, and I went on with my dressing in silence.

Halkett meanwhile, continued to give me advice about the island, and the log-houses, and the signal-ensign; in fact, about all that could possibly concern my safety and speedy escape, concluding with a warning to me never to divulge that anything but a mere accident had been the occasion of my being cast away. "This, for your own sake and for mine too, Con.," said he, "for one day or other, he,"—he pointed to the after-cabin—"he'd know it, and then it would fare badly with some of us."

"Why not come too, Halkett?" said I, "this life is as hateful to you as to myself."

"Hush, boy, no more of that," said he, with a degree of emotion which I had never witnessed in him before. "Make yourself warm and snug, for you mustn't take any spare clothes, or you'd be suspected by whoever takes you off the island: here's my brandy-flask, and a tinder-box—that's a small bag of biscuit—for you'll take six or seven hours to reach the log-house—and here is a pistol with some powder and ball. Come along now, or shall I carry you up the ladder?"

"No, I'm able enough now," said I, making an effort to seem free from pain while I stepped up on deck.

I was not prepared for the affectionate leave-taking which met me here; each of the crew shook my hand twice or thrice over, and there was but one did not press upon me some little gift in token of remembrance.

At last the boat was lowered, and Halkett and three others descending noiselessly, motioned to me to follow. I stepped boldly over the side, and waving a last good-bye, to those above, sat down in the stern to steer, as I was directed.

It was a calm night, with nothing of a sea, save that rolling heave ever present in the Gulf-stream; and now the men stretched to their oars, and we darted swiftly on, not a word breaking the deep stillness.

Although the island lay within six miles,

we could see nothing of it against the sky, for the highest point is little more than twelve feet above the water-level.

I have said that nothing was spoken as we rowed along over the dark and swelling water; but this silence did not impress me till I saw ahead of us the long low outline of the dreary island shutting out the horizon; then, a sensation of sickening despair came over me. Was I to linger out a few short hours of life on that melancholy spot, and die at last exhausted and broken-hearted? "Was this to be the end of the brilliant dream I had so often reveled in?" "Ah, Con.!" said I, "to play the game of life, a man must have capital to stand its losses—its runs of evil fortune; but you are ruined with one bad deal!"

"Run in here! in this creek!" cried Halkett to the men; and the boat glided into a little bay of still water under the lee of the land; and then, after about twenty minutes' stout rowing, her keel grated on the shingly shore of Anticosti.

"We cannot land you dry-shod, Con.," said Halkett, "it shoals for some distance here."

"No matter," said I, trying to affect an easy jocular air, my choking throat and swelling heart made far from easy; "for to think of wet feet, would be like the felon at the drop blowing the froth off the porter because it was unwholesome."

"I've better hopes of you than that comes to, lad!" said he; "but good by! good by!" He shook my hand like a vice, and sat down with his back toward me; the others took a kind farewell of me; and then, shouldering my little bag of biscuits, I pressed my cap down over my eyes, and stepped into the surf. It was scarcely more than over midleg, but the clay-like spongy bottom made it tiresome walking. I had only gone a few hundred yards, when a loud cheer struck me; I turned, it was the boat's crew, giving a parting salute. I tried to answer it, but my voice failed me; and the next moment they had turned the point, and I saw them no more!

I now plodded wearily on, and in about half an hour reached the land; and whether from weariness, or some strange instinct of security, on touching shore, I know not, but I threw myself heavily down on the shingly stones, and slept soundly; ay, and dreamed too! dreamed of lands far away, such as I had often read of in books of travels, where bright flowers and delicious fruits were growing, and where birds and insects of gaudiest colors floated past with a sweet murmuring song that made the air tremble.

Who has not read Robinson Crusoe? and who has not imagined himself combating with some of the difficulties of his fortune, and picturing to his mind what his conduct might have been under this or that emergency.

No speculations are pleasanter, when indulged at our own fire-side, in an easy chair, after having solaced our "material" nature by a good dinner, and satisfied the "moral" man by the "City article," which assures us that the Three per Cents are rising, and that Consols, for the account, are in a very prosperous state. Then, indeed, if our thoughts by any accident stray to the shipwrecked sailor, they are blended with a wholesome philanthropy, born of good digestion and fair worldly prospects; we assure ourselves that we should have made precisely the same exertions that he did, and comported ourselves in all the varied walks of carpenter, tailor, hosier, sailmaker and boatbuilder, exactly like him. The chances are, too, that if accidentally out of temper with our neighbors, we cordially acknowledge that the retirement was not the worst feature in his history; and if provoked by John Thomas, the footman, we are ready to swear, that there was more gratitude in Friday's little black finger, than in the whole body corporate of flunkies, from from Richmond to Blackwall.

While these very laudable sentiments are easy enough in the circumstances I have mentioned, they are marvellously difficult to practise at the touch of stern reality. At least I found them so, as I set out to seek the house in Anticosti. It was just daybreak, as, somewhat stiffened with a sleep on the cold beach, and sore from my recent bruises, I began my march. "Nor-west and by west" was Halkett's vague direction to me; but as I had no compass, I was left to the guidance of the rising sun for the cardinal points. Not a path, nor track of any kind, was to be seen; indeed, the surface could scarcely have borne traces of footsteps, for it was one uniform mass of slaty shingle, with here and there the backbone of a fish, and scattered fragments of seaweed, washed up by the storms, on this low bleak shore. I can not fancy desolation more perfect than this dreary spot, slightly undulating, but never sufficient to lose sight of the sea; not a particle of shelter to be found; not a rock, nor even a stone, large enough to sit upon when weary. Of vegetation, not a trace could be met with,—even a patch of moss, or a lichen, would have been a blessing to see; but there were neither. At last, as I journeyed on, I wandered beyond the sound of the sea, as it broke upon the low strand, and then the silence became actually appalling: but a few moments back, and the loud booming of the breakers stunned the ear; and now, as I stopped to listen, I could hear my own heart, as, in full thick beat, it smote against my ribs. I could not dismiss the impression, that such a stillness—

then terrible—would prevail on the day of judgment; when, after the graves had given up their millions of dead, and the agonizing cry for mercy had died away, then, as in a moment of dread suspense, the air would be motionless—not a leaf to stir, not a wing to cleave it. Such possession of me did this notion take, that I fell upon my knees and sobbed aloud, while, with trembling and uplifted hands, I prayed that I too might be pardoned.

So powerful is the influence of a devotional feeling, no matter how associated with error, how alloyed by the dross of superstition, that I, who but an instant back could scarcely drag my wearied limbs along for very despair, became of a sudden trustful and courageous. Life seemed no longer the worthless thing it did a few minutes before; on the contrary, I was ready to dare anything to preserve it; and so, with renewed vigor, I again set forward.

At each little swell of the ground, I gazed eagerly about me, hoping to see the log-hut, but in vain: nothing but the same wearisome monotony met my view. The sun was now high, and I could easily see that I was following out the direction Halkett gave me, and which I continued to repeat over and over to myself as I went along. This, and watching my shadow—the only one that touched the earth—were my occupations. It may seem absurd, even to downright folly; but when, from any change in the direction of my course, the shadow did not fall in front of me, where I could mark it, my spirits fell, and my heavy heart grew heavier.

When, however, it did precede me, I was never wearied watching how it dived down the little slopes, and rose again on the opposite bank, bending with each swell of the ground. Even this was companionship—its very motion smacked of life.

At length I came upon a little pool of rain-water; and, although far from clear, it reflected the bright blue sky, and white clouds, so temptingly, that I sat down beside it to make my breakfast. As I sat thus, Hope was again with me, and I fancied how,—in some long distant time, when favored by fortune, and possessed of every worldly gift, with rank, and riches, and honor,—I should remember the hour when, a poor friendless outcast, I ate my lonely meal on Antiocsti. I fancied, even, how friends would listen almost incredulously to the tale, and with what traits of pity, or of praise, they would follow me in my story.

I felt I was not doomed to die in that dreary land—that my own courage would sustain me; and thus armed I again set out.

Although I walked from daybreak to late evening, it was only a short time before darkness closed in, that I saw a bulky mass straight before, which I knew must be the Log-house. I could scarcely drag my legs alone a few moments before, but now I broke into a run, and with many a stumble, and more than one fall,—for I never turned my eyes from the hut,—I at last reached a little cleared spot of ground, in the midst of which stood the "Refuge-house."

What a moment of joy was that, as, unable to move further, I sat down upon a little bench in front of the hut! All sense of my loneliness, all memory of my desolation, was lost in an instant. There was my home; how strange a word for that sad-looking hut of pine-logs, in a lone island, uninhabited! No matter; it would be my shelter, and my refuge, till better days came round; and with that stout resolve, I entered the great roomy apartment, which, in the settling gloom of night seemed immense.

Striking a light, I proceeded to take a survey of my territory, which I rejoiced to see, contained a great metal stove, and an abundant supply of bed-clothing, precautions required by the frequency of ships being icebound in these latitudes. There were several casks of biscuit, some flour, a large chest of maize, besides three large tanks of water, supplied by the rain. A few bags of salt, and some scattered objects of clothing, completed the catalogue, which, if not very luxurious, contained nearly everything of absolute necessity.

I lighted a good fire in the stove, less because I felt cold, for it was still autumn, than for the companionship of the bright blaze and the crackling wood. This done, I proceeded to make myself a bed on one of the platforms, arranged like bed-places round the walls, and of which I saw the upper ones seemed to have a preference in the opinion of my predecessors, since, in these, the greater part of the bed-clothing was to be found, a choice I could easily detect the reason of, in the troops of rats which walked to and fro, with a most contemptuous indifference to my presence; some of them standing near me while I made my bed, and looking, as doubtless they felt, considerably surprised at the nature of my operations. Promising myself to open a spirited campaign against them on the morrow, I trimmed, and lighted a large lamp, which from its position had defied their attempt on the oil it still contained; and then, a biscuit in hand, betook myself to bed, watching with an interest, not, I own, altogether pleasant, the gambols of these primitive natives of Antiocsti.

From my earliest years I had had an antipathy to rats,—so great, that it mastered all the instincts of my courage. I feared them, with a fear I should not have felt, in presence of a wild beast, and I was confident that, had I been attacked vigorously by even a single

rat, the natural disgust would have rendered me unable to cope with him. When very young, I remembered hearing the story of an officer, who, desirous of visiting the vaults under St. Patrick's church, in Dublin, descended into them under the escort of the sexton. By some chance they separated from each other, and the sexton, after in vain seeking and calling for his companion for several hours, concluded that he had already returned to the upper air; and so he returned also, locking and barring the heavy door, as was his wont. The following day the officer's friends, alarmed at his absence, proceeded to make search for him through the city, and at last, learning that he had visited the cathedral, went thither, and even examined the vaults, when, what was their horror to discover a portion of the brass ornament of his shako, and a broken sword, in the midst of several hundreds of rats, dead and dying,—the terrible remains of a combat that must have lasted for hours. This story, for the truth of which some persons yet living will vouch, I heard when a mere child, and perhaps to its influence may I date a species of terror that has always been too much, for either my reason, or my courage.

If I slept, then, it was more owing to my utter weariness and exhaustion than to that languid frame of mind; and, although too tired to dream, my first waking thought was how to commence hostilities against the rats. As to any personal hand-to-hand action, I need scarcely say I declined engaging in such, and my supply of gunpowder being scanty, the method I hit upon was to make a species of grenade, by inserting a quantity of powder with a sufficiency of broken glass into a bottle, leaving an aperture through the cork for a fusee; then, having smeared the outside of the bottle plentifully with oil, of which I discovered a supply in bladders suspended from the ceiling, I retired to my berth, with the other extremity of the fusee in my hand, ready to ignite when the moment came.

I had not long to wait; my enemies, bold from long impunity, came fearlessly forward, and surrounded the bottle in myriads; it became a scene like an election row, to witness their tumbling and rolling over each other in the action. Nor could I bring myself to cut short the festivity, till I began to entertain fears for the safety of the bottle, which already seemed to be loosened from its bed of clay. Then at last I handed a match to my cord, and, almost before I could cover my head with the blanket, the flask exploded, with a crash and a cry that showed me its success. The battle-field was truly a terrible sight, for the wounded were far more numerous than the dead, and I, shame to say, had neither courage nor humanity to finish their sufferings, but lay still, while their companions dragged them away in various stages of suffering.

I at first supposed that this was an exploit that could only succeed but once, and that the well-known sagacity of the creatures would have made them avoid so costly a temptation. Nothing of the kind; they were perfect Scythians in their love of oil; and as often as I repeated my experiment, they were ready to try their fortunes. Or perhaps they had some of the gambler's element in their nature, and each felt that he might win where others lost.

I had made Halkett a promise that for a couple of days, at least, I would not hoist the signal flag, lest any accident should induce Sir Dudley to suspect my place of refuge, so that I was completely reduced to my campaign against the rats for occupation and amusement. So far as I could discover, the little island, traverse it how I would, never varied, the same rise and swell of surface, clad with loose stone, lay on every side; and so depressing had this mournful uniformity become to me, that I rarely ventured out of the hut, or, when I did, it was to sit upon the little bench outside the door, from which a sea view extended over the wide waters of the Gulf.

To sit here and try to decipher the names cut into the wood was my constant occupation. What histories, too, did I weave of those who carved these letters; and how did they fix themselves in my mind, each name suggesting an identity, till I felt as if I had known them intimately. Some seemed the patient work of weeks; and it was easy to see that after the letters were cut, the sculptor had gone on embellishing and ornamenting his work for very lack of labor. Others again were mere initials, and one was a half finished name, leaving me to the perpetual doubt whether he had been rescued from his captivity, or died ere it was completed.

Between my hours spent here and the little duties of my household, with usually three or four explosions against my rats, the day went over—I will not say rapidly, but pass it did; and each night brought me nearer to the time when I should hoist my signal and hope—ay, that was the great supporter through all—hope for rescue.

It was now the third night of my being on the island, as I sat at my fire, trying to invent some new mode for the destruction of my enemies; for my last charge of powder had been been expended. I had nothing remaining, save the loading of the pistol. It was true that I had succeeded to a great extent, the creatures no longer appeared with their former air of assurance, nor in large bodies. Their army was evidently disorganised; they no longer took the field in battalions, but in scattered guerilla parties, without discipline or courage. Even had my ammunition lasted, it is more than doubtful that my tactics would have con-

tinued to have the same success: they had begun to dread the bottle, like a reformed drunkard. Often have I seen them approach within a few feet of it, and wait patiently till some younger and more adventurous spirit would venture nearer, and then at the slightest stir—the least rustling of my bedclothes—away they went in full career. It was excellent; the secret, like most great mysteries of the same kind, had had its day. This was consolatory too, as I had no longer the means of continuing my siege operations; while the caution and reserve of the enemy suggested a system of defence of the simplest, but most effectual, kind, which was, to place a certain number of bottles at different parts of the hut, the very sight of which inspired terror; and if followed by any noise, was certain to secure me, for some time at least, from all molestation.

Shall I tell the reader how this stratagem first occurred to me? It was simply thus:—In one of the early but unrecorded years of my history, I used to act as driver to the Moate and Kilbeggan caravan—not, indeed, as the recognised coachee of that very rickety and most precarious conveyance, but as a kind of "deputy assistant" to the paid official; who, having a wife at Kilbeggan, usually found some excuse for stopping at Chara, and sending me forward with the passengers,—a proceeding, I am bound to own, not over consistent with humanity to "man or beast." Many were the misadventures of that luckless conveniency, and the public were loud in their denunciations of it; but as nobody knew the proprietors, nor did the most searching scrutiny detect the existence of a "way-bill," the complaints were uttered to the wind, and I was at full liberty "to do my stage" in three hours, or one-half the time, as I fancied.

The passengers at length learned this valuable fact, and found that greasing my palm was a sure method of oiling the wheels. All complaints gradually subsided; in fact, the dumb animals were the only ones who had any right to make them. I drove them at a very brisk pace—thriving trade—the caravan became popular, and my fame rose as the horses' condition declined. At last the secret was discovered; and instead of my imposing whip of four yards and a half of whipcord, they reduced me to a stunted bit of stick, with a little drooping lash that wouldn't reach the tail of my one leader. My receipts fell off from that hour: in fact, instead of praises and sixpences, I now got nothing but curses and hard names; and at one hill, near "Horse-leap," which I used in my prosperous days to "go at" in a slashing canter, amid a shower of encomiums, I was now obliged to stagger slowly up, with four-and-twenty small farmers, and may be a priest, in full cry at my sulkiness, laziness, incivility, and other good gifts; and all this, ay, and more, for lack of a bit of whip-cord.

I have been told that very great people will stoop to low alliances when hard pressed: even cabinet ministers, I believe, have now and then acknowledged very dubious allies. Let not Con. Cregan, then, be reproached if he called in the help of a little bare-footed boy, who used to beg on the hill of Horse-leap, and who, at the sound of the approaching caravan, sallied forth with a long branch of an ash-tree, and belabored the team into some faint resemblance to a canter. Through this auxiliary, I recovered in part my long-lost popularity, and was likely to be again reinstated in public favor, when my assistant caught the measles, and I was once more reduced to my own efforts.

In this emergency I had nothing for it but a stratagem, and so, as the conveyance arrived at the foot of the hill, and the horses, dropping their heads, were gradually subsiding into the little shuffling amble that precedes a slow walk, I used to scream out at the top of my voice all my accustomed exhortations to the boy. "Ah, hit him again, Tommy,—into him, boy,—under the traces, my lad!—give him enough of it!—welt him well, you!" exclamations that, from old associations, always stimulated the wretched beasts into a canter; and under the impression of this salutary terror, we used to reach the top almost as speedily as in the old days of the penal code.

The same device now aided me against the rats of Anticosti; and if any one will say, to what end this narrative of an encounter so insignificant, my answer is, that whether in the St. Lawrence or in St. Stephens', rats are far more formidable, than their size or strength would seem to imply; and whether they nibble your rags or your reputation, their success is invariably the same.

Four days had now elapsed, and I concluded that the yacht must ere this have been miles on her voyage up the river. The next morning, then, I should venture to hoist the signal, and thus apprise the passing ships that one deserted and forlorn creature, at least, still lingered on the miserable island.

I sat at my fire till a late hour. I was lower in spirits than usual. I had watched the Gulf from sunrise to sunset, and without seeing one sail upon its surface. A light breeze was blowing from the northward, and on this I supposed many of the outward vessels would be borne along, but not one appeared. From time to time a fleeting cloud, resting for a moment on the horizon, would assume the semblance of a ship, but at length I grew accustomed to these deceptions, and suffered little or no disappointment when a second glance at the spot failed to detect them.

Once or twice the thought crossed my mind that I might never leave the island, that winter might close in, and the Gulf be frozen, before I could make my escape, and I actually shuddered at the very notion of a fate so terrible. I cowered nearer to the fire as the flame subsided, and was sitting with my hands outstretched over the blaze, when the sudden crash of one of the bottles behind, startled me. Were the rats already regaining courage in anticipation of the time when I could no longer resist them? with this idea I turned my head round. The flame threw a long ray of light upon the floor as I moved, and in the midst of this I beheld, at a distance of about three yards off, a large black head, with two immense and bloodshot eyes, glaring fixedly at me. It seemed to rise out of the earth, above which it rose scarcely more than a foot in height.

Paralyzed by terror, I could not stir, I could scarcely breathe, as with a slow and nodding motion the large black face came nearer; and now I could see that it was a man—a negro—who on hands and knees was slowly creeping towards me. Overwhelmed by fear as I was, I noted the features, as marked by age and worn by want; they resembled those of a wild beast rather than of a human creature. More from the force of a mere mechanical impulse, than with any notion of defence, for which my terror totally incapacitated me, I had drawn my pistol from my bosom, and held it pointed towards him.

"No fire!—no fire!" cried the creature, in a low faint voice, and at the same time, while resting on one hand, he held up with the other a long bright knife in an attitude of menace.

"No nearer then!" screamed I, as I fell back beside the stove, and still kept my eyes fixed upon him, whom now I knew to be the Black Boatswain; and thus we remained, each watching the other, while the fire flickered and threw its fitful glare over the gloomy space around us. As we were thus, I saw, or thought I saw, the negro stealthily drawing up his legs, as if for a spring, and in my terror, I believe I should have pulled the trigger, when suddenly the knife dropped from his hand, and pointing with his finger to his dry, cracked lips, he said, "Aboire"—water.

The look of earnest, almost passionate entreaty of the poor creature's face,—the expression of want and misery, struggling with a faint hope, as he uttered these words, routed all fears for myself; and filling a cup from the tank with water, I emptied the last remaining drops of my brandy-flask into it, and held it to his mouth.

He swallowed it greedily; and then clasping my wrist with his gaunt and bony fingers, held me fast for a few seconds, while he recovered his breath; at last, and with an effort that seemed almost convulsive, he said some words in Spanish, which I could not understand. I shook my head to show him my ignorance of the language, and then fixing his eye full upon me, he said, "Alone, here? boy alone?"

Understanding that this referred to myself, I answered at once, that I was alone, and had been deserted by my companions.

"Bad men, white men!" cried he, gnashing his teeth savagely; while again he pointed to his lips, and muttered "water!" I endeavored to free myself from his grasp to fill the cup once more; but he held me firmly, and showed by a sign that he wished me to assist him to reach the tank. I accordingly stooped down to help him, and now perceived that he could do little more than drag his legs forward and support himself on the knees; being either wholly or in part paralysed from the hips downwards. "Ah, foco!" cried he, twice or thrice, and then changed to the word, "feu!" "Le feu;" on which his gaze was fixed with a horrid earnestness.

It was not without labor and much exertion that I succeeded in dragging him near the embers of the fire; but having done so, I quickly replenished the dying flame, and fanning it with my hat, soon succeeded in making a cheerful blaze once more. "Buono! goot! goot!" said he, several times, as he held his shriveled and wasted fingers almost into the fire.

"Are you hungry?" said I, bending down to make myself heard.

He nodded, twice.

"Can you eat biscuit? I have nothing else," said I; for I half feared that the hard dry food would be impracticable for his almost toothless jaws.

He said something about "Guisado," once or twice; and at last made a sign, that I understood to mean that the biscuit might be softened in water for him. And with that I placed a pot of water on the fire, and soon saw by the expression of his eye that I had divined his meaning.

As I continued to blow the fire, and occasionally examined the water to see if it boiled, I could mark that the negro's eyes never once quitted me, but, with a restless activity, followed me wherever I went, or whatever I did; and, although from his age, and the dreadful infirmity he labored under, I felt I should prove his equal in any struggle, I own that I cast many a sidelong look towards him, lest he should take me by surprise. That he was the notorious Black Boatswain of whom I had heard so much, I had no doubt whatever; and I felt not a little vain of my own courage and presence of mind, as I saw myself so possessed and collected in such company.

"Give! give!" cried he impatiently as I

examined the mess of steeping biscuit, and for which he seemed ravenously eager; and at length I removed it from the fire, and placed it before him. Such voracity as his I never witnessed, save in the case of Sir Dudley's lions; he crammed the food with both hands into his mouth, and devoured it with all the savage earnestness of a wild beast. Twice was I obliged to replenish the mess; and each time did it vanish with the same dispatch.

He now lay back on one arm, and, half-closing his eyes, appeared as if he was going asleep; but at the least stir or movement on my part, I saw that his wild, red-streaked eyes followed me at once.

Halkett had given me a little bag of tobacco, at parting, saying that although I was no smoker, I should soon learn to become one in my solitude. This I now produced, and offered him a handful.

The dark features were immediately lighted up with an almost frantic expression of pleasure, as he clutched the precious weed; and tearing off a fragment of the paper, he rolled it into the shape of a cigarette.

"No smoke?" asked he, as I sat watching his preparations.

I shook my head. "Ah!" cried he, laying down the tobacco before him. "Tehoka, here!" said he, pointing to it.

"I don't understand," said I; "what is Tehoka?"

"Bad! bad!" said he, shaking both hands; "weed make negro so ——, so ——," and he opened his mouth wide, and dropped his arms heavily backwards, to represent sickness, or perhaps death.

"No, no," said I; "this is good; a friend gave it to me."

"Smoke," said he, pushing it over towards me; and I saw now that my abstaining had excited his suspicions.

"If you like, I will smoke," said I, setting to work to manufacture a cigar like his own.

He sat eyeing me all the while; and when I proceeded to fill it with tobacco, he leaned over to see that I did not attempt any sleight of hand to deceive him.

"Will that do?" said I, showing him the little paper tube.

"Smoke," said he, gravely.

It was only after watching me for several minutes, that he took courage to venture himself; and even then, he scrutinised the tobacco as keenly as though it demanded all his acuteness to prevent stratagem. At length, he did begin; and certainly never did anything seem to effect a more powerful and more immediate influence. The fiery restless eyes grew heavy and dull; the wide-distended nostrils ceased to dilate with their former convulsive motion. His cheek, seamed with privation and passion, lay flaccid and at rest; and a look of lethargic ease stole over all the features, one by one, till at last the head fell forward on his chest; his arm slipped softly from beneath him, and he rolled heavily back, sunk in the deepest sleep.

I soon abandoned my tobacco now, which had already begun to produce a feeling of giddiness and confusion, very unfavorable to cool determination—emotions which did not subside so readily as I could have wished; for as I sat gazing on my swarthy companion, fancies the wildest and most absurd associated themselves with the strange reality. The terrible tales I once listened to about the "Black Boatswain" came to mingle with the present. The only remnant of right reason left, prompted me to keep up my fire; a certain terror of being alone, and in the dark, with the negro, predominating over every other thought.

By the bright blaze, which soon arose, I could now mark the enormous figure, which, in all the abandonment of heavy slumber, lay outstretched before me. Although it was evident he was very old, the gigantic limbs showed what immense strength he must have possessed; while in the several white cicatrices that marked his flesh, I could reckon a great number of wounds, some of them of fearful extent. The only covering he wore, was a piece of sailcloth wrapped round his body; over this he had a blanket, through a round hole in which his head issued, like as in a Mexican Poncho, leaving his sinewy limbs perfectly naked. A bit of ragged, worn bunting—part, as it seemed, of an old union-jack—was bound round his head, and in its showy colors, served to enhance the stern expression of his harsh features.

As my senses became clearer, I began to imagine how it happened that he came to the hut, since in all the narratives I had heard of him, the greatest doubt existed that he was still living, so effectually did he manage his concealment. At last, by dint of much thought, I hit upon what I suspected to be the real solution of the difficulty, which was, that he was accustomed to venture hither whenever the signal-flag was not hoisted; and as I had not done so, that he was under the belief that he was the only living man on the island.

That he must have contrived his hiding-place with great success was clear enough; for whether the allegations against him were true or false, they were so universally believed by sailors, that if he had been discovered, they would unquestionably have carried him off to Quebec. It was now in *my* power "to do the state this service;" and I began to canvass with myself all the reasons for and against it. If, on the one hand, it reminded me of the old legends I used to read about striplings that led captive huge giants

or fierce dragons, on the other, I felt it would be a species of treachery to one who had eaten bread from my hands. Besides, to what end—even supposing him guilty to any extent—to what end bring him to justice, when a few days, or hours, perhaps, would close a life whose suffering was manifest enough! And lastly, was I so certain of escape myself, that I already plotted carrying a prisoner with me? The last reflection saved me the trouble of thinking much more on the others; and so I fell to pondering over myself and my destination.

Not long was I permitted to indulge in such reveries; for the negro now began to dream, and talk aloud with a rapidity of utterance and vehemence very different from the monosyllabic efforts he had favored me with. As the language was Spanish, I could catch nothing of his meaning; but I could see that some fearful reminiscence was agitating his mind by the working of his fingers, and the violent contortions of his face.

In the struggle of his paroxysm—for it was little less—he tore open the coarse rag of canvas that he wore, and I could perceive something fastened round his neck by a piece of spunyarn. At first I thought it one of those charms that seamen are so fond of carrying about them—amulets, against Heaven knows what kind of dangers: but, on stooping down, I perceived it was an old leather pocket-book, which once had been red, but by time and dirt was almost black.

More than once he clutched this in his hand, with a wild energy, as if it was his heart's treasure, and then the great drops of sweat would start out upon his forehead, and his parted lips would quiver with agony. In one of these struggles, he tore the book from the cord, and opening it, seemed to seek for something among its contents. The rapidity of the movement, and the seeming collectedness of every gesture, made me believe that he was awake; but I soon saw that his great and staring eye-balls were not turned to the spot, but were fixed on vacancy.

His motions were now more and more hurried: at one time his fingers would turn over the papers in the pocket-book; at another, he would grope with his hand along the ground, and pat the earth down with his palm, as if, having buried something in the earth, he would conceal every trace of it from discovery; and at these moments the Spanish word, "oro"—gold—would escape him in a half-sigh, and this, and the word, "Guajaqualla," were the only ones I could catch; but my mind retained both for many a day after.

At last, he crushed the papers hurriedly together, and closed the pocket-book; but in doing so, a single slip of paper fell to the ground. I leaned over, and caught it; and by the light of the fire, I read the following lines, which were in print, and apparently cut from the column of a newspaper:

"ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD.

"Any one will be entitled to the above reward, who may detect, or give such information as may lead to the detection of Menelaus Crick, a Negro slave, aged forty-eight; he stands six feet two high; broad chest and shoulders, the right higher than the left; has marks of the lash on the back, and two cutlass scars on the face; the great toe of the left foot is wanting, and he walks with difficulty, from a gun-shot wound in the spine.

"As he is a fellow of resolute character, and great strength, all persons are hereby warned not to attempt his capture, save in sufficient numbers. He was last seen at San Luis, and is supposed to have gone in the direction of Guajaqualla, where it is said he worked once as a gold-washer."

"Address.—The Office of the Picayune—Letter—T— G— B—. New Orleans."

There were a few words in Spanish, scrawled on the back.

"Here is the man!" said I, looking down at the sleeping figure; who would have thought a thousand dollars could be made of him?" Not indeed that I speculated on such an unholy gain.—No, the very offer only enlisted my sympathies in favor of the poor wretch; besides, how many years ago must that advertisement have appeared; he was forty-five at that time, and now his age might be nigh eighty. My curiosity became intense to see the contents of the pocket-book, from which I could fancy abundant materials to eke out the Negro's history. I am afraid that nothing but the terror of discovery prevented my stealing it. I even planned how it might be done, without awaking him; but the long bright knife which glistened in the strap of his blanket admonished me to prudence, and I abstained.

My fire waxed fainter as the dawn drew nigh, and as I was afraid of sleep coming over me, I stepped noiselessly from the hut, and gained the open air. My first occupation was to hoist the signal! and as it rose into the air, I watched its massive folds unfurling, with a throb of hope that gave me new courage. The standard was very lofty, and stood upon a mound of earth; and as the flag itself was large, I had every reason to think it could not escape notice. Scarcely, indeed, had I made fast the halyard, than I beheld on the very verge of the horizon what seemed to be a vessel. The moment of sunrise, like that of sunset, is peculiarly favorable to distinct vision, and as the pink line of dawn sheeted over the sea, the dark object stood out clear and sharp; but the next moment the glare of

brighter day covered sky and water together, and I could no longer see the ship.

In my anxiety to try and catch sight of it from another spot, I hastened down to the shore; but already a rosy tint was spread over the wide sea, and nothing was discernible except the heaving waves and the streaked sky above them.

I sat upon a rock straining my eyes, but to no purpose; and at last the cold raw air pierced through me, and I remembered that I had left my jacket in the hut. But for this, indeed, I would not have returned to it,—for, without absolute fear of the negro, his repulsive features, and scowling look, made his companionship far from pleasurable. His suspicion of me, too, might have led him to some act of violence; and therefore I determined, if I were even to seek shelter in the Refuge-house at the other end of the island, I would not go back to this one.

It was some time before I could summon courage to venture back again; and even when I had reached the door, it was not without a struggle with myself that I dared to enter. The daylight was now streaming in, across the long and dreary chamber, and, encouraged by this, I stepped across the threshold. My first glance was towards the stove, where I had left him lying asleep. The fire had burned out, and the negro was gone! With cautious steps, and many a prying glance around, I ventured forward, my heart thumping with a fear I cannot explain,—since his very presence had not caused such terror; but nowhere was he to be found—not a trace of him remained. Indeed, were it not for the scrap of printed paper, which I had carefully preserved, I should have believed the whole events of the night to be the mere fancies of a dream.

Twice was I obliged to take it from my pocket and read it over, to assure myself that I was not pursuing some hallucination of sleep; and if I felt convinced that the events were real, and had actually happened, I will frankly own that the reality inspired me with a sense of fear which no memory of a mere vision could have inspired.

Daylight is a bold companion, however, and where night would make the heart beat fast, and the cheek pale, the sun will give a strong pulse and a ruddy face. This I could not help feeling, as I acknowledged to myself that had it been yet dark, I had rather have perished with cold than sought for my jacket within the hut.

At last, grown bolder, I had even the courage to seek for the negro on every side. I examined the berths along the walls; I searched the recesses beside the biscuit-casks; I removed planks and turned over sails, but without success. The difficulty with which he moved, r[illegible]em doubly strange, and satisfied me that his place of concealment could not be far off; nay, possibly, at that very moment he might be actually watching me, and waiting for a favorable instant to pounce upon me. This dread increased as my search continued to be fruitless; so that I abandoned the pursuit, assured that I had done everything that could have been asked either of my courage or humanity; nor was I sorry to assure myself that I had done enough.

My interest in the subject was soon superseded by one nearer to my heart; for as I left the hut, I beheld, about four miles off, a large three-masted vessel bearing up the Gulf, with all her canvas spread. Forgetting the distance, and everything save my longing to be free, I ascended a little eminence, and shouted with all my might, waving my handkerchief back and forward above my head. I cannot describe the transport of delight I felt, at perceiving that a flag was hoisted to the main peak, and soon after lowered—a recognition of the signal which floated above me. I even cried aloud with joy, and then, in the eagerness of my ecstasy, I set off along the shore, seeking out the best place for a boat to run in.

Never did a ship appear so glorious an object to my eyes; her spars seemed more taper, her sails more snowy, her bearing prouder, than ever a vessel owned before; and when at length I could distinguish the figures of men in the rigging, my heart actually leaped to my mouth with delight!

At last she backed her topsail, and now I saw shooting out from beneath her tall sides a light pinnace, that skimmed the water like a sea-bird. As if they saw me, they headed exactly towards where I stood, and ran the craft into a little bay just at my feet. A crew of four sailors and cockswain now jumped ashore, and advanced towards me.

"Are there many of you?" said the cockswain, gruffly, and as though nothing were a commoner occurrence in life than to rescue a poor forlorn fellow-creature from an uninhabited rock.

"I am alone, sir," said I, almost bursting into tears, for mingled joy and disappointment; for I was, I own it, disappointed at the want of sympathy for my lone condition.

"What ship did you belong to, boy?" asked he, as shortly as before.

"A yacht, sir,—the 'Fire-fly.'"

"Ah, that's it; so they shoved you ashore here. That's what comes of sailing with gentlemen, as they calls 'em."

"No, sir; we landed—a few of us—during a calm——"

"Ay, ay," he broke in, "I know all that—the old story; you landed to shoot rabbits, and somehow you got separated from the others; the wind sprung up meantime—the yacht fired a gun to come off—eh, isn't that it? Come, my lad, no gammon with me.

You're some infernal young scamp that was 'had up' for punishment, and they either put you ashore here for the rats, or you jumped overboard yourself, and floated hither on a spare hen-coop. But never mind—we'll give you a run to Quebec; jump in."

I followed the order with alacrity, and soon found myself on board the "Hampden" transport, which was conveying the —th Regiment of Foot to Canada.

"No one but this here boy, sir," said the coxswain; shoving me before him towards the Skipper, who, amidst a crowd of officers in undress, sat smoking on the after-deck.

A very significant grunt seemed to imply that the vessel's way was lost for very slight cause.

"He says as how he belonged to a yacht, sir," resumed the coxswain.

"Whose yacht, boy?" asked one of the officers.

"Sir Dudley Broughton's, sir; the 'Firefly,'" said I.

"Broughton! Broughton!" said an old shrewd-looking man, in a foraging cap; "don't you know all about him; but, to be sure, he was before your day;" and then changing his discourse to French, with which language, thanks to my kind old friend, Father Rush, I was sufficiently acquainted to understand what was said; he added, "Sir Dudley was in the Life Guards, once; his wife eloped with a Russian or a Polish Count—I forget which—and he became deranged in consequence. Were you long with Sir Dudley, boy?" asked he, addressing me in English.

"Not quite two months, sir."

"Not a bad spell with such a master!" resumed he, in French; if the stories they tell of him be true! How did you happen to be left on Anticosti?"

"No use in asking, Captain!" broke in the Skipper. "You never get a word of truth from chaps like that; go fo'ard, boy."

"And with this brief direction, I was dismissed. All my fancied heroism—all my anticipated glory—vanishing at once; the only thought my privations excited, being that I was a young scamp—who, if he told truth, would confess that all his sufferings and misfortunes had been but too well merited.

This was another lesson to me in life, and one which perhaps I could not have acquired more thoroughly than by a few days on Anticosti.

CHAPTER XII.

"A GLIMPSE ON ANOTHER OPENING IN LIFE."

Although only a few hundred miles from Quebec, our voyage still continued for several days, the "Hampden," like all transport-ships, was only "great in a calm," and the Gulf-stream being powerful enough to retard far better sailors.

To those who, like myself, were not pressed for time, or had no very pleasing vista opening to them on shore, the voyage was far from disagreeable. As the channel narrowed, the tall mountains of Vermont came into view, and gradually the villages on the shore could be detected,—small, dark clusters, in the midst of what appeared interminable pine forests. Here and there less pleasant sights presented themselves, in the shape of dismasted hulks, being the remains of vessels which had got fastened in the ice of the early "fall," and were deserted by the crews.

On the whole it was novelty, and novelty alone, lent any charm to the picture; for the shores of the Gulf, until you come within two days' journey of Quebec, are sadly discouraging and dreary. The Log-house is itself a mournful object; and when seen standing alone in some small clearing, with blackened stumps studding the space, through which two or three figures are seen to move, is inexpressibly sad looking and solitary.

Now and then we would pass some little town, with a humble imitation of a harbor for shipping, and a quay; and in the midst a standard, with a flag, would denote that some government official resided there—the reward, doubtless, of some gallant deed, some bold achievement afloat; for I heard that they were chiefly lieutenants in the navy, who, having more intimacy with French grape and canister than with "First Lords," were fain to spend the remnant of their days in these gloomiest of exiles.

The absence of all signs of life and movement in the picture, can not fail to depress the spectator. No team of oxen draws the loaded wagon along; not a plow is seen. There are no gatherings of people in the open places of the towns; no cattle can be descried on the hills. The settlements appear like the chance resting-places of men traveling through the dark forests, and not their homes for life. At times a single figure would be seen on some high cliff above the sea, standing motionless, and, to all seeming, watching the ship. I can not say how deeply such a sight always affected me; I could not help fancying him some lone emigrant, following with beating heart the track he was never again to travel.

Apparently, these things made a deeper impression on me than upon most others on board. As for the soldiers, they were occupied with getting their arms and equipments in order, to make a respectable appearance on landing. It was one eternal scene of soap and pipeclay all day long; and creatures barely able to crawl, from sea-sickness and debility, were obliged to scour and polish

away, as if the glory of England depended on the show the gallant —th would make, the day we should set foot on shore. The Skipper, too, was bent on making an equally imposing show to the landsmen; his weather topmasts were stowed away, and in their place were hoisted some light and taper spars, not exactly in accordance with the lubberly hull beneath. Pitch and white paint were in great requisition too; and every day saw some half-dozen of the crew suspended over the side, either scraping or painting for the very life. Many a shirt dangled from the booms, and more than one low-crowned hat received a fresh coat of glistening varnish: all were intent on the approaching landing, even to the group of lounging officers on the poop, who had begun to reduce their beards and whiskers to a more "regulation" standard, and who usually passed the morning inspecting epaulettes and sword-knots, chakos, gorgets, and such like, with the importance of men who felt what havoc among the fair Canadians they were soon about to inflict.

My services were in request among this section of the passengers, since I had become an expert hand at cleaning arms and equipments with Sir Dudley; besides that, not wearing his Majesty's cloth, the officers were at liberty to talk to me with a freedom they could not have used with their men. They were all more or less curious to hear about Sir Dudley, of whom, without transgressing Halkett's caution, I was able to relate some amusing particulars. As my hearers invariably made their comments on my narratives in French, I was often amused to hear them record their opinions of myself, expressed with perfect candor in my presence. The senior officer was a Captain Pike, an old, keen-eyed, pock-marked man, with a nose as thin as a sheet of parchment. He seemed to read me like a book; at least, so far as I knew, his opinions perfectly divined my true character.

"Our friend Con.," he would say, is an uncommonly shrewd varlet, but he is only telling us some of the truth; he sees that he is entertaining enough, and won't produce 'Lafitte,' so long as we enjoy his 'Ordinaire.'"

"Now, what will become of such a fellow as that?" asked another; "Heaven knows! Such rascals turn out consummate scoundrels, or rise to positions of eminence. Never was there a more complete lottery than the life of a young rogue like that."

"I can't fancy," drawled out a young subaltern, "how an ignorant cur, without education, manners, and means, can ever rise to anything."

"Who can say whether he has not all these?" said the Captain, quietly. "Trust me, Carrington, you'd cut a much poorer figure in *his* place, than would he in *yours*."

The Ensign gave a hearty laugh, and the Captain resumed "I said, it were not impossible that he had each of the three requisites you spoke of; and I repeat it. He may, without possessing learning, have picked up that kind of rudimentary knowledge, that keenness and zeal improve on every day; and as for tact and address, such fellows possess both as a birthright. I have a plan in my head for the youngster; but you must all pledge yourselves to secresy, or I'll not venture upon it."

Here a very general chorus of promises and "on honors" broke forth: after the subsidence of which, Captain Pike continued, still, however, in French; and although being far from a proficient in that tongue, I was able to follow the tenor of his discourse, and divine its meaning—particularly as, from time to time, some of the listeners would propound a question or two in English, by the aid of which I invariably contrived to keep up with "the argument."

"You know, lads," said the Captain, "that our old friend, Mrs. Davis, who keeps the boarding-house in the Upper Town, has been always worrying us to bring her out what she calls a first-rate man servant from England; by which she means, a creature capable of subsisting on quarter rations, and who, too far from home to turn restive, must put up with any wages. The very fact that he came out special, she well knows, will be a puff for the 'Establishment' among the Canadian members of Parliament, and the small fry of officials who dine at the house; and as to qualifications, who will dare question the 'London footman?'"

"Pooh, pooh!" broke in Carrington; "that fellow don't look like a London footman."

"Who says he does?" retorted the Captain; "who ever said brass buttons and blue beads were gold and turquoise? but they pass for the same in villages not fifty miles from where we are sailing. Mother Davis was wife of a skipper in the timber trade, who died harbor-master here; she is not a very likely person to be critical about a butler or footman's accomplishments."

"By Jove!" cried another, "Pike is all right! go on with your plan."

"My plan is this: We'll dress up our friend Con., here;—give him a few lessons about waiting at table, delivering a message, and so forth,—furnish him with a jolly set of characters,—and start him on the road of life with Mother Davis."

A merry roar of approving laughter broke forth from the party at this brief summary of Captain Pike's intentions; and, indeed, it was not without great difficulty I avoided joining in it.

"He looks so devilish young!" said Carrington; "he can't be fifteen."

"Possibly not fourteen," said Pike; "but we'll shave his head, and give him a wig. I'll answer for the 'make up;' and as I have had some experience of private theatricals, rely on't he'll pass muster."

"How will you dress him, Pike?"

"In livery,—a full suit of snuff brown, lined with yellow; I'll devote a large cloak I have to the purpose, and we'll set the tailor at work to-day."

"Is he to have shorts?"

"Of course; some of you must 'stand' silk stockings for him, for we shall have to turn him out with a good kit."

A very generous burst of promises here broke in, about shirts, vests, cravats, gloves, and other wearables, which, I own it, gave the whole contrivance a far brighter coloring in my eyes, than when it offered to be a mere lark.

"Will the rogue consent, think you?" asked Carrington.

"Will he prefer a bed, and a dinner, to nothing to eat, and a siesta under the planks on the quays of Quebec?" asked Pike, contemptuously. "Look at the fellow! watch his keen eyes and his humorous mouth when he's speaking to you, and say if he wouldn't do the thing for the fun of it? Not but a right clever chap like him will see something besides a joke in the whole contrivance."

"I foresee he'll break down at the first go off," said Carrington; who, through all the controversy, seemed impressed with the very humblest opinion of my merits.

"I foresee exactly the reverse," said Pike. "I've seldom met a more acute youngster, nor one readier to take up your meaning; and if the varlet doesn't get spoiled by education, but simply follows out the bent of his own shrewd intelligence, he'll do well yet."

"You rate him more highly than I do," said Carrington again.

"Not impossible either; we take our soundings with very dissimilar lead-lines," said Pike, scoffingly. "My opinion is formed by hearing the boy's own observations about character and life, when he was speaking of Broughton; but if you were ten times as right about him, and I twice as many times in the wrong, he'll do for what I intend him."

The others expressed their full concurrence in the Captain's view of the matter,—voted me a phœnix of all young vagabonds, and their brother-officer Carrington a downright ass,—both being my own private sentiments to the letter.

And now for an honest avowal! It was the flattery of my natural acuteness—the Captain's panegyric on my aptitude and smartness—that won me over to a concurrence in the scheme; for, at heart, I neither liked the notion of "service," nor the prospect of the abstemious living he had so pointedly alluded to. Still, to justify the favorable impression he had conceived of me, and also with some half hope that I should see "life"—the ruling passion of my mind—under a new aspect, I resolved to accept the proposition so soon as it should be made to me: nor had I long to await that moment.

"Con., my lad," said the Captain, "you may leave that belt there; come aft here,—I want to speak to you. What are your plans when you reach Quebec? Do you mean to look after your old master, Sir Dudley, again?"

"No, sir; I have had enough of salt water for a time—I'll keep my feet on dry land now."

"But what line of life do you propose to follow?"

I hesitated for the answer, and was silent.

"I mean," resumed he, "is it your intention to become a farm-servant with some of the emigrant families, or will you seek for employment in the town?"

"Or would you like to enlist, my lad?" broke in another.

"No, thank you, sir; promotion is slow from the ranks, and I've a notion one ought to move 'up' as they move 'on' in life."

"Listen to the varlet now," said Pike, in French; "the fellow's as cool with us as if we were exactly his equals, and no more. I'll tell you what it is, lads," added he, seriously, "when such rogues journey the road of life singly, they raise *themselves* to station and eminence; but when they herd together in masses, these are the fellows who pull *others* down, and effect the most disastrous social revolutions. So you'll not be a soldier, Con.," added he, resuming the vernacular; "well, what are your ideas as to the civil service?"

"Anything to begin with, sir."

"Quite right, lad—well said; a fair start is all you ask?"

"Why, sir, I carry no weight, either in the shape of goods or character; and if a light equipment gives speed, I've a chance to be placed well."

The Captain gave a side-glance at the others, as though to say, "Was I correct in my opinion of this fellow?" and then went on,—"I have a thought in my head for you, Con.: there is a lady of my acquaintance at Quebec wants a servant; now if you could pick up some notion of the duties, I've no doubt you'd learn the remainder rapidly."

"I used to wait on Sir Dudley, sir, and am therefore not entirely ignorant."

"Very true; and as these gentlemen and myself will put you into training while the voyage lasts, I hope you'll do us credit in the end."

"Much will depend on my mistress, sir,"

said I,—determining to profit by what I had overheard, but yet not use the knowledge rashly or unadvisedly. "Should she not be very exacting and very particular, but have a little patience with me, accepting zeal for skill, I've no doubt, sir, I'll not discredit your recommendation."

"That's the very point I'm coming to, Con.," said the captain, lowering his voice to a most confidential tone. "The true state of the case is this:"—and here he entered upon an explanation, which I need not trouble the reader by recapitulating, since it merely went the length I have already related, save that he added, in conclusion, this important piece of information:

"Your golden rule, in every difficulty, will then be, to assure Mrs. Davis that you always did so, whatever it may be, when you were living with Lord George, or Sir Charles, or the Bishop of Drone. You understand me—eh!"

"I think so, sir," said I, brightening up, and, at the same time stealing an illustration from my old legal practices. "In Mrs. Davis' Court there are no precedents."

"Exactly, Con.; hit the nail on the very head, my boy!"

"It will not be a very difficult game, sir, if the guests are like the mistress."

"So they are, for the most part; now and then, you'll have a military and naval officer at table, and you'll be obliged to look out sharp, and not let them detect you; but with the skippers of merchant-men, dock-yard people, store-keepers, male and female, I fancy, you can hold your own."

"Why, sir, I hope they'll be satisfied with the qualification that contented my former titled masters," said I, with a knowing twinkle of the eye, he seemed to relish prodigiously, and an assumed tone of voice, that suited well the part I was to play.

"Come down below, now, and we'll write your characters for you;" and so he beckoned the others to accompany him to the cabin, whither I followed them.

An animated debate ensued as to the number and nature of the certificates I ought to possess. Some being of opinion that I should have those of every kind and degree; others alleging that my age forbids the likelihood of my having served in more than two or three situations.

"What say you to this, lads?" said Pike, reading from a rough and much-corrected draft before him.

"The bearer, Cornelius Cregan, has lived in my service ten months as a page; he is scrupulously honest, active and intelligent, well acquainted with the duties of his station, and competent to discharge them in the first families. I now dismiss him at his own request. CECILIA MENDLESHAW."

"Gad, I'd rather make him start as what they call in his own country a 'Tay-boy,'" said Carrington, "one of those bits of tarnished gold-lace and gaiters, seen about the outskirts of Dublin."

"Your honor is right, sir," said I, "glad to show myself above any absurd vanity on the score of my early beginning; a 'Tay-boy, on the Rathmines road, able to drive a jaunting-car, and wait at table."

"That's the mark, I believe," said Pike. "Suppose, then, we say, Con. Cregan has served me twelve months, waited at table, and taken care of a horse and car."

"Ah, sir!" said I, "sure an Irish gentleman with a 'Tayboy' would be finer spoken than that. It would be, I certify, that Cornelius Cregan, who served in my establishment as under butler, and occasionally assisting the coachman, is a most respectable servant, well-mannered and respectful, having always lived in high situations, and with the most distinguished individuals."

"Ah, that's it," broke in Carrington, "understands lamps, and is perfectly competent to make jellies, soups, and preserves."

"Confound it, man! you're making him a cook."

"By Jove, so I was; it's so hard to remember what the fellow is."

"I think we may leave it to himself," said Pike, "he seems to have a very good notion of what is necessary; so Master Con., write your own biography, my lad, and we'll give it all the needful currency of handwriting and seal."

"It's a pity you're a papist," said another, "or you could have such a recommendation from a 'serious family' I know of, in Surry."

"Never mind," rejoined the captain, "one signed, 'P. O. Dowdlum, Bishop of Toronia,' will do even better in the Lower Province."

"Exactly, sir; and, as I used to serve Mass once, I can 'come out strong' about my early training with 'his Grace!'"

"Very well," said Pike, "tell the tailor to take your measure for the livery, and you'll wait on us to-day at table;" with this order, I was dismissed to con over my fictitious, and speculate on my true "character."

CHAPTER XIII.

QUEBEC.

As viewed from Diamond Harbor, a more striking city than Quebec is seldom seen. The great rock rising above the Lower Town, and crowned with its batteries, all bristling with guns, seemed to my eyes the very realization of impregnability. I looked from the ship that lay tranquilly on the water below,

and whose decks were thronged with blue-jackets—to the Highlander who paced his short path as sentry, some hundred feet high upon the wall of the fortress; and, I thought to myself, with such defenders as these, that standard yonder need never carry any other banner.

The whole view is panoramic; the bending of the river shuts out the channel by which you have made your approach, giving the semblance of a lake, on whose surface vessels of every nation lie at anchor, some with the sails hung out to dry, gracefully drooping from the taper spars; others refitting again for sea, and loading the huge pine-trunks, moored as vast rafts to the stern. There were people everywhere; all was motion, life, and activity. Jolly-boats with twenty oars, man-of-war gigs bounding rapidly past them with eight; canoes skimming by without a ripple, and seemingly without impulse, till you caught sight of the lounging figure, who lay at full length in the stern, and whose red features were scarce distinguishable from the copper-colored bark of his boat. Some moved upon the rafts, and even upon single trunks of trees, as, separated from the mass, they floated down on the swift current, boat-hook in hand, to catch at the first object chance might offer them. The quays, and the streets leading down to them, were all thronged; and, as you cast your eye upwards, here and there above the tall roofs might be seen the winding flight of stairs that lead to the Upper Town, alike dark with the moving tide of men. On every embrasure and gallery, on every terrace and platform, it was the same. Never did I behold such a human tide!

Now there was something amazingly inspiriting in all this, particularly when coming from the solitude and monotony of a long voyage. The very voices that ye-hoed; the hoarse challenge of the sentinels on the Rock; the busy hum of the town—made delicious music to my ear; and I could have stood and leaned over the bulwark for hours, to gaze at the scene. I own no higher interest invested the picture—for I was ignorant of Wolfe. I had never heard of Montcalm—the plains of "Abra'm" were to me but grassy slopes, and "nothing more." It was the life and stir—the tide of that human ocean, on which I longed myself to be a swimmer—these were what charmed me. Nor was the deck of the old "Hampden" inactive all the while, although seldom attracting much of my notice: soldiers were mustering, knapsacks packing, rolls calling, belts buffing, and coats brushing on all sides; men grumbling; sergeants cursing; officers swearing; half-dressed invalids popping up their heads out of hatchways, answering to wrong names, and doctors ordering them down again with many an anathema; soldiers in the way of sailors, and sailors always hauling at something that interfered with the inspection-drill: every one in the wrong place, and each cursing his neighbor for stupidity.

At last the shore-boats boarded us, as if our confusion wanted anything to increase it. Red-faced harbor-masters shook hands with the skipper and pilot, and disappeared into the "round-house" to discuss grog and the late gales. Officers from the garrison came out to welcome their friends—for it was the second battalion we had on board of a regiment whose first had been some years in Canada;—and then what a rush of inquiries were exchanged. "How's the Duke?"—"All quiet in England?"—"No sign of war in Europe?"—"Are the 8th come home?"—"Where's Forbes?"—"Has Davern sold out?" with a mass of such small interests as engage men who live in *coteries*.

Then there were emissaries for newspapers, eagerly hunting for spicy rumors, not found in the last journals; waiters of hotels, porters, boatmen, guides, Indians with mocassins to sell, and a hundred other functionaries bespeaking custom and patronage; and although often driven over the side most ignominiously at one moment, certain to reappear the next, at the opposite gangway.

How order could ever be established in this floating Babel I knew not, and yet at last all got into train somehow.

First one large boat crammed with men, who sat even in the gunwales, moved slowly away; then another and another followed; a lubberly thing, half lighter half jolly-boat, was soon loaded with baggage—amid which some soldiers' wives, and a scattering population of babies were seen; till by degrees the deck was cleared—and none remained of all that vast multitude, save the "mate" and the "watch;" who proceeded to get things "ship-shape," pretty much in the same good-tempered spirit servants are accustomed to put the drawing-rooms to rights, after an entertainment which has kept them up till daylight, and allows of no time for sleep. Till then I had no conception of what a voyage ended meant, and that when the anchor dropped from the bow a scene of bustle ensued to which nothing at sea bore any proportion. Now, I had no friends—no one came to welcome *me*—none asked for *my* name. The officers—even the Captain, in the excitement of arriving, had forgotten all about me; so that when the mate put the question to me, "why I didn't go ashore?" I had no other answer to give him than the honest one, "that I had nothing to do when I got there." "I suppose you know how to gain a livin' one way or t'other, my lad?" said he, with a very disparaging glance out of the corner of his eye.

"I am ashamed to say, sir, that I do not."

"Well, I never see'd Picaroons starve, that's a comfort you have; but as we don't mean to mess you here, you'd better get your kit on deck, and prepare to go ashore."

Now the kit he alluded to was the chest of clothes given to me by the Captain, which, being bestowed for a particular purpose, and with an object now seemingly abandoned or forgotten, I began to feel scruples as to my having any claim to. Like an actor whose engagement had been for one part, I did not think myself warranted in carrying away the wardrobe of my character; besides, who should tell how the Captain might resent such conduct on my side. I might be treated as a thief!—I Con. Cregan, who had registered a solemn vow in my own heart to be "a gentleman:" such an indignity should not be entertained even in thought. Yet it was very hard for one in possession of such an admirable wardrobe to want a dinner—for one so luxuriously apparelled on the outside, to be so lamentably unprovided within. From the solution of this knotty question I was most fortunately preserved by the arrival of a Corporal of the —th, who came with an order from Captain Pike, that I should at once repair to his quarters in the Upper Town.

Not being perhaps in his captain's confidence, nor having any very clear notion of my precise station in life—for I was dressed in an old cloak and foraging cap—the Corporal delivered his message to me with a military salute, and a certain air of deference very grateful to my feelings.

"Have you a boat alongside, Corporal?" said I, as I lounged listlessly on the binnacle.

"Yes, sir; a pair of oars—will that do?"

"Yes, that will do," I replied negligently; "see my traps safe on board, and tell me when all's ready."

The Corporal saluted once more, and went to give the necessary directions: meanwhile the mate, who had been a most amazed spectator of the scene, came over and stood right opposite to me, with an expression of the most ludicrous doubt and hesitation. It was just at that moment, that, in drawing the cloak round me, I discovered in a pocket of it, an old cigar-case. I took it out with the most easy *nonchalance*, and leisurely striking a light, began smoking away, and not bestowing even a glance at my neighbor.

Astonishment had so completely gotten the better of the man, that he could not utter a word; and I perceived that he had to look over the side where the boat lay, to assure himself that the whole was reality.

"All right, sir," said the Corporal, carrying his hand to his cap.

I arose languidly from my recumbent position, and followed the soldier to the gangway; then turning slowly around, I surveyed the mate from head to foot, with a glance of mild but contemptuous pity, while I said, "In your station, my good man, the lesson is perhaps not called for, since you may rarely be called on to exercise it; but I would wish to observe, that you will save yourself much humiliation, and considerable contempt, by not taking people for what they seem by externals." With this grave admonition, delivered in a half-theatrical tone of voice, I draped my "toga," so as to hide any imperfection of my interior costume, and descended majestically into the boat.

When we reached the Barrack, which was in the Upper Town, the Captain was at mess; but had left orders that I should have my dinner, and be ready at his quarters, in my full livery, in the evening.

I dined, very much to my satisfaction, on some of the "debris" of the mess; and under the auspices of the Captain's servant, arrayed myself in my new finery, which, I am free to confess, presented what artists would call, "a flashy bit of color;" being far more in the style of Horace Vernet than Van Dyke. Had the choice been given me, I own I should have preferred wooing Fortune in more sombre habiliments: but this was a minor consideration—and so I felt, as I found myself standing alone in the Captain's sitting room, and endeavoring to accustom myself to my own very showy identity, as reflected in a large cheval glass, which exhibited me down to the very buckles of my shoes.

I will not affirm positively, but only throw it out as a hint, that the major part of a decanter of sherry, which I discussed at dinner, aided in lifting me above the paltry consideration of mere appearance, and made me feel what I have often heard ragged vagabonds in the streets denominate "the dignity of a man." By degrees, too, I not only grew reconciled to the gaudy costume, but began—strange accommodation of feeling—actually to enjoy its distinctive character.

"There are young gentlemen, Con.," said I, in soliloquy, "many are there, who would look absurd merry Andrews, if dressed in this fashion. There are fellows to whom this kind of thing would be a sore test! These bright tints would play the very devil with their complexion—not to mention that every one's legs couldn't afford such publicity! But Con., my friend, you have a natural aptitude for every shade of color, as for every station and condition. Courage, my boy! although only in the rear-rank at present, you'll march in the van yet. Nature has been gracious with you, Mr. Cregan!" said I, warming with the subject, while with my hands deep down in my coat-pockets, I walked backward and forward before the glass, stealing side-long glances at myself as I passed; "there are fellows, who born in your station, would have died in it, without a

bit more influence over their fate in this life, than a Poldoody oyster; they'd vegetate to the end of existence, and slip out of the world as a fellow shirks out of a shebeen-house, when he hasn't tu'pence for another 'dandy' of punch. Not so with you Con. Cregan! You have hydrogen in you—you have the buoyant element that soars above the vulgar herd. These are not the partial sentiments of a dear friend, Con.; they are the current opinions of the world about you. How soon 'the Captain' saw what stuff you were made of. How long was old Pike in detecting the latent powers of your intellect?" What a shout of laughter followed these words!—It came from half-a-dozen officers, who having entered the room during my apostrophe, had concealed themselves behind a screen, to listen to the peroration.

They now rushed out in a body, and throwing themselves into chairs and upon sofas, laughed, till the very room rung with the clamor, the Captain himself joining in the emotion with all his heart. As for me, however, self-satisfied but one moment back, I was humbled to the very earth now; the vauntings by which I had been soothing my vanity, were suddenly turned into scoffs and sneers at my self conceit, and I actually looked to see if I could not leap out of the window, and never be seen by one of the party again. The window, however, was barred—the door was unapproachable—there was a fire in the grate—and so, as escape was denied me, I at once abandoned a plan, which I saw unfeasable; and with a quickness, to which I owe much in life, immediately adopted an opposite tactic. Assuming a deferential position, I drew back towards the wall, to be laughed at, as long as the honorable company should fancy it.

"So, Mr. Cregan," cried one, drying his eyes with his handkerchief, "modesty is one of those invaluable gifts with which nature has favored you?"

"I sincerely trust it may be no bar to your advancement," said another.

"Rather cruel," added a third, to be baulked for such a mere trifle."

"I say, Pike," added another, "I rather envy you the insinuated flattery of your discrimination. It would seem that you detected the precious metal here at once."

"What country do you come from, boy?" said a hard-featured old officer, who had laughed less than the others.

"How can you ask, Chudleigh?" said another; there's only one land rears that plant."

"There's a weed very like it in Scotland, M'Aldine," said the Captain, with a grin which the last speaker did not half relish.

"You're Hirish, ain't you?" said a boyish-looking Ensign, with sore eyes.

"Yes, sir."

"Very much so, I fancy," said he laughing as though he had been very droll.

"I always heard your countrymen had wings; what has become of them?"

"I believe we used to have, sir; but the English plucked us," said I, with a look of assumed simplicity.

"And what is all that about the Blarney stone?" said another; "isn't there some story or other about it?"

"It's a stone they kiss in *my* country, sir, to give us a smooth tongue."

"I don't see the great use of that," rejoined he, with a stupid look.

"It's mighty useful at times, sir," said I, with a half glance towards Captain Pike.

"You're too much, gentlemen, far too much, for my poor friend Con.," said the Captain; "you forget that he's only a poor Irish lad. Come now, let us rather think of starting him in the world, with something to keep the devil out of his pocket." And with this kind of suggestion, he chucked a dollar into his cap; and then commenced a begging tour of the room, which, I am ready to confess, showed the company to be far more generous than they were witty.

"Here, Master Con.," said he, as he poured the contents into my hands, "here is wherewithal to pay your footing at Mrs. Davis's. As a traveler from the old country, you'll be expected to entertain the servants' hall: do it liberally; there's nothing like a bold push at the first go off.."

"I know it, sir; my father used to say, that the gentleman always won his election who made most freeholders drunk, the first day of the poll."

"Your father was a man of keen observation, Con."

"And is, sir, still, with your leave, if kangaroo meat hasn't disagreed with him, and left me to sustain the honors of the house."

"Oh, that's it, Con., is it?" said Captain Pike, with a sly glance.

"Yes, sir, that's it," said I, replying more to his look than his words.

"Here's the letter for Mrs. Davis—you'll present it early to-morrow; be discreet—keep your own counsel, and I've no doubt you'll do well."

"I'd be an ungrateful vagabond, if I made your honor out a false prophet," said I: and bowing respectfully to the company, I withdrew.

"What a wonderful principle of equilibrium exists between one's heart and one's pocket!" thought I, as I went down stairs. I never felt the former so light, as now that the latter is heavy.

I wandered out into the town, somewhat puzzled how to dispose of myself for the evening. Had I been performing the part of a "walking gentleman," I fancied I could have

easily hit upon some appropriate and becoming pastime. A theatre—there was one in the "Lower Town"—and a tavern afterwards would have filled the interval before it was time to go to bed. "Time to go to bed!"—strange phrase! born of a thousand-and-one conventionalities. For some, that time comes when the sun has set, and with its last beams of rosy light reminds labor of the coming morrow. To some it is the hour when wearied faculties can do no more—when tired intellect falters "by the way," and cannot keep the "line of march." To others, it comes with dawning light, and when roses and rouge look ghastly; and to others, again, whose "deeds are evil," it is the glare of noon-day.

Now, as for me, I was neither wearied by toil nor pleasure; no sense of past fatigue—no anticipation of coming exertion—invited slumber; nay, I was actually more wakeful than I had been during the entire evening, and I felt a most impulsive desire for a little social enjoyment—that kind of intercourse with strangers, which I always remarked had the effect of eliciting my own conversational qualities to a degree that astonished even myself.

In search of some house of entertainment—some public resort—I paced all the streets of the Upper Town, but to no purpose. Occasionally, lights in a drawing-room, and the sound of a piano, would tell where some small party was assembled; or now and then, from a lower story, a joyous roar of laughter, or the merry chorus of a drinking-song, would bespeak some after-dinner convivialities: but to mingle in scenes like these, I felt that I had yet a long road to travel—ay, to pass muster in the very humblest of those circles, what a deal had I to learn! How much humility, how much confidence; what deference, and what self-reliance; what mingled gravity and levity; what shades and gradations of color, so nicely balanced and proportioned too, that, unresolved by the prism, they show no preponderating tint—make up that pellucid property men call "Tact!" Ay, Con., that is your rarest gift of all! only acquire that, and you may dispense with ancestry, and kindred, and even wealth itself; since he who has "tact" participates in all these advantages "*among his friends.*"

As I mused thus, I had reached the "Lower Town," and found myself opposite the door of a tavern, over which a brilliant lamp illuminated the sign of "The British Grenadier," a species of canteen, in high favor with sergeants and quartermasters of the garrison. I entered boldly, and with the intention of behaving generously to myself; but scarcely had I passed the threshold, than I heard a voice utter in a half whisper, "Dang me, if he an't in livery!"

I did not wait for more. My "tact" assured me that even there I was not admissible; so I strolled out again, muttering to myself, "When a man has neither friend nor supper, and the hour is past midnight, the chances are it is 'time to go to bed;'" and with this sage reflection, I wended my way towards a humble lodging-house on the Quay, over which on landing I read the words, "The Emigrants' Home."

CHAPTER XIV

HOW I "FELL IN" AND "OUT" WITH "THE WIDOW DAVIS."

For the sake of conciseness in this veracious history, I prefer making the reader acquainted at once with facts and individuals, not by the slow process in which the knowledge of them was acquired by myself, but in all the plenitude which intimate acquaintance now supplies; and although this may not seem to accord with the bit-by-bit, and day-by-day narrative of a life, it saves a world of time, some patience, and mayhap some skipping, too. Under this plea, I have already introduced Sir Dudley Broughton to the reader; and now, with permission, mean to present Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. Davis, relict of Thomas John Davis, was a character so associated with Quebec, that to speak of that city without her, would be like writing an account of Newfoundland and never alluding to the article "cod-fish." For a great number of years her house had been the rendezvous of everything houseless, from the newly come "married" officer, to the flash commercial traveller from the States; from the agent of an unknown Land Company, to the "Skipper," of a rank pretentious enough to dine at a boarding-house. The establishment—as she loved to style it—combined all the free and easy air of domesticity, with the enjoyment of society. It was an "acted newspaper," where paragraphs, military and naval, social, scandalous, and commercial, were fabricated with a speed no "compositor" could have kept up with. Here the newly-arrived subaltern heard all the pipe-clay gossip, not of the garrison, but of the Province; here the bagman made contracts and took orders; here the "French Deputy" picked up what he called afterwards in the Chamber "L'opinion publique;" and here the men of pine-logs, and white deal, imbibed what they fervently believed to be the habits and manners of the "English aristocracy." "To invest the establishment with this character," to make it go forth to the world as the mirror of high and fashionable life, had been the passion of Mrs. D.'s

existence. Never did Monarch labor for the safeguard that might fence and hedge round his dynasty, more zealously; never did Minister strive for the guarantees that should ensure the continuance of his system. It was the moving purpose of her life; in it she had invested all her activity, both of mind and body; and as she looked back to the barbarism from which her generous devotion had rescued hundreds, she might well be pardoned if a ray of self-glorification lighted up her face. "When I think of Quebec, when T. J."—her familiar mode of alluding to the defunct Thomas John—"and myself first beheld it," would she say, "and see it now, I believe I may be proud." The social habits were indeed at a low ebb. The skippers,—and there were few other strangers,—had a manifest contempt for the use of the fork at dinner, and performed a kind of sword-exercise while eating, of the most fearful kind. Napkins were always misconstrued—the prevailing impression being that they were pocket-handkerchiefs. No man had any vested interest in his own wine-glass; while thirsty souls even dispensed with such luxuries, and drank from the bottle itself.

Then, sea-usages had carried themselves into shore life. The company were continually getting up to look out of windows, watching the vessels that passed, remarking on the state of the tide, and then resuming their places with a muttering over the "half-ebb," and that the wind was "northing-by-west," looked for change. All the conversation smacked of salt-water; every allusion had an odor of tar and sea-weed about it.

Poor Mrs. Davis! how was she to civilize these savages? how invest their lives with any interest above timber? They would not listen to the polite news of "Government House;" they would not vouchsafe the least attention to the interesting paragraphs she recited as table-talk,—how the Prince of Hohenhumbughousen had arrived at Windsor on a visit to Majesty; nor how Royalty walked in "The Slopes," or sat for its picture.

Of the "Duke of Northumberland," they only knew a troop-ship of the name, and even that had been water-logged! The "Wellington" traded to Mirimachi, and the "Robert Peel" was a barque belonging to Newfoundland, and employed in general traffic, and not believed very seaworthy.

Some may make the ungracious remark, that she might have spared herself this task of humanizing—that she could have left these "ligneous christians," these creatures of tar and turpentine, where she found them. The same observation will apply equally to Cooke, to Franklin, to Brooke of Borneo, and a hundred other civilizers; so Mrs. D. felt it, and so she labored to make T. J. feel it; but he wouldn't. The ungrateful old bear saw the ordinary grow daily thinner—he perceived that *Banquo* might have seated himself at any part of the table, and he actually upbraided his wife with the fact. Every day he announced some new defection from the list of their old supporters. Now it was old Ben Crosseley, of the "Lively Biddy," that wouldn't stand being ordered to shake out his canvas—that is, to spread his napkin—when he was taking in sea-store; then it was Tom Galket, grew indignant at not being permitted to beat "to quarters" with his knuckles at every pause in the dinner. Some were put out by being obliged to sit with their legs under the table, being long habituated to dine at a cask with a plank on it, and of course keeping their limbs "stowed away" under the seat; and one, an old and much respected river pilot, was carried away insensible from table, on hearing that grog was not a recognised table beverage throughout the British dominions.

The banishment of lobscouse and sea-pie—pork, with its concomitant cataplasm of peas, and other similar delicacies from the bill of fare, completed the defection; and at last none remained of the "once goodlie company," save an old attenuated Guernsey skipper, too much in debt to leave, but who attributed his fealty to the preference he entertained for "les usages de la bonne societé, et la charmante Mde. Davis." T. J. could never hold up his head again; he moped about the docks and quays, like the restless spirit of some Ancient Mariner. Every one pitied him; and he grew so accustomed to condolence—so dependent, in fact, on commiseration—that he spent his days rowing from one ship to the other in the harbor, drinking grog with the skippers, till, by dint of pure sympathy, he slipped quietly into his grave, after something like a two years' attack of delirium tremens.

The same week that saw T. J. descend to the tomb, saw his widow ascend to the "Upper Town,"—the more congenial locality for aspirations like hers. If no eulogistic inscription marked his resting-place, a very showy brass plate adorned hers. From that hour she was emancipated: it seemed, indeed, as if she had turned a corner in life, and at once emerged from gloom and darkness into sunshine. It chanced that the barracks were at that very moment undergoing repair, and several officers were glad to find, at a convenient distance, the comforts and accommodations, which a plausible advertisement in the "Quebec Messenger" assured them were to be obtained for one pound one shilling weekly.

There are people who will tell you that we live in a heartless, selfish, grabbing, grasping age, where each preys upon his neighbor, and where gain is the spirit of every con-

tract; and yet, in what period of the world was maternal tenderness, the comforts of a home, the watchful anxieties of parental love, to be had so cheaply? Who ever heard of bachelors being admitted into families, where music and the arts formed the evening's recreation, in the Middle Ages? Does Herodotus inform us, that "young and attractive ladies would take charge of a widower's household, and superintend the care of his family?" Not a bit of it! On this point, at least, the wisdom of our ancestors has no chance with us. There is not a wish of the heart, there is not a yearning of the affections, that a three-and-sixpenny advertisement in the "Times" will not evoke a remedy for. You can make love, or a book, or a speech, by deputy; for every relative you lose, there are fifty kind-hearted creatures to supply the place; and not only may you travel over half the globe without more personal exertion than it costs you to go to bed, but you can be measured either for a wife or a suit of clothes, without ever seeing the lady or the tailor.

The "Hotel Davis," so said the newspaper, "was situated in the most airy and healthful locality of the Upper Town." No one ever rung the bell of the hall-door from the first of October to May, but would acknowledge the truth of the first epithet. "The society, for admission to which the most particular references are required, embraces all that is intellectual, high-bred, and refined. The table, where preside the 'feast of reason and the flow of soul,' combines the elegance and delicacy of the French, with the less sophisticated succulence of English cookery. Intellectual resources,—the humanizing influences of song and poetry,—the varied pleasures of cultivated and kindred spirits, which have won for this establishment the epithet of the Davisian Acropolis, continue to make it the chosen retreat of gentlemen connected with civil and military pursuits, who are lodged and boarded for one guinea weekly.

"Receptions every Thursday. Balls, during the winter, on the first Monday of each month."

Such was one among many—I select it as the shortest—announcements of this cheap Elysium; and now, two words about Mrs. D. herself. She was a poor, thin, shriveled-up little woman, with a rugged, broken-up face, whose profile looked like a jagged saw. Next to elegance of manner, her passion was personal appearance—by which she meant, the adventitious aid of false hair, rouge, and cosmetics, and these she employed with such ever-varying ingenuity, that her complexion changed daily, from classic pallor, to Spanish richness, while the angle of incidence of her eyebrows took in every thing, from forty-five degrees, to the horizontal. Her style was "sylph," and so she was gauzy and floating in all her drapery. A black veil to the back of her head—a filmy, gossamer-kind of scarf across her shoulders—assisted this deception, and, when she crossed the room, gave her the air of a clothes'-line in a high wind.

Black mittens, over fingers glowing in all the splendor of imitation rings, and a locket about the size of a cheese-plate, containing the hair,—some said, the scalp,—of the late T. J., completed a costume which Mrs. D. herself, believed Parisian, but to which no revolution, democratic or social, could reduce a French woman.

She borrowed her language as well as her costume from the Grand Nation, and with this comfortable reflection, that she was not likely to be asked to restore the loan. Her French was about as incongruous as her dress—but Quebec, fortunately, was not Paris; and she drove her coach and six through "Adelow," with a hardihood that outstripped, if it did not defy, criticism.

By the military and naval people she was deemed the best "fun" going; her pretension, her affectation, her shrewdness, and her simplicity; her religious homage to fashion; her unmerciful tyranny towards what she thought vulgarity, made her the subject of many a joke and much amusement. The other classes, the more regular habitues of the "house," thought she was a princess in disguise; they revered her opinions as oracles, and only wondered how the court-end could spare one so evidently formed to be the glass of fashion.

If I have been too prolix in my sketch, kind reader, attribute it to the true cause—my anxiety to serve those who are good enough to place themselves under my guidance. Mrs. D. still lives; the establishment still survives; at five o'clock each day—ay, this very day, I have no doubt—her table is crowded by "the rank and fashion" of the Quebec world: and the chances are, if you yourself, worthy reader, should visit that city, that you may be glad to give your blank days to the fare of Madame Davis.

It was ten o'clock in the forenoon as I arrived at her door, and sent in Captain Pike's letter, announcing my arrival I found Mrs. D. in what she called her own room—a little den of about eleven feet square, shelved all round, and showing an array of jars and preserve-pots that was most imposing,—the offerings of skippers from the West India Islands and Madeira, who paid a kind of blackmail in preserved ginger, guavas, yams, pepper-pots, chili, and potted crabs, that would have given liver-complaints to half the Province.

Mrs. D. was standing on a step-ladder, arranging her treasures by the aid of a negro boy of about twelve years old, as I entered;

and not feeling that I was of consequence sufficient to require a more formal audience, she took a steady and patient observation of me, and then resumed her labors. The little window, about six feet from the ground, threw a fine Rembrandt light upon me, as I stood in my showy habiliments, endeavoring, by an imposing attitude, to exhibit myself to the best advantage.

"Forty-seven; guava jelly, Sambo!—where is forty-seven?"

"Me no see him," said Sambo; "missus eat him up, perhaps."

"Monsonze! you filthy creature,—look for it, sirrah;" so saying, Mrs. Davis applied her double eye-glass to her eyes, and again surveyed me for some seconds.

"You are the"—she hesitated—"the young person my friend Captain Pike brought out, I believe?"

"Yes, my lady," said I, bowing profoundly.

"What's your name, the captain has not written it clearly?"

"Cregan, my lady,—Con. Cregan."

"Con.,—Con., repeated she twice or thrice; "what does Con. mean?"

"It's the short for Cornelius, my lady."

"Ah, the abbreviation for Cornelius!—and where have you lived, Cornelius?'

"My last place, my lady, was Sir Miles O'Ryan's, of Roaring-water."

"What are you doing, you wretch;—take your filthy fingers out of that pot this instant," screamed she suddenly.

"Me taste him, an' he be dam hot!" cried the nigger, dancing from one foot to the other, as his mouth was on fire from tasting capsicum pods.

I thought of my own mustard experience, and then, turning a glance of ineffable contempt upon my black friend, said, "Those creatures, my lady, are *so* ignorant, they really do not know the nature of the commmonest condiments."

"Very true, Cornelius; I would wish, however, to observe to you, that although my family are all persons of rank, I have no title myself—that is to say," added she, with a pleasing smile, "I do not assume it here,—therefore, until we return to England, you needn't address me as ladyship."

"No, my lady—I beg your ladyship's pardon for forgetting; but as I have always lived in high families, I've got the habit, my lady, of saying my lady."

"I am Madam—plain Madam Davis—there, I knew you'd do it, you nasty little beast, you odious black creature." This sudden apostrophe was evoked by the nigger endeavoring to balance a jam-pot on his thumb, while he spun it round with the other hand;—an exploit that ended with a smash of the jar, and a squash of the jam all over my silk stockings.

"It's of no consequence, my lady, I shall change them when I dress for dinner," said I, with consummate ease.

"The jam is lost, however—will you kindly beat him about the head with that candlestick beside you?"

I seized the implement, as if in most choleric mood: but my black was not to be caught so easily; and with a drive between my legs he bolted for the door—while I was pitched forward against the step-ladder head-foremost. In my terror I threw out my hands to save myself, and caught—not the ladder, but Madam Davis' legs,—and down we went together, with a small avalanche of brown jars and preserve-pots clattering over us.

As I had gone head-foremost, my head through the ladder; and as Mrs. Davis had fallen on the top of me—her head being reversed—there we lay, like herrings in a barrel, till her swoon had passed away. At last she did rally; and gathering herself up, sat against the wall, a most rueful picture of bruises and disorder, while I, emerging from between the steps of the ladder, began to examine whether it were marmalade or my brains that I felt coming down my cheek.

"You'll never mention this shocking event, Cornelius," said she, trying to adjust her wig, which now faced over the left shoulder.

"Never, my lady. Am I to consider myself engaged?"

"Yes, on the terms of Captain Pike's note,—ten pounds; no wine nor tea-money, no passage-fare out, no livery, no—" I was afraid she was going to add no prog, but she grew faint, and merely said, "bring me a glass of water."

"I'll put you in charge of the lamps and plate to-morrow," said she, recovering.

"Very well, madam," said I aloud—while to myself I muttered, "they might easily be in better hands."

"You'll wait at table to-day."

"Yes, my lady—madam, I mean."

"Soup always goes first to Mrs. Trussford—black velvet, and very fat; then to the lady in blue spectacles; afterward, Miss Moriarty. Ah, I'm too weak for giving directions: I'm in what they call 'un état de fuillete.'" And with these words, Mrs. Davis retired, leaving me to the contemplation of the battle-field and my own bruises.

My next care was to present myself below stairs; and although some may smile at the avowal, I had far more misgivings about how I should pass muster with the underlings, than with the head of the department. Is the reader aware that it was a farrier of the Emperor Alexander's guard who first predicted the destruction of the "grand army" in Russia? A French horse-shoe was shown to him, as a curiosity; and he immediately exclaimed,—"What! not yet frost-roughed?

these fellows don't know the climate; the snows begin to-morrow!" So it is—ignorance and pretension are infallibly discovered by "routine" people; they look to details, and they at once detect him who mistakes or overlooks them.

Resolving, at all events, to make my "Old World" habits stand my part in every difficulty, and to sneer down everything I did not understand, I put on a bold face, and descended to the lower regions.

Great people, "Ministers," and Secretaries for the "Home" and "Foreign," little know how great their privilege is, that in taking office, they are spared all unpleasant meetings with their predecessors. At least, I conclude such to be the case; and that my Lord Palmerston "stepping in" does not come abruptly upon Lord Aberdeen "going out," nor does an angry altercation arise between him who arrives to stay, and he who is packing his portmanteau to be off. I say that I opine as much, and that both the entrance and the departure are conducted with due etiquette and propriety; in fact, that Lord A. has called his cab and slipped away before Lord P. has begun to "take up" the "spoons"—not a bad metaphor, by the way—for an entrance into the Foreign office.

No such decorous reserve presides over the change of a domestic ministry. The whole warfare of opposition is condensed into one angry moment, and the rival parties are brought face to face in the most ungracious fashion.

Now, my system in life was that so well and popularly known by the name of M. Guizot, "Le Paix á tout prix;" and I take pride to myself in thinking that I have carried it out with more success. With a firm resolve, therefore, that no temptation should induce me to deviate from a pacific policy, I entered the kitchen; where the "lower house" was then "in committee"—the "Cook in the chair."

"Here he com, now!" said Blackie; and the assembly grew hushed as I entered.

"Ay, here he comes!" said I, re-echoing the speech; "and let us see if we shall not be merry comrades."

The address was a happy one; and that evening closed upon me in the very pinnacle of popularity.

I have hesitated for some time, whether I should not ask of my reader to enrol himself for a short space as a member of "the establishment," or even to sojourn one day beneath a roof where so many originals were congregated; to witness the very table itself, set out with its artificial fruits and flowers, its pine-apples in wax, and its peaches of paper; all the appliances by which Mrs. D., in her ardent zeal, hoped to propagate refinement and abstemiousness; high-breeding and low diet being, in her esteem, inseparably united. To see the company—the poor old faded and crushed flowers of mock gentility—widows and unmarried daughters of tax-collectors, long "gathered." Polite store-keepers and apothecaries to the "Forces," cultivating the Graces at the cost of their appetites, and descending, in costumes of twenty years back, in the pleasing delusion of being "dressed" for dinner; while here and there some unhappy skipper, undergoing a course of refinement, looking like a bear in a "ballet," ashamed of his awkwardness, and even still more ashamed of the company wherein he found himself; and lastly, some old Seigneur of the Lower Province—a poor, wasted, wrinkled creature, covered with hair-powder and snuff, but yet, strangely enough, preserving some "taste of his once quality," and not altogether destitute of the graces of the land he sprung from; curious and incongruous elements to make up society, and worthy of the presidency of that greater incongruity who ruled them.

Condemned to eat food they did not relish, and discuss themes they did not comprehend, what a noble zeal was theirs! What sacrifices did they not make to the genius of "gentility!" If they would sneer at a hash, Mrs. D.'s magic wand charmed it into a "ragout;" when they almost sneezed at the sour wine, Mrs. D. called for another glass of "La Rose." "Rabbits" they were assured were the daily diet of the Duke of Devonshire, and Lady Laddington ate kid every day at dinner. In the same way, potatos were vulgar things, but "Pommes de terres, a la mâitre d'hôtel," were a delicacy for royalty.

To support these delusions of diet, I was everlastingly referred to. "Cregan," would she say,—placing her glass to her eye, and fixing on some dish, every portion of which her own dainty fingers had compounded,—"Cregan, what is that?"

"Poulet à la George quatre, madame!"—she always permitted me to improvise the nomenclature,—"the receipt came from the Bishop of Beldoff's cook."

"Ah! prepared with olives, I believe?"

"Exactly, madame," would I say; presenting the dish, whose success was at once assured.

If a wry face, or an unhappy contortion of the mouth from any guest, announced disappointment, Mrs. D. at once appealed to me for the explanation. "What is it, Cregan?—Mrs. Blotter, I fear you don't like that 'plat?'"

"The truffles were rather old, Madame;" or, "the anchovies were too fresh;" or, "there was too little caviar," or something of the kind, I would unhesitatingly aver; for my head was stocked with a strong catalogue, from an old French Cookery-book which I used to study each morning. The more abstruse my explanation, the more certain of its

being indorsed by the company—only too happy to be supposed capable of detecting the subtle deficiency; all but the old French Deputy, who, on such occasions, would give a little shake of his narrow head, and mutter to himself, "Ah; il est mutin, ce gaillard-là!"

Under the influence of great names, they would have eaten a stewed mummy from the Pyramids. What the Marquis of Asheldown, or the Earl of Brocknore invariably ordered, could not without risk be despised by these "small boys" of refinement. It is true, they often mourned in secret over the altered taste of the old country, which preferred kickshaws and trumpery to its hallowed ribs and sirloins; but, like the folk who sit at the Opera, while they long for the Haymarket, and who listen to Jenny Lind, while their hearts are with Mrs. Keeley, they "took out" in fashion what they lost in amusement,—a very English habit, by the way. To be sure, and to their honor be it spoken, they wished the Queen would be pleased to fancy legs of mutton and loins of veal, just as some others are eager for Royalty to enjoy the national drama; but they innocently forgot the while, that "they" might have the sirloin, and "the others" Shakspeare, even without majesty partaking of either, and that a roast goose and Falstaff can be relished, even without such august precedent. Dear, good souls they were, never deviating from that fine old sturdy spirit of independence, which makes us feel ourselves a match for the whole world in arms, as we read the "Times" and hum "Rule Britannia."

All this devout homage of a class, with whom they had nothing in common, and with which they could never come into contact, produced in me a very strange result; and in place of being ready to smile at the imitators, I began to conceive a stupendous idea of the natural greatness of those who could so impress the ranks beneath them. "Con.," said I to myself, "that is the class in life would suit you perfectly. There is no trade like that of a gentleman. He who does nothing, is always ready for everything; the little shifts and straits of a handicraft or a profession, narrow and confine the natural expansiveness of the intellect, which, like a tide over a flat shore, should swell and spread itself out, free and without effort. See to this, Master Con.; take care that you don't sit down contented with a low round on the ladder of life, but strive ever upwards; depend on it, the view is best from the top, even if it only enable you to look down on your competitors."

These imaginings, as might be easily imagined, led me to form a very depreciating estimate of my lords and masters of the "establishment." Not only their little foibles and weaknesses, their small pretensions and their petty attempts at fine life, were all palpable to my eyes, but their humble fortunes and narrow means to support such assumption were equally so; and there is nothing which a vulgar mind—I was vulgar at that period—so unhesitatingly seizes on for sarcasm, as the endeavor of a poor man to "do the fine gentleman."

If no man is a hero to his valet, he who has no valet is never a hero at all—is nobody. I conceived, then, the most insulting contempt for the company, on whom I practised a hundred petty devices of annoyance. I would drop gravy on a fine satin dress, in which the wearer only made her appearance at festivals, or stain with sauce the "Russia ducks" destined to figure through half a week. Sometimes, by an adroit change of decanters during dinner, I would produce a scene of almost irremediable confusion, when the owner of sherry would find himself taking toast-and-water, he of the last beverage having improved the time and finished the racier liquid. Such reciprocities, although strictly in accordance with "free-trade," invariably led to very warm discussions, that lasted through the remainder of the evening.

Then I removed plates ere the eater was satisfied, and that with an air of such imposing resolve, as to silence remonstrance. When a stingy guest passed up his decanter to a friend, in a moment of enthusiastic munificence, I never suffered it to return till it was emptied; while to the elderly ladies, I measured out the wine like laudanum; every now and then, too, I would forget to hand the dish to some one or other of the company, and affect only to discover my error as the last spoonful was disappearing.

Nor did my liberties end here. I was constantly introducing innovations in the order of dinner, that produced most ludicrous scenes of discomfiture,—now insisting on the use of a fork—now, of a spoon, under circumstances where no adroitness could compensate for the implement; and one day, I actually went so far as to introduce soap with the finger-glasses, averring that "it was always done at Devonshire House on grand occasions." I thought I should have betrayed myself, as I saw the efforts of the party to perform their parts with suitable dignity; all I could do was to restrain a burst of open laughter.

So long as I prosecuted my reforms on the actual staff of the establishment, all went well. Now and then, it is true, I used to overhear in French, of which they believed me to be ignorant, rather sharp comments on the "free-and-easy tone of my manners,—how careless I had become," and so on; complaints, however, sure to be met by some assurance that "my manners were quite London"—that what I did was the type of fash.

ionable servitude; apologies made less to screen me than to exalt those who invented them, as thoroughly conversant with high life in England.

At last, partly from being careless of consequences, for I was getting very weary of this kind of life,—the great amusement of which u ed to be, repeating my performance for the ear of Captain Pike, and he was now removed with his regiment to Kingstown,—and partly wishing for some incidents, of what kind I cared not, that might break the monotony of my existence, I contrived one day to stretch my prerogative too far, or in the phrase of the gulf, "I harpooned a bottle-nose,"—the periphrasis for making a gross mistake.

I had been some years at Mrs. Davis's, in fact, I felt and thought myself a man, when the last ball of the season was announced—an entertainment at which usually, a more crowded assemblage used to congregate than at any of the previous ones.

It was the choice occasion for the habitues of the house to invite their grand friends, for Mrs. D. was accustomed to put forth all her strength, and the arrangements were made on a scale of magnificence that invariably occasioned a petty famine for the fortnight beforehand. Soup never appeared, that there might be "bouillon" for the dancers; every one was on a short allowance of milk, eggs, and sugar; meat became almost a tradition; even candles waned and went out, in waiting for the auspicious night when they should blaze like noon day. Nor did the company fail to participate in these preparatory schoolings. What frightful heads in curl-papers would appear at breakfast and dinner! What buttoned-up coats and black cravats refuse all investigation on the score of linen! What mysterious cookings of cosmetics at midnight, with petty thefts of lard and thick cream! What washings of kid gloves, that when washed would never go on again! What inventions of French polish that refused all persuasions to dry, but continued to stick to, and paint everything it came in contact with! Then there were high dresses cut down, like frigates razeed; frock coats reduced to dress ones; mock lace and false jewelry were at a premium; and all the little patch-work devices of ribbons, bows, and carnations, gimp, gauze, and geraniums, were put into requisition—petty acts of deception, that each saw through in her neighbor, but firmly believed were undetectable in herself.

Then what caballings about the invited! what scrutiny into rank and station—"what set they were in," and whom did they visit; with little Star-chamber inquisitions as to character, all breaches of which, it is but fair to state, were most charitably deemed remediable if the party had any pretension to social position; for not only the saint in crape was twice a saint in lawn, but the satin sinner was pardonable, where the "washing silk" would have been found guilty without a "recommendation."

Then there was eternal tuning of the pianoforte, which most perversely insisted on not suiting voices that might have sung duets with a peacock. Quadrilles were practised in empty rooms; and Miss Timmock was actually seen trying to teach Blotter to waltz—a proceeding, I rejoice to say, that the moral feeling of the household at once suppressed. And then, what a scene of decoration went forward in all the apartments! As in certain benevolent families, whatever is uneatable is always given to the poor; so here, all the artificial flowers unavailable for the toilet were generously bestowed to festoon along the walls, to conceal tin sconces, and to wreath round rickety chandeliers. Contrivance—that most belauded phenomenon in Nature's craft—was everywhere. If necessity be the mother of invention, poor gentility is the "step-mother." Never were made greater efforts, or greater sacrifices incurred, to make Mrs. D. appear like a West-end leader of the fashion, and to make the establishment itself seem a Holderness House.

As for me, I was the type of a stage servant—one of those creatures who hand round coffee in the "School for Scandal." My silk stockings were embroidered with silver, and my showy coat displayed a bouquet that might have filled a vase.

In addition to these personal graces, I had long been head of my department; all the other officials; from the negro knife cleaner upwards, besides all those begged, borrowed, and I believe I might add, stolen domestics of other families, being placed under my orders.

Among the many functions committed to me, the drilling of these gentry stood first in difficulty, not only because they were rebellious under control, but because I had actually to invent "the discipline during the parade." One golden rule, however, I had adopted, and never suffered myself to deviate from, viz., to do nothing as it had been done before,—a maxim which relieved me from all the consequences of inexperience. Traditions are fatal things for a radical reformer; and I remembered having heard it remarked, how Napoleon himself first sacrificed his dignity, by attempting an imitation of the monarchy. By this one precept I ruled and squared all my conduct.

The most refractory of my subordinates was a jackanapes about my own age, who having once waited on the "young gentlemen" in the cock-pit of a man-of-war, fancied he had acquired very extended views of life. Among other traits of his fashionable experience, he remembered that at a dejuné given by the officers at Cadiz once, the company, who

breakfasted in the gun-room, had all left their hats and cloaks in the midshipmen's berth, receiving each a small piece of card with a number on it, a similar one being attached to the property,—a process so universal now in our theatres and assemblies, that I ask pardon for so particularly describing it; but it was a novelty at the time I speak'of, and had all the merits of a new discovery.

Smush—this was the deputy's name—had been so struck with the admirable success of the arrangement, that he had actually preserved the pieces of card, and now produced them, black and ragged, from the recesses of his trunk.

"Mr. Cregan," such was the respectful title by which I was now always addressed—"Mr. Cregan can tell us," said he, "if this is not the custom at great balls in London."

"It used to be so, formerly," said I, with an air of most consummate coolness, as I sat in an arm-chair, regaling myself with a cigar; "the practice you allude to, Smush, did prevail, I admit. But our fashionable laws change; one day it is all ultra refinement and Sybarite luxury, the next, they affect a degree of mock simplicity in their manners: anything for novelty! Now, for instance, eating fish with the fingers——"

"Do they, indeed, go so far?"

"Do they!" ay, and fifty things worse. At a race-dinner the same silver cup goes round the table, drunk out of by every one,—I have seen strange things in my time."

"That you must, Mr. Cregan."

"Latterly," said I, warming with my subject, and seeing my auditory ready to believe anything, "they began the same system with the soup, and always passed the tureen round, each tasting it as it went. This was an innovation of the Duke of Struttenham's, but I I don't fancy it will last."

"And how do they manage about the hats, Mr. Cregan?"

"The last thing, in that way, was what I saw at Lord Mudbroke's, at Richmond, where, not to hamper the guests with these foolish bits of card, which they were always losing, the servant in waiting chalked a number on the hat or coat, or whatever it might be, and then marked the same on the gentleman's back!"

Had it not been for the imposing gravity of my manner, the absurdity of this suggestion had been at once apparent; but I spoke like an oracle, and I impressed my words with the simple gravity of a common-place truth.

"If you wish to do the very newest hing, Smush, that's the latest; quite a fresh touch; and I'll venture to say, perfectly unknown here. It saves a world of trouble to all parties; and as you brush it off before they leave, it is always another claim for the parting douceur!"

"I'll do it," said Smush, eagerly; "they cannot be angry—"

"Angry! angry at what is done with the very first people in London!" said I, affecting horror at the bare thought. The train was now laid; I had only to wait for its explosion. At first, I did this with eager impatience for the result; then, as the time drew near, with somewhat of anxiety; and, at last, with downright fear of the consequences. Yet to revoke the order, to confess that I was only hoaxing on so solemn a subject, would have been the downfall of my ascendancy forever. What was to be done?

I could imagine but one escape from the difficulty; which was, to provide myself with a clothes-brush, and as my station was at the drawing-room door, to erase the numerals before their wearers entered. In this way I should escape the forfeiture of my credit, and the risk of maintaining it.

I would willingly recall some of the strange incidents of that great occasion, but my mind can only dwell upon one; as, brush in hand, I asked permission to remove some accidental dust,—a leave most graciously accorded, and ascribed to my town-bred habits of attention. At last—it was nigh midnight, and for above an hour the company had received no accession to its ranks; quadrilles had succeeded quadrilles, and the business of the scene went swimmingly on,—all the time-honored events of similar assemblages happening with that rigid regularity, which, if evening parties were managed by steam, and regulated by a fly-wheel, could not proceed with more orderly routine. "Heads of houses" with bald scalps, led out simpering young boarding-school misses, and danced with a noble show of agility, to refute any latent suspicion of coming age. There were the usual number of very old people, who vowed the dancing was only a shuffling walk, not the merry movement they had practised half a century ago; and there were lack-a-dasical young gentlemen, with waistcoats variegated as a hearth-rug, and magnificent breast-pins—like miniature pokers—who lounged and lolled about, as though youth were the most embarrassing and wearying infliction mortality was heir to.

There were, besides, all the varieties of the class—young lady—as seen in every land where muslin is sold and white shoes are manufactured. There was the slight young lady, who floated about with her gauzy dress daintily pinched in two; then there was the short and dumpling young lady, who danced with a duck in her gait; and there were a large proportion of the flouncing, flaunting kind, who took the figures of the quadrille by storm, and went at the "right and left" as if they were escaping from a fire; and there was Mrs. Davis herself, in a spangled toque

and red shoes, pottering about from place to place, with a terrible eagerness to be agreeable and fashionable at the same time.

It was, I have said, nigh midnight, as I stood at the half-open door, watching the animated and amusing scene within, when Mrs. Davis, catching sight of me, and doubtless for the purpose of displaying my specious livery, ordered me to open a window, or close a shutter, or something of like importance. I had scarcely performed the service, when a kind of half titter through the room made me look round, and to my unspeakable horror, I beheld in the centre of the room, Town-Major McCan, the most passionate little man in Quebec, making his obeisances to Mrs. Davis, while a circle around were, with handkerchiefs to their mouths, stifling as they best could, a burst of laughter; since exactly between his shoulders, in marks of about four inches long, stood the numerals "158," a great flourish underneath proclaiming that the roll had probably concluded, and that this was the "last man."

Of the Major, tradition had already consecrated one exploit; he had once kicked an impertinent tradesman down the great flight of iron stairs which leads from the Upper Town to Diamond Harbor,—a feat, to appreciate which, it is necessary to bear in mind that the stair in question is almost perpendicular, and contains six hundred and forty-eight steps! My very back ached by anticipation as I thought of it; and as I retreated toward the door, it was in a kind of shuffle, feeling like one who had been well thrashed.

"A large party, Mrs. D.; a very brilliant and crowded assembly," said the Major, pulling out his bushy whiskers, and looking importantly around. "Now what number have you here?"

"I can not even guess, Major; but we have had very few apologies. Could you approximate to our numbers this evening, Mr. Cox?" said she, addressing a spiteful-looking old man, who sat eyeing the company through an opera-glass.

"I have counted one hundred and thirty-four, madam; but the Major makes them more numerous still!"

"How do you mean, Cox?" said he, getting firey red.

"If you'll look in that glass yonder, which is opposite the mirror, you'll soon see!" wheezed out the old man, maliciously. I did not wait for more: with one spring I descended the first flight; another brought me to the hall; but not before a terrible shout of laughter apprised me that all was discovered. I had just time to open the clock-case, and step into it, as Major McCan came thundering down stairs, with his coat on his arm.

A shrill yell from Sambo now told me that one culprit, at least, was "up" for punishment. "Tell the truth, you d—d piece of carved ebony! who did this?"

"Not me, massa! not me, massa! Smush did him!"

Smush was at the instant emerging from the back parlor with a tray of colored fluids for the dancers. With one vigorous kick the Major sent the whole flying; and ere the terrified servitor knew what the assault portended, a strong grasp caught him by the throat, and ran him up bang! against the clock-case. Oh, what a terrible moment was that for me! I heard the very gurgling rattle in his throat, like choking, and felt as if when he ceased to breathe, that I should expire with him.

"You confess it! you own it, then! you infernal rascal!" said the Major, almost hoarse with rage.

"Oh, forgive me, sir! oh, forgive me! It was Mr. Cregan, sir, the butler, who told me! Oh dear, I'm ——" what, he couldn't finish; for the Major, in relinquishing his grasp, flung him backwards, and he fell against the stairs.

"So, it was Mr.—Cregan,—the—butler,—was it!" said the Major, with an emphasis on each word, as though he had bitten the syllables. "Well! as sure as my name is Tony M'Can, Mr. Cregan shall pay for this! Turn about is fair play; you have marked *me*, and may I be a drummer to the Cape fencibles if I don't mark *you!*" and with this denunciation, uttered in a tone, every accent of which vouched for truth, he took a hat—the first next to him—and issued from the house.

Shivering with terror—and not without cause—I waited till Smush had, with Sambo's aid, carried down-stairs the broken fragments; and then, the coast being clear, I stepped from my hiding-place, and opening the hall-door, fled; ay, ran as fast as my legs could carry me. I crossed the grass terrace in front of the barrack, not heeding the hoarse "who goes there" of the sentry; and then, dashing along the battery-wall, hastened down the stairs that led in successive flights to the filthy "Lower Town;" in whose dingy recesses I well knew that crime or shame could soon find a sanctuary.

CHAPTER XV.

AN EMIGRANT'S FIRST STEP "ON SHORE."

If I say that the Lower Town of Quebec is the St. Giles's of the metropolis, I convey but a very faint notion indeed of that terrible locality. I have seen life in some of its least attractive situations. I am not ignorant of the Liberties of Dublin, and the Claddah of Galway; I have passed more time than I care to mention in the Isle St. Louis of Paris;

while the Leopoldstadt of Vienna, and the Ghetto of Rome are tolerably familiar to me; but still, for wickedness in its most unwashed state, I give the palm to the Lower Town of Quebec.

The population, originally French, became gradually intermixed with emigrants, most of whom came from Ireland, and who, having expended the little means they could scrape together for the voyage, firmly believing that once landed in America, gold was a "chimera" not worth troubling one's head about—they were unable to go farther, and either became laborers to the city, or, as the market grew speedily overstocked, sunk down into a state of pauperism, the very counterpart of that they had left on the other side of the ocean. Their turbulence, their drunkenness, the reckless violence of all their habits, at first shocked, and then terrified the poor timid Canadians—of all people the most submissive and yielding—so that very soon feeling how impossible it was to maintain co-partnery with such associates, they left the neighborhood, and abandoned the field to the new race. Intermarriages had, however, taken place to a great extent; from which, and the daily intercourse with the natives, a species of language came to be spoken, which was currently called French; but which might, certainly with equal propriety, be called Cherokee. Of course this new tongue modified itself with the exigencies of those who spoke it; and as the French ingredient declined, the Milesian preponderated, till at length it became far more Irish than French.

Nothing assists barbarism like a dialect adapted to its own wants. Slang is infinitely more conducive to the propagation of vice than is generally believed; it is the "paper currency" of iniquity, and each man issues as much as he likes. If I wanted an evidence of this fact, I should "call up" the place I am speaking of, where the very jargon at once defied civilization, and ignored the "schoolmaster." The authorities, either regarding the task as too hopeless, or too dangerous, or too troublesome, seemed to slur over the existence of this infamous locality; it is not impossible that they saw with some satisfaction, that wickedness had selected its only peculiar and appropriate territory, and that they had left this den of vice, as Yankee farmers are accustomed to leave a spot of tall grass to attract the snakes, by way of preventing them scattering and spreading over a larger surface.

As each emigrant-ship arrived, hosts of these idlers of the Lower Town beset the newly-landed strangers, and by their voice and accent imposed upon the poor wanderers. The very tones of the old country were a magic the new comers could not withstand, after weeks of voyaging that seemed like years of travel. Whatever reminded them of the country they had quitted, ay,—strange inconsistency of the human heart—of the land they had left for very hopelessness, touched their hearts, and moved them to the very tenderest emotions. To trade on this susceptibility became a recognised livelihood; so that the quays were crowded with idle vagabonds, who sought out the prey with as much skill as a West-end waiter displays in detecting the rank of a new arrival.

This filthy locality, too, contained all the lodging-houses resorted to by the emigrants, who were easily persuaded to follow their "countryman" wherever he might lead. Here were spent the days—sometimes, unhappily, the weeks—before they could fix upon the part of the country to which they should bend their steps; and here, but too often, were wasted in excess and debauchery the little hoards that had cost years to accumulate, till further progress became impossible; and the stranger who landed but a few weeks back, full of strong hope, sunk down into the degraded condition of those who had been his ruin, the old story—the dupe become blackleg.

It were well if deceit and falsehood,—if heartless treachery and calculating baseness, were all that went forward here. But not so; crimes of every character were rife also, and not an inhabitant of the city, with money or character, would have, for any consideration, put foot within this district after night-fall. The very cries that broke upon the stillness of the night were often heard in the Upper Town; and whenever a shriek of agony arose, or the heart-rending cry for help, prudent citizens would close the window, and say, "It is some of the Irish in the Lower Town,"—a comprehensive statement, that needed no commentary.

Towards this pleasant locality I now hastened, with a kind of instinctive sense that I had some claims on the sanctuary. It chanced that an emigrant-ship which had arrived that evening was just disembarking its passengers; mingling with the throng of which, I entered the filthy and narrow lanes of this Alsatia. The new arrivals were all Irish, and as usual were heralded by parties of the resident population, eagerly canvassing them for this or that lodging-house. Had not my own troubles been enough for me, I should have felt interested in the strange contrast between the simple peasant first stepping on a foreign shore, and the shrewd roguery of him who proposed guidance, and who doubtless had himself once been as unsuspecting and artless as those he now cajoled and endeavored to dupe.

I soon saw that single individuals were accounted of little consequence; the claim of the various lodging-houses were as family hotels, perhaps; so that I mixed myself up

with a group of some eight or ten, whose voices sounded pleasantly, for, in the dark, I had no other indication to suggest a preference.

I was not long in establishing a footing, so far as talking went, with one of this party—an old, very old man, whose greatest anxiety was to know, first, if "there was any Ingins where we were going?" and secondly, if I had ever heard of his grandson, Dan. Cullinane? The first doubt I solved for him frankly and freely, that an Indian wouldn't dare to show his nose where we were walking; and as to the second, I hesitated, promising to refer to "my tablets" when I came to the light, for I thought the name was familiar to me.

"He was a shoemaker by trade," said the old man, "and a better never left Ireland; he was 'prentice to old Finucane in Ennis, and might have done well, if he hadn't the turn for Americay."

"But he'll do better here, rely upon it," said I, inviting some further disclosures; "I'm certain he's not disappointed with having come out."

"No, indeed; glory be to God! he's doing finely; and 'twas that persuaded my son Joe to sell the little place and come here,—and a wonderful long way it is!"

After expending a few generalities on sea voyages in general, with a cursory glance at naval architecture, from Noah's "square" stern, down to the modern "round" innovation, we again returned to Dan, for whom I already conceived a strong interest.

"And is it far to New Orleans from this?" said the old man, who, I perceived, was struck by the air of sagacity in my discourse.

"New Orleans! why that's in the States, a thousand miles away!"

"Oh! murther, murther!" cried the old fellow, wringing his hands; "and ain't we in the States?"

"No," said I; "this is Canada."

"Joe! Joe!" cried he, pulling his son by the collar, "listen to this, acushla. Oh, murther, murther! we're kilt and destroyed intirely!"

"What is it, father?" said a tall, powerfully built man, who spoke in a low but resolute voice; "what ails you!"

"Tell him, darlint,—tell him!" said the old man, not able to utter his griefs.

"It seems," said I, "that you believed yourselves in the States; now this is not so. This is British America—Lower Canada.

"Isn't 'Quaybec?'" said he, standing full in front of me.

"It is Quebec; but still that is Canada."

"And it's ten thousand miles from Dan.!" said the old fellow, whose cries were almost suffocating him.

"Whisht, father, and let me talk," said the son; "do you know New Orleans?"

"Perfectly—every street of it," said I, with an effrontery the darkness aided considerably.

"And how far is't from here?"

"Something like thirteen or fourteen hundred miles, at a rough guess."

"Oh, th' eternal villain! if I had him by the neck!" cried Joe, as he struck the ground a blow with his blackthorn which certainly would not have improved the human face divine; "he towld me they were a few miles asunder, an easy day's walk!"

"Who said so?" asked I.

"The chap on Eden Quay, in Dublin, where we took our passage."

"Don't be down-hearted, anyway," said I; "distance is nothing here; we think no more of a hundred miles than you do in Ireland of a walk before breakfast. If it's any comfort to you, I'm going the same way myself."

This very consolatory assurance, which I learned then for the first time also, did not appear to give the full confidence I expected, for Joe made no answer, but with head dropped and clasped hands, continued to mutter some words in Irish, that, so far as sound went, had not the "clink" of blessings.

"He knows Dan.," said the old man to his son in a whisper, which, low as it was, my quick ears detected.

"What does he know about him?" exclaimed the son, savagely; for the memory of one deception was too strong upon him to make him lightly credulous.

"I knew a very smart young man—a very promising young fellow indeed, at New Orleans," said I, "of the name you speak of—Dan. Cullinane."

"What part of Ireland did he come from?" asked Joe.

The man I mean was from Clare, somewhere in the neighborhood of Ennis."

"That's it!" said the old man.

"Whisht!" said the son, whose caution was not so easily satisfied; and turning to me, added, "What was he by trade?"

"He was a shoemaker, and an excellent one; indeed, I've no hesitation in saying, one of the best in New Orleans."

"What was the street he lived in?"

Here was a puzzler! for, as my reader knows, I was at the end of my information, and had not the slightest knowledge of New Orleans or its localities. The little scrap of newspaper I had picked up on Anticosti, was the only thing having any reference to that city I ever possessed in my life. But, true to my theory, to let nothing go to loss, I remembered this now, and with an easy confidence said, "I cannot recall the street, but it is just as you turn out of the street where the Picayune newspaper-office stands."

"Right!—all right, by the father of Moses!"

cried Joe, stretching out a brawny hand, and shaking mine with the cordiality of friendship. Then stepping forward to where the rest of the party were walking with two most loquacious guides, he said: "Molly! here's a boy knows Dan.! Biddy! come here, and hear about Dan.!"

Two young girls, in long cloth cloaks, turned hastily round, and drew near, as they exclaimed in a breath, "Oh tell us about Dan., sir!"

"'Tis betther wait till we're in a house," said the old man, who was, however greedy for news, not a little desirous of a fire and something to eat. "Sure you'll come with us, and take yer share of what's going," said he to me; an invitation which, ere I could reply to, was reiterated by the whole party.

"Do you know where we're going here?" asked Joe of me, as we continued our way through mazes of gloomy lanes, that grew gradually less and less frequented.

"No," said I in a whisper, "but 'tis best be on our guard here—we are in a bad neighborhood."

"Well, there's three boys there," said he, pointing to his sons, who walked in front, "that will pay for all they get. Will you ax the fellows how far we're to go yet, for they don't mind *me*."

"Are we near this same lodging-house?" said I, bluntly, to the guides, and using French, to show that I was no unfledged arrival from beyond the seas.

"Ahi!" cried one, "a gaillard from the battery!"

"Where from, á la gueule de loup, young mounsier?" said the other, familiarly catching me by the lapel of my coat.

"Because I am not afraid of his teeth," said I, with an easy effrontery my heart gave a flat lie to.

"Vrai?" said he, with a laugh of horrible meaning.

"Vrai!" repeated I, with a sinking courage, but a very bold voice.

"I wish we were in better company," whispered I to Joe; "what directions did you give these fellows?"

"To show us the best lodging-house for the night, and that we'd pay well for it."

"Ah!" thought I, "that explains something."

"Here we are, mounseers," said one, as, stopping at the door of a two-storied house, he knocked with his knuckles on the panel.

"Nous fillons, slick, en suite, here," said the other, holding out his hand.

"They are going!" whispered I, "they want to be paid, and we are well rid of them."

"It would be manners to wait and see if they'll let us in," said Joe, who did not fancy this summary departure, while he fumbled in his pocket for a suitable coin.

"Vite!—quick!—sharp time!" cried one of the fellows, who, as the sound of voices was heard from within, seemed impatient to be off; and so, snatching rather than taking the shilling which still lingered in Joe's reluctant fingers, he wheeled about and fled, followed rapidly by the other.

"Qui va!" cried a sharp voice from within as I knocked for the second time on the door-panel with a stone.

"Friends," said I, "we want a lodging and something to eat."

The door was at once opened, and by the light of a lantern, we saw the figure of an old woman, whose eyes, bleared and bloodshot, glared at us fixedly.

"'Tis a lodgen' yez want!" said she, in an accent that showed her to be Irish. "And who brought yez here?"

"Two young fellows we met on the Quay," said Joe; "one called the other 'Tony.'"

"Ay, indeed!" muttered the hag; "I was sure of it; "his own son! his own son!"

These words she repeated in a tone of profound sorrow, and for a time seemed quite unmindful of our presence.

"Are we to get in at all?" said the old man, in an accent of impatience.

"What a hurry yer' in; and maybe 'tis wishing yerself out again ye'd be, after ye wor in!"

"I think we'd better try somewhere else," whispered Joe to me; "I don't like the look of this place." Before I could reply to this, a loud yell burst forth from the end of the street, accompanied by the tramp of many people, who seemed to move in a kind of regulated step.

"Here they are! Here they come!" cried the old woman; "step in quick, or ye'll be too late!" and she dragged the young girls forward by the cloak, into the hall; we followed without further question. Then placing the lantern on the floor, she drew a heavy chain across the door, and dropped her cloak over the light; saying, in a low, tremulous voice, "Them's the 'Tapageers!'"

The crowd now came closer, and we perceived that they were singing in chorus a song, of which the air, at least, was Irish.

The barbarous rhyme of one rude verse, as they sung it in passing, still lingers in my memory:

"No bloody Agint here we see
Ready to track, distrain and saze us;
Whate'er we ax, we have it free,
And take at hand whatever plaze us.
Tow, row, row,
Will yez show me now,
The Polis that'll dare to face us."

"There they go! 'tis well ye wor safe!" said the old hag, as the sounds died away, and all became silent in the street, without.

"Who, or what are they?" said I; my curiosity being stimulated by fear.

"Them's the 'Tapageers!' The chaps that never spared man or woman in their rounds. 'Tis bad enough, the place is; but they make it far worse!"

"Can we stop here for the night?" said Joe, growing impatient at the colloquy.

"And what for, wud ye stop here?" asked the crone; as she held up the lantern, the better to see him who made the demand.

"We want our supper, and a place to sleep," said the old man; "and we're able and willin' to pay for both."

"'Tis a nice place, ye kem, for either!" said she; and she leaned back against the wall, and laughed with a fiend-like malice, that made my blood chill.

"Then I suppose we must go somewhere else," said Joe; "come, boys, 'tis no use losing our time here!"

"God speed you!" said she, preparing to undo the chain that fastened the door. "Ye have bould hearts, any way! There they go! d'ye hear them?" this was said in a half-whisper, and the wild yells of the 'Tapageers' arose without; and soon after, the noise and tumult of a scuffle; at least we could hear the crashing of sticks, and the shouting of a fray; from which, too, piercing cries for help burst forth.

"What are ye doin'? are ye mad? are ye out of yer senses?" cried the hag, as Joe endeavored to wrest open the chain—the secret of which he did not understand.

"They're murdering some one without there!" said he. "Let me free, or I'll kick down your old door, this minute!"

"Kick away, honey!" said the hag; "as strong men as yourself tried that a'ready; and, d'ye hear, it's done now! it's *over!*"

These terrible words were in allusion to a low kind of sobbing sound, which grew fainter and fainter, and then ceased altogether.

"They're taking the body away," whispered she, after a pause of death-like stillness.

"Where to?" said I, half breathless with terror.

"To the river! the stream runs fast, and the corpse will be down below Goose Island, ay, in the Gulf, 'fore morning!"

The two young girls, unable longer to control their feelings, here burst out a crying; and the old man, pulling out a rosary, turned to the wall, and began his prayers.

"'Tis a bloody place; glory be to God!" said Joe, at last, with a sigh; and clasped his hands before him, like one unable to decide on what course to follow.

I saw, now, that all were so paralyzed by fear, that it devolved upon me to act for the rest; so, summoning my best courage, I said, "Will you allow us to stay here for the night? since we are strangers, and do not know where to seek shelter." She shook her head, not so much with the air of refusing my request, as to convey that I had asked for something scarce worth the granting.

"We only want a shelter for the night——"

"And a bit to eat," broke in the old man, turning round from his prayers. "Sanctificatur in sec'la,—if it was only a bit of belly bacon, and,—Tower of Ivory, purtect us,—with a pot of praties, and,—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John——"

"Is he a friar?" said the hag, to me, eagerly; "does he belong to an 'ordher?'"

"No!" said I; "he's only a good Catholic."

She wrung her hands, as if in disappointment; and then, taking up the lantern once more, said, "Come along! I'll show yez where ye can stay."

We followed, I leading the others, up a narrow and rickety stair, between two walls, streaming with damp, and patched with mould. When she reached the landing, she searched for a moment for a key, which having found, she opened the door of a long, low room, whose only furniture was a deal table and a few chairs; a candle stuck in a bottle, and some drinking vessels of tin, were on the table, and a piece of newspaper containing some tobacco.

"There!" said she, lighting the candle; "you may stay here; 'tis all I'm able to do for yez, is to give ye shelter."

"And nothing to eat!" ejaculated the old man, sorrowfully.

"Hav'n't you a few potatoes?" said Joe.

"I didn't taste food since yesterday morning," said the hag; "and that's what's to keep life in me to-morrow!" and as she spoke, she held out a fragment of blackened seabiscuit, such as Russian sailors call "rusk."

"Well, by coorse, there's no use in talking!" said Joe; who always seemed the first to see his way clearly. "'Tis worse for the girls, for *we* can take a draw of the pipe. Lucky for us we have it!"

Meanwhile, the two girls had taken off their cloaks, and were busy gathering some loose sticks together, to make a fire; a piece of practical wisdom I at once lent all aid to.

The hag, apparently moved by the ready compliance to make the best of matters, went out, and returned with some more wood, fragments of ship-timber, which she offered us, saying, "'Tis all I can give yez. Good night to yez all!"

"Well, father!" said Joe, as soon as he had lighted his pipe, and taken a seat by the fire; "ye wor tired enough of the ship, but I think ye wish yerself back again there, now!"

"I wish more nor that," said the old man, querulously; "I wish I never seen the same ship; nor ever left ould Ireland!"

This sentiment threw a gloom over the whole party, by awakening not only memories

of home and that far away land, but also, by the confession of a sense of disappointment, which each was only able to struggle against, while unavowed. The sorrow made them silent, and at last sleepy. At first, the three "boys," great fellows of six feet high stretched themselves full length on the floor, and snored away in concert; then the two girls, one with her head on the other's lap, fell off; while the old man, sitting directly in front of the fire, nodded backwards and forwards, waking up, every half-hour or so, to light his pipe; which done, he immediately fell off into a doze once more; leaving Joe and myself alone, waking and watchful.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT IN THE "LOWER TOWN."

Joe's eyes were bent upon me, as I sat directly opposite him, with a fixedness that I could easily see was occasioned by my showy costume; his glances ranged from my buckled shoes to my white cravat, adorned with a splendid brooch of mock amethyst; nay, I almost fancied once, that he was counting the silver clocks on my silk stockings! It was a look of most undisguised astonishment,—such a look as one bestows upon some new and singular animal, of whose habits and instincts we are lost in conjecture.

Now I was "York, too,"—that is to say, I was Irish as well as himself; and I well knew that there was no rank nor condition of man, for which the peasant in Ireland conceives the same low estimate, as the "Livery Servant." The class is associated in his mind with chicanery, impudence, falsehood, theft, and a score of similar good properties; not to add, that being occasionally, in great families, a native of England, the Saxon element is united to the other "bitters" of the potion.

Scarcely a "tenant" could be found, that would not rather face a mastiff than a footman,—such is the proverbial dislike to these human lilies, who neither toil nor spin. Now, I have said, I knew this well: I had been reared in the knowledge and practice of this and many similar antipathies, so that I, at once, took counsel with myself what I should do to escape from the reproach of a mark so indelibly stamped upon me by externals. "La famille Cullinane" suited *me* admirably,—they were precisely the kind of people *I* wanted; my care, therefore, was that they should reciprocate the want, and be utterly helpless without *me*. Thus reflecting, I could not help saying to myself, how gladly would I have parted with all these gauds for a homely, ay, or even a ragged suit of native frieze. I remembered the cock on the dunghill, who would have given his diamond for one single grain of corn; and I felt that "Æsop" was a grand political economist.

From these and similar mental meanderings I was brought back by Joe; who, after emptying the ashes from his pipe, said, and with a peculiarly dry voice, "Ye'r in a service, young man?"

Now although the words were few, and the speaker did not intend that his manner should have given them any particular significance; yet the tone, the cautious slowness of the enunciation—coupled with the stern stare at my "bravery," made them tingle on my ears, and send the blood rushing to my cheeks with shame. It was like a sharp prick of the spur; and so it turned out.

"In a service!" said I, with a look of offended dignity; "No; I flatter myself not that low, yet. What could have made you suppose so? Oh, I see!"—here I burst out into a very well-assumed laugh; "that is excellent, to be sure! ha, ha, ha! so, it was these"—and I stretched forth my embroidered shins,—"it was these, deceived you! and a very natural mistake, too. No, my worthy friend: not but, indeed, I might envy many, in that same ignoble position." I said this with a sudden change of voice, as though overcast by some sad recollection.

"'Twas indeed your dress," said Joe, with a modest deference in his manner, meant to be a full apology for his late blunder. "Maybe 'tis the fashin here."

"No, Cullinane," said I, using a freedom which should open the way to our relative future standing: "No; not even that;" here I heaved a heavy sigh, and became silent. My companion, abashed by his mistake, said nothing; and so we sat, without interchanging a word for full five minutes.

"I have had a struggle with myself, Cullinane," said I, at last; "and I have conquered. Ay, I have gained the day in a hard-fought battle against my sense of shame. I will be frank with you, therefore. "In this dress, I appeared to-night on the boards of the Quebec Theatre"

"A Play actor!" exclaimed Joe, with a face very far from expressing any high sense of the histrionic art.

"Not exactly," said I, "only a would-be one. I am a gentleman by birth, family, and fortune; but taking into my head, in a foolish hour, that I should like the excitement of an actor's life, I fled from home, quitted friends, relatives, affluence, and ease, to follow a strolling company. At another time, I may relate to you all the disguises I assumed to escape detection. Immense sums were offered for my apprehension—why do I say *were*—ay, Cullinane, are offered. I will not deceive you. It is in your power this instant, by

surrendering me to my family, to earn five thousand dollars!"

"Do you think I'd be ——"

"No, I do not. In proof of my confidence in you, hear my story. We travelled through the States at first by unfrequented routes till we reached the north, when gaining courage, I ventured to take a high range of characters, and, I will own it, with success. At last we came to Canada, in which country, although the reward had not been announced, my father had acquainted all the principal people with my flight, entreating them to do their utmost to dissuade me from a career so far below my rank and future prospects. Among others, he wrote to an old friend and schoolfellow, the Governor-General, requesting his aid in this affair. I was always able, from other sources, to learn every step that was taken with this object; so that I not only knew this, but actually possessed a copy of my father's letter to Lord Poynder, wherein this passage occurred—'Above all things, my dear Poynder, no publicity! no exposure! remember the position Cornelius will one day hold, and let him not be ashamed when he may meet you in after-life. If the silly boy can be induced, by his own sense of dignity, to abandon this unworthy pursuit, so much the better; but coercion would, I fear, give faint hope of eradicating the evil.' Now, as I perceived that no actual force was to be employed against me, I did not hesitate to appear in the part for which the bills announced me. Have you ever read Shakspere?"

"No, sir," said Joe, respectfully.

"Well, no matter. I was to appear as *Hamlet*—this is the dress of that character—little suspecting, indeed, how the applause I was accustomed to receive was to be changed. To be brief. In the very centre of the dress-circle was the Governor himself; he came with his whole staff, but without any previous intimation. No sooner had I made my entrance on the scene—scarcely had I begun that magnificent soliloquy, 'Show me the thief that stole my fame,'—when his Excellency commenced hissing! Now, when the Governor-General hisses, all the staff hiss; then the President of the Council and all his colleagues hiss; then comes the Bishop and the inferior clergy, with the judges and the Attorney-general, and so on: then all the loyal population of the house joined in, with the exception of a few in the galleries, that hated the British connexion, and who cried out, 'Three cheers for Con. Cregan and the independence of Canada!' In this way went on the first act; groans and yells and catcalls overtopping all I tried to say, and screams for the manager to come out issuing from every part of the house. At last out he did come. This for a while made matters worse; so many directions were given, questions asked, and demands made, that it was clearly impossible to hear any one voice; and there stood the manager, swinging his arms about like an insane telegraph, now running to the stage-box at one side, then crossing over to the other, to maintain a little private conversation by signs, till the sense of the house spoke out by accidentally catching a glimpse of me in the side-scenes.

"'Is it your pleasure, my lord, ladies and gentlemen, that this actor should not appear again before you?'

"'Yes—yes! No—no—no,' were shouted from hundreds of voices.

"'What am I to understand,' said he, bowing with his arm crossed submissively before him; 'I submit myself to your orders. If Mr. Cregan does not meet your approbation—'

"'Throw him into the dock!—break his neck!—set him adrift on a log down the Gulf-stream!—chip him up for bark! burn him for charcoal!' and twenty other like humane proposals burst forth together; and so not waiting to see how far the manager's politeness would carry him, I fled from the theatre. Yes, Cullinane, I fled with shame and disgust from that fickle public, who applaud with ecstasy to-day, that they may condemn with infamy to-morrow. Nor was I deceived by the vain egotism of supposing that *I* was the object of their ungenerous anger. Alas! my friend, the evil lay deeper—it was my Irish name and family they sought to insult! The old grudge that they bear us at home, they carry over the seas with them. How plain it is; they never can forgive our superiority. It is this they seek revenge upon wherever they find us."

I own that in giving this peculiar turn to my narrative, I was led by perceiving that my listener had begun to show a most lamentable want of sympathy for myself and my sufferings, so I was driven to try what a little patriotism might do in arousing his feelings; and I was right. Some of Cullinane's connexions had been Terrys—or Blackfeet or Whitefeet, or some one or other of those pleasant fraternities who study ball-practice, with a landlord for the bull's-eye. He at once caught up the spirit of my remarks, and even quoted some eloquent passages of Mr. O'Connell, about the width of our shoulders, and the calves of our legs, and other like personal advantages, incontestably showing as they do that we never were made to be subject to the Saxon. It was the law of the land, however, which had his heartiest abhorrence. This, like nine-tenths of his own class in Ireland, he regarded as a systematic means of oppression, invented by the rich to give them the tyrannical dominion over the poor. Nor is the belief to be wondered at, considering how cognizant the pea-

sant often is of all the schemes and wiles by which a conviction is compassed; nay, the very adroitness of a legal defence in criminal cases—the feints, the quips, the stratagems—instead of suggesting admiration for those barriers by which the life and liberty of a subject is protected, only engendered a stronger conviction of the roguish character of that ordeal, where craft and subtlety could do so much.

It was at the close of a very long diatribe over Irish law and lawyers, that Cullinane, whose confidence increased each moment, said with a sigh, "Ay! they worn't so 'cute in ould times, when my poor grandfather was tried, as they are now, or maybe he'd have had betther luck."

"What happened to him?" said I.

"He was hanged, acushla!" said he, knocking the ashes out of his pipe as leisurely as might be, and then mumbling a scrap of a prayer below his breath.

"For what?' asked I, in some agitation; but he didn't hear me, being sunk in his own reflections, so that I was forced to repeat my question.

"Ye never heerd of one Mr. Shinane of the Grove?" said he, after a pause; "of coorse ye didn't—'tis many years ago now: but he was well known oncet, and owned a great part of Ennistymore, and a hard man he was. But no matter for that,—he was a strong, full man, with rosy cheeks, and stout built, and sorra a lease in the country had not his life in it! a thing he liked well, for he used to to say, 'It'll be the ruin of ye all, if any one shoots me!' Well, my grandfather—rest his sowl in glory! was his driver, and used to manage everything on the property for him; and considerin' what a hard thing it is, he was well liked by the country round—all but by one man, Maurice Cafferty by name. I never seed him, for it was all 'fore I was born, but the name is in my mind, as if I knew him well. I used to hear it every night of my life when I was a child!

"There was a dispute about Cafferty's houldin', and my grandfather was for turnin' him out, for he was a bad tenant; but Mr. Shinane was afeerd of him, and said, 'Leave him quiet, Mat.,' says he, 'he's a troublesome chap, and we'll get rid of him in our own good time; but don't drive him to extremities: I told him to come up to the cottage this morning; come with me there, and we'll talk to him.' Now the cottage was a little place about two miles off, in the woods, where the master used to dine sometimes in summer, when they were chipping bark, but nobody lived there.

"It was remarked by many that morning, as they went along, that my father and Mr. Shinane was in high words all the time,—at least so the people working in the fields thought, and even the childer that was picking bark said that they were talking as if they were very angry with each other.

"This was about eleven o'clock, and at the same time Cafferty, who was selling a pig in Ennistymore, said to the butcher, 'Be quick, and tell me what you'll give, for I must go home and clean myself, as I'm to speak to the master to-day about my lease.' Well, at a little before twelve Cafferty came through the wood, and asked the people had they seen Mr. Shinane pass by, for that he towld him to meet him at the cottage; and the workmen said yes, and more by token that he was quarrellin' with Mat. Cullinane. 'I'm sorry for that,' says Cafferty, 'for I wanted him to be in a good humor, and long life to him!' The words wasn't well out, but what would they see but my grandfather running towards them at the top of his speed, screeching out like mad, 'The master's murdered! the master's kilt dead!' Away they all went to the cottage, and there upon the floor was the dead body, with an axe buried deep in the skull—so deep that only the thick part of the iron was outside. That was the dreadful sight! and sure enough, after looking at the corpse, every eye was turned on my grandfather, who was leaning on the dresser, pale and trembling, and his hand and knees all covered with blood. 'How did it happen, Mat.?' said three or four together; but Cafferty muttered, 'It's better ask nothing about it; it's not likely *he'll* tell us the truth!'

"The same night my grandfather was arrested on suspicion and brought to Ennis, where he was lodged in gaol; and although there was no witness agin' him, nor anything more than I towld ye—the high words between them, the axe being my grandfather's, the blood on his clothes and hands, and his dreadful confusion when the people came up,—all these went so hard against him, and particularly as the judge said it was good to make an example, that he was condemned; and so it was he was hanged on the next Saturday in front of the gaol!"

"But what defence did he make? what account did he give of the circumstance?"

"All he could tell was, that he was standing beside the master at the table, talking quietly, when he heard a shout and a yell in the wood, and he said, 'They're stealing the bark out there; they'll not leave us a hundred weight of it yet!' and out he rushed into the copse. The shouting grew louder, and he thought it was some of the men cryin' for help, and so he never stopped running till he came where they were at work felling trees. 'What's the matter?" says he to the men, as he came up panting and breathless; 'where was the screeching?'

"'We heerd nothing,' says the men.

"'Ye heerd notning! didn't ye hear yells and shouting this minute?'

"'Sorra bit,' says the men, looking strangely at each other, for my grandfather was agitated, and trembling, between anger and a kind of fear; just, as he said afterwards, 'as if there was something dreadful going to happen him!' 'Them was terrible cries, anyway!' says my grandfather; and with that he turned back to the cottage, and it was then that he found the master lying dead on his face, and the axe in his skull. He tried to lift him up, or turn him over on his back, and that was the way he bloodied his hands, and all the front of his clothes. That was all he had to say, and to swear before the sight of Heaven, that he didn't do it!

"No matter! they hanged him for it! Ay, and I have an ould newspaper in my trunk this minit, where there's a great discoorse about the wickedness of a crayture going out of the world wid a lie on his last breath!"

"And you think he was innocent?" said I.

"Sure, we know it! sure, the Priest said to my father,—'take courage,' says he, 'your father isn't in a bad place. If he's in purgatory,' says he, 'he's not over the broken bridge, where the murderers does be, but in the meadows, where the stream is shallow, and stepping stones in it! and every stone costs ten masses—sorra more!' God help us! but blood is a dreadful thing!" And with this reflection, uttered in a voice of fervent feeling, the hardy peasant laid down his pipe; and I could see, by his muttering lips, and clasped hands, that he was offering up a prayer for the soul's rest of his unhappy kinsman.

"And what became of Cafferty?" said I, as he finished his devotions.

"'Twas never rightly known; for, after he gave evidence on the trial, the people didn't like him, and he left the place; some say he went to his mother's relations down in Kerry!"

The deep-drawn breathings of the sleepers around us; the unbroken stillness of the night; the fast-expiring embers, which only flickered at intervals, contributed their aid to make the story more deeply affecting; and I sat pondering over it, and canvassing within my mind all the probabilities of the condemned man's guilt or innocence; nor, I must own it, were all my convictions on the side of the narrator's belief; but even that very doubt heightened the interest considerably. As for Cullinane, his thoughts were evidently less with the incidents of the characters as they lived, than with that long pilgrimage of expiation, in which his imagination pictured his poor relative still a wanderer beyond the grave.

The fire now barely flickered, throwing from time to time little jets of light upon the sleeping figures around us, and then leaving all in dark indistinctness. My companion also, crouching down, hid his face within his hands, and either slept or was lost in deep thought, and I alone of all the party was left awake, my mind dwelling on the tale I had just heard, with a degree of interest to which the place and the hour strongly contributed.

I had been for some time thus, when the sound of feet, moving heavily over head, attracted my attention. They were like the sluggish footsteps of age, but passing to and fro with what seemed haste and eagerness. I could hear a voice, too, which, even in its indistinctness, I recognized as that of the old woman; and once or twice fancied I could detect another, whose accents sounded like pain and suffering. The shuffling footsteps still continued, and I heard the old crazy sash of the window open, and after an interval, shut again, while I distinctly could catch the old hag's voice, saying, "It's all dark without; there's no use 'trying!'" a low whining sound followed; and then I heard the old woman slowly descending the stairs, and by the motion of her hand along the wall, I conjectured that she had no light.

She stopped as she came to the door, and seemed to listen to the long-drawn breathing of the sleepers; and then she pushed open the door, and entered. With a strange dread of what this might mean, I still resolved to let the event take its course; and, feigning deepest sleep, I lay back against the wall, and watched her well.

Guiding herself along by the wall, she advanced slowly, halting every second or third step to listen,—a strange precaution, since her own asthmatic breathing was enough to mask all other sounds. At last, she neared the grate; and then her thin, and cord-like fingers passed from the wall, to rest upon my head. It was with a kind of thrill I felt them; for I perceived by the touch, that she did not know on what her hand was placed. She knelt down now, close beside me, and stooping over, stirred the embers with her fingers, till she discovered some faint resemblance to fire, amid the dark ashes. To brighten this into flame, she blew upon it for several minutes, and, even taking the live embers in her hands, tried in every way to kindle them.

With a patience that seemed untirable, she continued at this for a long time; now selecting from the hearth some new material to work upon, and now abandoning it for another; till when I had almost grown drowsy in watching this monotonous process, a thin bright light sprung up, and I saw that she had lighted a little piece of candle that she held in her hand. I think even now I have her before me, as, crouched down upon her knees, and sheltering the candle from the current air of the room, she took a stealthy,

but searching glance at the figures, who, in in every attitude of weariness, were sleeping heavily around.

It was not without a great effort that she regained her feet,—for she was very old and infirm; and now she retraced her steps cautiously as she came—stopping at intervals to listen, and then resuming her way as before. I watched her till she passed out; and then, as I heard her first heavy footstep on the stair, I slipped off my shoes, and followed her.

My mind throughout the whole of that night had been kept in a state of tension, that invariably has the effect of magnifying the significance of every—even the very commonest occurrences. It resembles that peculiar condition in certain maladies, when the senses become preternaturally acute; in such moments the reason is never satisfied with drawing only from inferences for any fact before it; it seeks for more, and in the effort becomes lost in the mazes of mere fancy. I will own, that as with stealthy step, and noiseless gesture, I followed that old hag, there was a kind of ecstacy in my terror which no mere sense of pleasure could convey. The light seemed to show ghastly shapes, as she passed, on the green and mouldy walls; and her head, with its masses of long and straggling grey hair, nodded in shadow like some unearthly spectre.

As she came nigh the top, I heard a weak and whining cry, something too deep for the voice of infancy, but seeming too faint for manhood. "Ay, ay," croaked the hag harshly, "I'm coming—I'm coming!" and as she said this, she pushed open a door, and entered a room, which, by the passing gleam of light as she went, I perceived lay next to the roof, for the rafters and the tiles were both visible, as there was no ceiling.

I held my breath as I slowly stole along, and then reaching the door as it lay half ajar, I crouched down and peeped in.

CHAPTER XVII.

A "SCENE;" AND "MY LUCUBRATIONS ON THE ST. LAWRENCE.

When the light of the candle which the old woman carried had somewhat dissipated the darkness, I could see the whole interior of the room; and certainly, well habituated as I had been from my earliest years to such sights, poverty like this I never had seen before! Not a chair nor table was there; a few broken utensils for cooking, such as are usually thrown away as useless among rubbish, stood upon the cold hearth. A few potatoes on one broken dish, and a little meat on another, were the only things like food. It was not for some minutes that I perceived in the corner a miserable bed of straw confined within a plank, supported by two rough stones; nor was it till I had looked long and closely, that I saw that the figure of a man lay extended on the bed, his stiffened and outstretched limbs resembling those of a corpse. Toward this the old woman now tottered with slow steps, and setting the small piece of candle upright in a saucer, she approached the bed. "There it is now! look at it and make yer mind asy," said she, placing it on the floor beside the bed, in such a position that he could see it.

The sick man turned his face round; and as his eyes met the light, there came over his whole features a wondrous change. Livid and clammy with the death-sweat, the rigid muscles relaxed, and in the staring eye-balls and the parted lips there seemed a perfect paroxysm of emotion. "Is that it?—are ye sure that's it?" cried he, in a voice to which the momentary excitement imparted strength.

"To be sure I am; I seen Father Ned bless it himself, and sprinkle it too!" said she.

"Oh! the heavenly ——" He stopped, and in a lower voice added, "Say it for me, Molly!—say it for me, Molly! I can't say it myself."

"Keep your eyes on the blessed candle!" said the hag, peevishly; "'tis a quarter dollar it cost me."

"Wouldn't he come, Molly?—did he say he wouldn't come?"

"Father Ned! arrah, 'tis likely he'd come here at night, with the Tappageers on their rounds, and nothing to give him when he kem!"

"Not to hear my last words!—not to take my confession!" cried he, in a kind of shriek. "Oh! 'tis the black list of sins I have to own to!"

"Whisht—whisht" cried the hag. "'Tis many a year ago, now: may be it's all forgot."

"No, it's not!" cried the dying man, with a wild energy he did not seem to have strength for. "When you wor away, Molly, he was here, standing beside the bed."

The old hag laughed with a horrid sardonic laugh.

"Don't—don't, for the love of—ah—I can't say—I can't say it!" cried he, and the voice died away in the effort.

"What did he say to ye when he kem?" said she, in a scoffing tone.

"He never spoke a word, but he pressed back the cloth that was on his head, and I saw the deep cut in it, down to the very face!"

"Well, I'm sure it had time to heal before this time!" said the woman, with a tone of mockery.

"Where's Dan, Molly? did he never come back since?"

"Sorra bit; he said he'd go out of the house, and never come back to it. You frightened the boy with the terrible things you say in your ravings."

"Oh! murther—murther—my own flesh and blood desart me!"

"Then why won't you be raisonable—why won't you hould your peace about what happened long agone?"

"Because I can't!" said he, with a peevish eagerness. "Because I'm going where it's all known a'ready."

"Faix, and I wouldn't be reminding them, any way!" said the hag, whose sarcastic impiety added fresh tortures to the dying sinner.

"I wanted to tell Father Ned all—I wanted to have masses for him that's gone, the man that suffered instead of me! Oh dear! Oh dear!—and nobody will come to me."

"If ye cry that loud, I'll leave you too!" said the hag. "They know already 'tis the spotted fever ye have, and the Tappageers would burn the house under ye, if I was to go."

"Don't go, Molly!—don't leave me!" he cried, with heart-rending anguish. "Bring the blessed candle nearer, I don't see it well."

"You'll see less of it soon—'tis nigh out!" said she, snuffing the wick with her fingers.

The dying man now stretched out his fleshless fingers toward the light, and I could see by his lips that he was praying. "They're calling me now," cried he, "Molly!" And his voice of a sudden grew strong and full—"don't ye hear them?—there it is again—Maurice Cafferty—Maurice Cafferty,—yer wantin'."

"Lie down and be at peace! said she, rudely pushing him back on the bed.

"The blessed candle—where's the blessed candle?" shrieked he.

"'Tis out!" said the hag; and as she spoke the wick fell into the saucer, and all was dark.

A wild and fearful cry broke from the sick man, and re-echoed through the silent house, and ere it died away, I had crept stealthily back to my place beside my companions.

Did you hear anything, or was I dreamin'?" said Joe to me. "I thought I heard the most dreadful scream—like a man drownin'."

"It was a dream, perhaps," said I, shuddering at the thought of what I had just witnessed, while I listened with terrible anxiety for any sound overhead, but none came; and so passed the long hours till day-dawn.

Without revealing to my companion the terrible scene I had been witness to, I told him that we were in the same house with a fearful malady; an announcement I well knew had greater terror for none than an Irish peasant. He at once decided on departing; and although day was barely breaking, he awoke the others, and a low whispering conversation ensued, in which I felt, or imagined at least, that I was an interested party. At last, Joe turning toward me, said, "And you, sir? what do you mean to do?"

"The very question," said I, "that I can not answer. If I were to follow my inclination, I'd turn homeward; if I must yield to necessity, I'll call upon the Governor General, and remain with him till I hear from my friends."

There was a pause,—a moment of deliberation seemed to fall upon the bystanders, which at length was broken by the old man saying, "Well, good luck be with you, any way! 'Tis the best thing you could do."

I saw that I had overshot my bolt, and with difficulty concealed my annoyance at my own failure. My irritation was, I conclude, sufficiently apparent; for Joe quickly said, "We're very sorry to part with you; but if we could be of any use before we go ——"

"Which way do you travel?" said I, carelessly.

"That's the pazzle; for we don't know the country. 'Tis New Orleans we'd like to go to first."

"Nothing easier!" said I: "take the steamer to Montreal, cross over into the States, down Lake Champlain to Whitehall, over to Albany; and then twenty hours down the Hudson brings you to New York."

"You know the way well!" said Joe, with an undisguised admiration for my geography, —which, I need not tell the reader, was all acquired from books and maps.

"I should think so," said I, "seeing that I might travel it blindfold."

"Is it dangerous? are there Injians?" said the old man, whose mind seemed very alive to the perils of red men.

"There are some tribes on the way," said I; "but the white fellows you meet with are worse than the red ones—such rogues and assassins, too!"

"The saints presarve us! how will we ever do it?"

"Look out for some smart fellow, who knows the way, and thoroughly understands the people, and who can speak French fluently, for the first part of the journey,—and who is up to all the Yankee roguery, for the second. Give him full power to guide and direct your expedition, and you'll have both a safe journey and a pleasant one."

"Ay, and where will we get him?" cried one.

"And what would he be askin' for his trouble?" said another; while Joe, with an assenting nod, reiterated both questions, and seemed to expect that answer from me.

"It ought to be easy enough in such a city as this," said I, negligently. "Are you no-

quainted with Forbes and Gudgeon—they are my bankers—they could, I'm sure, find out your man at once."

"Ah, sir, we know nobody at all!" exclaimed Joe, in an accent of such humility, that I actually felt shocked at my own duplicity.

"By Jove!" said I, as though a sudden thought had struck me, "very little would make me go with you myself." A regular burst of joy from the whole party here interrupted me. "Yes; I'm quite in earnest," said I with a dignified air. "This place will be excessively distasteful to me henceforth. I have placed myself in what is called a false position here, and 'twere far better to escape from it at once."

"That would be the making of us, all out, if ye could come, Mr. Cregan!" said Joe.

"Let me interrupt you one moment," said I. If I should accompany you on this journey, there is one condition only upon which I would consent to it."

"Whatever you like; only say it!" said he, over whom I had established a species of magnetic influence.

"It is this, then," said I; "that you treat me on terms of perfect equality,—forget my birth and rank in life; regard me exactly as one of yourselves. Let me be no longer any thing but Con. Cregan."

"That's mighty handsome, entirely!" said the old man; a sentiment concurred in by the whole family in chorus.

"Remember, then!" said I, "no more Mr. Cregan. I am Con.—nothing more!"

Joe looked unutterable delight at the condescension.

"Secondly, I should not wish to go back to my lodgings here, after what has occurred; so I'll write a few lines to have my trunks forwarded to Montreal; until which time, I'll ask of you to procure me a change of costume; for I can not bear to be seen in this absurd dress by daylight."

"To be sure; whatever you please!" said Joe, overjoyed at the projected arrangement.

After some further discussion on the subject, I inquired where their luggage was stored; and learned that it lay at the Montreal Steamer wharf, where it had been deposited the preceding day; and by a bill of the packets, which Joe produced, I saw that she was to sail that very morning, at eight o'clock. There was then no time to lose; so I advised my companions to move silently and noiselessly from the house, and to follow me.—With an implicit reliance on every direction I uttered, they stole carefully down the stairs, and issued into the street, which now was perfectly deserted.

Although in total ignorance of the locality, I stepped out confidently; and first making for the Harbor, as a "point of departure," I at last reached the "New Wharf," as the station of the river steamers was called. With an air of the most consummate effrontery, I entered the office, to bargain for our passage; and although the clerks were not sparing of their ridicule, both on my pretensions and my costume—as the conversation was carried on in French, my companions started in wonder at my fluency, and in silent ecstasy at the good fortune that had thrown them into such guidance.

It was a busy morning for me; since besides getting their luggage on board, and procuring them a hearty breakfast, I had also to arrange about my own costume, of which I now felt really ashamed at every step.

At length we got under weigh, and steamed stoutly against the fast-flowing St. Lawrence; our decks crowded with a multifarious and motley crew of emigrants, all bound for various places in the Upper Province, but with as pleasant an ignorance of where they were going, what it was like, and how far off, as the most devoted fatalist could have wished for. A few, and they were the shrewd exceptions, remembered the name of the city in whose neighborhood they were about to settle; many more could only say negatively, that it wasn't Lachine, nor it wasn't Trois Rivières; some were only capable of affirming that it was "beyant Montreal," or "higher up than Kingston;" and lastly, a "few bright spirits" were going "wid the help o' God, where Dan" was, or "Peter." They were not downhearted, nor anxious, nor fretful for all this; far from it. It seemed as if the world before them, in all the attractions of its novelty, suggested hope. They had left a land so full of wretchedness, that no change could well be worse; so they sat in pleasant little knots and groups upon the deck, "discoorsin'." Ay, just so!—"discoorsin'." Sassenach that you are! I hear you muttering, What is that? Well, I'll tell you. "Discoorsin'" is not talking, nor chaffing, nor mere conversing. It is not the *causêrie* of the French, nor the *conversazione* of Italy, nor is it the *Gespräche Unterhaltung* of plodding old Germany, but it is an admirable *mêlange* of all together. It is a grand *olla podrida*, where all things political, religious, agricultural, and educational, are discussed with such admirable keeping, such uniformity in the tone of sentiment and expression, that it would be difficult to detect a change in the subject matter, from the quiet monotony of its handling. The Pope—the praties—Molly Somebody's pig and the Priest's pony—Dan. O'Connell's last instalment of hope—the price of oats—the late assizes—laments over the past, the blessed days when there was little law and no police; when masses were cheap, and mutton to be had for stealing it,—such were the themes in vogue. And though generally one speaker

"held the floor," there was a running chorus of "Sure enough!" "Devil fear ye!" "Ai, why not?" kept up, that made every hearer a sleeping partner in the eloquence. Dissent or contradiction was a thing unheard of; they were all subjects upon which each felt precisely alike. No man's experience pointed to anything save rainy seasons and wet potatoes, cheap bacon and high county cess. Life had its one phase of monotonous want, only broken in upon by the momentary orgie of an election, or the excitement of a county town on the Saturday of an execution.

And so it was. Like the nor'-easter that followed them over the seas, came all the memories of what they had left behind. They had little care for even a passing look at the new and strange objects around them. The giant cedar trees along the banks,—the immense rafts, like floating islands, hurrying past in the foaming current, with myriads of figures moving on them,—the endless forests of dark pines,—the quaint log-houses, unlike those farther north, and with more pretension to architectural design,—and now and then a Canadian "batteau," shooting past like a sword-fish; its red-capped crew saluting the steamer with a wild cheer that would wake the echoes many a mile away. If they looked at these, it was easy to see that they noted them but indifferently: their hearts were far away. Ay! in spite of misery, and hardship, and famine, and flood, they were away in the wilds of Erris, in the bleak plains of Donegal, or the lonely glens of Connemara.

It has often struck me, that our rulers should have perpetuated the names of Irish localities in the New World. One must have experienced the feeling himself, to know the charm of this simple association. The hourly-recurring name that speaks so familiarly of home, is a powerful antidote to the sense of banishment. Well, here I am, prosing about emigrants, and their regrets, and wants, and hopes, and wishes, and forgetting the while the worthy little group who, with a hot "net" of potatoes, (for in this fashion each mess is allowed to boil its quota,) and a very savory cut of ham, awaited my presence in the steerage: they were good and kindly souls, every one of them. The old grandfather was a fine prosy old grumbler about the year '98, and the terrible doings of the "Orangemen." Joe was a stout-hearted, frank fellow, that only wanted fair play in the world to make his path steadily onward. The sons were, in Irish parlance, "good boys," and the girls fine-tempered and good-natured,—as ninety-nine out of the hundred are in the land they come from.

Now, shall I forfeit some of my kind reader's consideration if I say, that with all these excellences, and many others besides, that they became soon inexpressibly tiresome to me. There was not a theme they spoke on, that I had not already by heart. Irish grievances, in all their moods and tenses, had been always "stock pieces" in my father's cabin; and I am bound to acknowledge that the elder Cregan had a sagacity of perception, a shrewdness of discrimination, and an aptitude of expression not to be found every day. Listening to the Cullinanes, after him, was like hearing the butler commenting in the servants' hall over the debate one had listened to in "the House." It was a strange, queer sensation that I felt coming over me as we travelled along day by day together, and I can even now remember the shriek of ecstacy that escaped me one morning, when I had hit upon the true analysis of my feelings; and jumping up, I exclaimed, "Con! you *are* progressing, my boy; you'll be a gentleman yet; you have learned to be '*bored*' *already!*" From that hour out I cultivated "my Cullinanes" as people take a course of a Spa, where, nauseous and distasteful at the time, one fancies he is to store up, heaven knows how, many years of future health and vigor.

In a former chapter of these Confessions, I have told the reader the singular sensations I experienced when first under the influence of port wine; how a kind of transfusion, as it were, of Conservative principles,—a respect for order,—a love of decorum,—a sleepy indisposition to see anything like confusion going on about me—all feelings which, I take it, are eminently gentleman-like. Well, this fastidious weariness of the Cullinanes was evidently the "second round of the ladder." "It is a grand thing to be able to look down upon any one!" I do not mean this in any invidious, or unworthy sense; not for the sake of depreciating others, but purely for the sake of one's own self-esteem. I would but convey, that the secret conviction of superiority is amazingly exhilarating. To "hold your stride" beside an intellect that you can pass when you like, and yet merely accompany to what is called "make a race," is rare fun; to see the other, using every effort of whip and spur, hustling, shaking, and lifting, while you, well down in your saddle, never put the rowel to the flank of your fancy,—this is indeed glorious sport! In return for this, however, there is an intolerable degree of lassitude, in the daily association of people who are satisfied to talk for ever of the same things in the same terms.

The incidents of our journey were few and uninteresting. At Montreal I received a very civil note from Mrs. Davis, accompanying my trunk and my purse. In the few lines I had written to her from the Packet-office, I said that my performance of a servant's character in her establishment had been undertaken for a wager, which I had just won; that I begged of her, in consequence, to devote the wages owing to me, to any charitable office she should

think fit, and kindly to forward my effects to Montreal, together with a certificate under her hand, that my real rank and station had never been detected during my stay in her house; this document being necessary to convince my friend, Captain Pike, that I had fulfilled the conditions of our bet.

Mrs. Davis's reply was a gem. "She had heard or read of Conacre, but didn't suspect we were the Cregans of that place. She did not know how she could ever forgive herself for having subjected me to menial duties. She had indeed been struck—as who had not?—with certain traits of my manner and address. In fact, poor Mrs. D., what with the material for gossip suggested by the story, the surprise, and the saving of the wages,—for I suspect that, like the Duke in Junius, her charity ended where it is proverbially said to begin, at home,—was in a perfect paroxysm of delight with me, herself, and the whole human race.

To me, this was a precious document; it was a patent of gentility at once. It was a passport which, if not issued by authority, had at least the "visa" of one witness to my rank, and I was not the stuff to require many credentials.

Before we had decided on what day we should leave Montreal, a kind of small mutiny began to show itself among our party. The old man, grown sick of travelling, and seeing the America of his hopes as far off as ever, became restive, and refused to move further. The sons had made acquaintances on board the steamer, who assured them that "about the lakes"—a very vague geography—land was to be had for asking. Peggy and Susan had picked up sweethearts, and wanted to journey westward; and poor Joe, pulled in these various directions, gave himself up to a little interregnum of drink, hoping that rum might decide what reason failed in.

As for me, I saw that my influence would depend upon my making myself a partisan; and too proud for this, I determined to leave them. I possessed some thirty dollars,—a good kit,—but, better than either, the most unbounded confidence in myself, and a firm conviction that the world was an instrument I should learn to play upon one day or other. There was no use in undeceiving them as to my real rank and station. One of the pleasantest incidents of their lives would be, in all probability, their having travelled in companionship with a gentleman; and so, remembering the story of the poor Alderman who never got over having learned that Robinson Crusoe was a fiction, I left them this solace unalloyed; and after a most cordial leave-taking, and having written down my father's address at New Orleans, I shook hands with the men twice over, kissed the girls ditto, and stepped on board the *Kingston* steamer, for no other reason that I know, except that she was the first to leave the wharf that morning.

I have said that I possessed something like thirty dollars; an advantageous sale of a part of my wardrobe to a young gentleman about to reside at Queenstown, as a waiter, "realized" me as much more; and with this sum I resolved upon making a short tour of Canada and the States, in order to pick up a few notions, and increase my store of experiences, ere I adopted any fixed career.

We laugh at the old gentleman in the play, who on hearing that his son has no want of money, immediately offers him ten pistoles, but who obstinately leaves him to starve when he discovers that he is without funds. We laugh at this, and we deem it absurd and extravagant; but it is precisely what we see the world do in like circumstances. All its generosity is reserved for those who do not require assistance; all its denials for those in need. "My Lord" refuses half-a-dozen dinners, while the poor devil author only knows the tune of "Roast Beef!" These reflections forced themselves upon me by observing that as I travelled along, apparently in no want of means, a hundred offers were made me by my fellow-travellers of situations and places: one would have enlisted me as his partner in a very lucrative piece of peripateticism, viz.—knife grinding; a vocation for which, after a few efforts on board the steamer, Nature would seem to have destined me, for I was assured I even picked up the sharp knowing cock of the eye required to examine the edge, and the style of my pedal-action drew rounds of applause; still I did not like it. The endless tramp upon a step, which, slipping from beneath you, seemed to emblematise a career that led to nothing, while an unpleasant association with what I had heard of a tread-mill, completed my distaste for it.

Another opened to me the more ambitious prospect of a shopman at his store, near Rochester; and even showed me, by way of temptation, some of the brilliant wares over whose fortunes I should preside. There were ginghams, and taffetas, and cottons of every hue and pattern; but, no, I felt this was not my walk either; and so I muttered to myself,—"No, Con! if you have tact with muslin, wait till its fashioned into a petticoat."

My next proposition came from a barber; and really if I did not take to the pole and basin, I own I was flattered at his praises of my skill. He pronounced my brush-hand as something bold, and masterly as Rubens,—while my steel manipulation was more brilliant than bloodless.

Then there was a Jew spectacle-maker—a hawker of pamphlets—an Indian Moccassin merchant—and twenty other of various walks; all of whom seemed to opine that

their craft, whatever it might be, was exactly the very line adapted to my faculties. Once only was I really tempted; it was by the Editor of the Kingston newspaper, "The Ontario Herald," who offered to take me into his office, and in time induct me into the gentle pastime of paragraph writing. I did, I own, feel a strong inclination for that free and independent kind of criticism, which, although issuing from a garret and by the light of a "dip," does not scruple to remind royalty how to comport itself, and gives kings and kaisers smart lessons in good breeding. For a time my mind dwelt on all these delights with ardor; but I soon felt that he who acts life has an incomparable advantage over him who merely writes it, and that even a poor performer is better, when the world is his stage, than the best critic.

I'll wait, thought I,—nothing within, no suggestive push from conscience urged me to follow any of these roads; and so I journeyed away from Kingston to Fort George, thence to Niagara; where I amused myself agreeably for a week, sitting all day long upon the Table Rock, and watching the Falls in a dreamy kind of self-consciousness, brought on by the din, the crash, the spray, the floating surf, and that vibration of the air on every side,—which all conspire to make up a sensation, that ever after associates with the memory of that scene, and leaves any effort to describe it so difficult.

From this I wandered into the States by Schenectady, Utica, and Albany, down the Hudson to New York, thence—but why recite mere names? It was after about three months travelling, during which my wardrobe shared a fate not dissimilar to Æsop's bread-basket, that I found myself at New Orleans. Coming even from the varied and strange panorama that so many weeks of continual travelling present, I was struck by the appearance of New Orleans. Do not be afraid, worthy reader! you're not "in" for any description of localities. I'll neither inflict you with a land view nor a sea view. In my company you'll never hear a word about the measurement of a cathedral, or the number of feet in height of a steeple. My care and my business are with men and women. They are to me the real objects of travel. The chequered board of human life is the map whose geography I love to study; and my thoughts are far more with the stream that flows from the heart, than with the grandest river that ever sought the sea. When I said I was struck with New Orleans, it was then with the air of its population. Never did I behold such a mass of bold, daring, reckless fellows as swaggered on every side. The fiery Frenchman, the determined-looking Yankee, the dark-browed Spaniard, the Camanche, and the half-caste, the Mulatto, the Texan, the Negro, the Cuban, and the Creole, were all here, and all seemed picked specimens of their race.

The least acute of observers could not fail to see that it was a land where a quick eye, a steady foot, and a strong hand were requisites of every-day life. The personal encounters, that in other cities are left altogether to the very lowest class of inhabitants, were here in frequent use among every grade and rank. Every one went armed; the scenes which so often occurred, showed the precaution a needful one.

The wide-awake look of the Yankee was sleepy indifference when contrasted with the intense keenness of aspect that met you here at every step, and you felt at once that you were in company where all your faculties would be few enough for self-protection. This, my first impression of the people, each day's experience served to confirm. Whatever little veils of shame and delicacy men throw over their sharp practices elsewhere, here, I am free to confess, they despised such hypocrisy. It was a free trade in wickedness. In their game of life, "cheating was fair." Now this in nowise suited me nor my plans. I soon saw that all the finer traits of my own astuteness would be submerged in the great ocean of coarse roguery around me, and I soon resolved upon taking my departure.

The how, and the where to?—two very important items in the resolve were yet to be solved, and I was trotting along Cliff-street one day, when my eyes rested suddenly upon the great board with large letters on it, "Office of the Picayune." I repeated the word over and over a couple of times, and then remembered it was the journal in which the reward for the Black Boatswain had been offered.

There was little enough, heaven knows, in this to give me any interest in the paper; but the total isolation in which I found myself, without one to speak to, or converse with, made me feel that even the "Picayune" was an acquaintance; and so I drew near the window, where a considerable number of persons were reading the last number of the paper, which in a laudable spirit of generosity was exposed within the glass to public gaze.

Mingling with these, but not near enough to read for myself, I could hear the topics that were discussed; among which, a row at the Congress—a duel with revolvers—a steam-explosion on the Mississippi—and a few smart instances of Lynch-law figured.

"What's that in the 'Yune print?" said a great raw-boned fellow, with a cigar like a small walking-cane in the corner of his mouth.

"It's a Texan go," said another; "Shan't catch me at that trick."

"Well, I don't know," drawled out a sleek-haired man, with a very Yankee drawl; "I see Roarin' Peter, our judge up at New Small-pox, take a tarnation deal of booty out of that location."

"Where had he been?" asked the tall fellow.

"At Guayugualla—over the frontier."

"There *is* a bit to be done about there," said the other; and wrapping his mantle about him, lounged off.

"Guayugualla!" repeated I: and, retiring a little from the crowd, I took from my pocket the little newspaper paragraph of the negro, and read the name which had sounded so familiarly to my ears.

I endeavored once more to approach the window, but the crowd had already increased considerably; and I had nothing for it, but to go in and buy the paper, which now had taken a strong hold upon me.

Cheap as was the paper, it cost me that day's dinner; and it was with a very great anxiety to test the value of my sacrifice, that I hastened to the little miserable den which I had hired as my sleeping-place.

Once within, I fastened the door, and spreading out the journal on my bed, proceeded to search for the Texan paragraph. It was headed in capitals, and easily found. It ran thus:—"Wanted, a few downright, go-ahead ones, to join an excursion into the One-Star Republic,—the object being to push a way down south, and open a new trade-line for home doings. Applicants to address the office of the paper, and rally at Galveston, with rifle, pistols, ammunition, horse, pack, and a bowie, on Tuesday, the 8th instant."

I'm sure I knew that paragraph off by heart before bed time; but just as I have seen a stupid man commit a proposition in Euclid to memory—without ever being able to work it, I was totally at a loss what to make of the meaning of the expedition. It was, to say the least, somewhat mysterious; and the whole being addressed to "go-ahead ones," who were to come with rifles and bowie-knives, showed that they were not likely to be missionaries. There was one wonderful clause about it; it smacked of adventure. There was a roving wildness in the very thought which pleased me, and I straightway opened a consultation with myself how I could compass the object. My stock of money had dwindled down to four dollars; and although I still possessed some of the best articles of my wardrobe, the greater portion had been long since disposed of.

Alas! the more I thought over it, the more hopeless did my hope of journey appear,—I made every imaginable good bargain, in my fancy; I disposed of old waistcoats and gaiters, as if they had been the honored vestments of heroes and sages; I knocked down my shoes at prices that Old Frederick's boots wouldn't have fetched; and yet, with all this, I fell far short of a sum sufficient to purchase my equipment,—in fact, I saw that if I compassed "the bowie-knife," it would be the full extent of my powers. I dwelt upon this theme so long, that I grew fevered and excited: I got to believe that here was a great career opening before me, to which one petty, miserable obstacle opposed itself. I was like a man deterred from undertaking an immense journey, by the trouble of crossing a rivulet.

In this frame of mind I went to bed, but only to rove over my crude fancies, and, in a state between sleep and waking, to imagine that some tiny hand held me back, and prevented me ascending a path on which Fortune kept waving her hand for me to follow. When day broke, I found myself sitting at my window, with the newspaper in my hands,—though how I came there, or how long I had spent in that attitude, I cannot say,—I only know that my limbs were excessively cold, and my temples hot, and that while my hands were benumbed and swollen, my heart beat faster and fuller than I had ever felt it before.

"Now for the 'Picayune,'" said I, starting from my chair; "though I never may make the journey, at least I'll ask the road."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"THE ORDINARY OF ALL NATIONS."

Making my way with difficulty through the crowd which filled the hall of the house, and which consisted of purchasers, newsvenders, reporters, printers' devils, and others interested in the "Picayune," all eagerly discussing the news of the day, I reached a small back office, where, having knocked timidly twice, I was desired to enter.

A man seated at a coarse deal table was cutting out paragraphs from various newspapers, which, as he threw them at either side of him, were eagerly caught up by two or three ragged urchins who were in waiting behind him. He looked up at me as I entered, and roughly asked what I wanted.

"I have seen an advertisement in your paper, headed, 'Expedition to Texas' ——"

"Up-stairs—No. 3—two pair back," said he, and went on with his labor.

I hesitated, hoping he might add something; but seeing that he had said all he intended or was likely to say, I slowly withdrew.

"Up-stairs, then—No. 3—two pair back," said I to myself, and mounted, with the very vaguest notions of what business I had when I got there. There was no difficulty in finding the place; many others were hastening towards

it at the same time; and in company with some half dozen very ill-favored and meanly-clad fellows, I entered a large room, where about forty men were assembled, who stood in knots or groups, talking in low and confidential tones together.

"Is there a committee to-day?" asked one of those who came in with me.

"Business is over," said another.

"And is the lottery drawn?"

"Ay, every ticket, except one or two."

"Who's won butcher's mare?"

"Tell us that, if you can," said a huge fellow, with a red worsted comforter round his throat; "that's exactly what we want to know."

"Well, I'm whipped if it ain't among those numbers," said a pale man with one eye, "and I'll give fifty dollars for one of 'em."

"You would, would you?" said another, jeering, "Lord, how soft you've grown! Why, she's worth five hundred dollars, that 'ere beast!"

"Butcher gave a mustang and two hundred and seventy for her," cried another.

"Well, she broke his neck, for all that," growled out he of the red neckcloth; "you'll see that some chap will win her that don't want a beast, and she'll be sold for a trifle."

"And there's a free passage to Galveston, grub and liquor, in the same ticket," said another; "an almighty sight of luck for one man!"

"It ain't me, anyhow," said red cravat, and then with a tremendous oath added, "I've been a putter-in at these Texas lotteries for four years, and never won anything but a blessed rosary."

"What became of it, Dick?" said another, laughing.

"The beads fitted my rifle bore, and I fired 'em away when lead was scarce."

Various discussions followed about luck and lotteries, with anecdotes of all kinds respecting fortunate winners; then came stories of Texan expeditions in former times, which I began to perceive were little else than speculations of a gambling kind, rarely intended to go further than the quay of New Orleans.

On the present occasion, however, it would seem a real expedition had been planned. Some had already sailed, others were to follow the very day after the lottery, and only waited to learn who was the fortunate winner of Butcher's mare, at that time waiting at Galveston for an owner.

I waited a long time, in hopes of acquiring something like an insight into the scope of the enterprise, but in vain; indeed, it was easy to see, that, of the company, not a single one, in all likelihood, intended to join the expedition. When I left the "Picayune," therefore, I was but little wiser than when I entered it; and yet somehow the whole scheme had taken a fast hold on my imagination, which readily filled in the details of what I was ignorant. The course of reading in which I had indulged on board Sir Dudley's yacht was doubtless the reason of this. My mind had laid up so many texts for adventurous fancies, that on the slightest pretext I could call up any quantity of enterprise and vicissitude.

A hundred times I asked myself if it were likely that any of these Texan adventurers would accept of my services to wait upon them. I was not ignorant of horses,—a tolerably fair groom,—could cook a little, that much I had learned on board the yacht; besides, wherever my qualifications failed, I had a ready witted ingenuity that supplied the place almost as well as the "real article."

"Ah!" thought I, "who knows how many are passing at this moment, whose very hearts would leap with joy to find such a fellow as I am, 'accustomed to "in-door and out, wages no object, and no objection to travel!'" Possessed with this notion, I could not help fancying that in every look that met mine as I went, I could read something like an inquiry—a searching glance that seemed to say, "Bless me! ain't that Con.? as I live there's Con. Cregan! What a rare piece of fortune to chance upon him at this juncture!"

I own it did require a vivid and warm imagination so to interpret the expressions which met my eyes at every moment, seeing that the part of the town into which I had wandered was that adjoining to the docks,—a filthy, gloomy quarter, chiefly resorted to by Jew slop-sellers, ship-chandlers, and such like, with here and there a sailors' ordinary, usually kept by a negro or half-breed.

I had eaten nothing that day, and it was now late in the afternoon, so that it was with a very strong interest I peeped occasionally into the little dens, where, under a paper lantern with the inscription, "All for Twelve cents," sat a company, usually of sailors and waterman, whose fare harmonized most unpleasantly with their features.

The combat between a man's taste and his exchequer is never less agreeable than when it concerns a dinner. To feel that you have a soul for turtle and truffles, and yet must descend to mashed potatoes and herrings,—to know that a palate capable of appreciating a salmi des perdreaux must be condemned to the indignity of stock fish,—what an indignity is that! The whole man revolts at it! You feel, besides, that such a meal is unrelieved by those suggestive excursions of fancy which a well-served table abounds in. In the one case you eat like the beast of the field,—it is a question of supporting nature, and no more: in the other, there is a poetry interwoven that elevates and exalts. With what discursive freedom does the imagination

range from the little plate of oysters that preludes your soup, to pearl fishery and the coral reefs, "with moonlight sleeping on the breaking surf." And then your soup, be it turtle or mulligatawney, how associated is it with the West Indies or the East, bearing on its aromatic vapor thousands of speculative reflections about sugar and slavery, pepper-pots, straw hats, piccaninnies, and the Bishop of Barbadoes; or the still grander themes of elephants, emeralds, and the Indus, with rajahs, tigers, punkahs, and the Punjaub!

And so you proceed, dreamily following out in fancy the hints each course supplies, and roving with your cutlets to the "cattle upon a thousand hills," or dallying with the dessert to the orange-groves of Zante or Sicily.

I do love all this. The boquet of my Bourdeaux brings back the Rhone, as the dry muscat of my Johannesberg pictures the vine-clad cliffs of the Vaterland,—with a long diminuendo train of thought about Metternich and the Holy Alliance—the unlucky treaty of 15—Vienna—Madame Schrader—and Castelli.

And how pleasantly and nationally does one come back with the Port to our "ancient ally Portugal," with a mind-painted panorama of Torres-Vedras and the Douro—with Black-horse Square and the Tagus—"The Duke" ever and anon flitting across the scene, and making each glass you carry to your lips a heartfelt "long life to him!"

Alas! and alas! such prandial delights were not for me; I must dine for twelve cents, or, by accepting the brilliant entertainment announced yonder, price half-a-dollar, keep Lent the rest of the week.

The temptation to which I allude ran thus:

"Ladies and Gentlemen's Grand Ordinary of all Nations, at 5 o'clock precisely.
Thumbo rig—Mint julep—and a Ball.

The 'Half-dollar.'
Monsieur Palamede de Rosanne directs the Ceremonies."

If there was a small phrase in the aforesaid not perfectly intelligible, it seemed upon the principle of the well-known adage, only to heighten the inducement. The "Thumbo rig" above might mean either a new potation or a new dance. Still, conceding this unknown territory, there was quite sufficient in the remainder of the advertisement to prove a strong temptation. The house, too, had a pretenteous air about it that promised well. There was a large bow-window, displaying a perfect landscape of rounds and sirloins, with a tasteful drapery of sausages overhead; while a fragrant odour of rum, onions, fresh crabs, cheese, salt cod, and preserved ginger, made the very air embrosial.

As I stood and sniffed, my resolution staggering under the assaults made on eye, nose, and palate, a very smartly-dressed female figure crossed the way, holding up her dress full an inch or so higher than even the mud required, and with a jaunty air displaying a pair of very pink stockings on very well-turned legs. I believe—I'm not sure, but I fear—the pink stockings completed what the pickled beef begun. I entered. Having paid my money at the bar, and given up my hat and great coat, I was ushered by a black waiter, dressed in a striped jacket and trousers, as if he had been ruled with red ink, into a large room, where a very numerous company of both sexes were assembled; some seated, some standing, but all talking away with buzz and confusion, that showed perfect intimacy to be the order of the day. The men it was easy to see were chiefly in the "shipping interest." There was a strong majority of mates and small skippers, whose varied tongues ranged from Spanish and Portuguese to Dutch and Danish; French, English, and Russian, were also heard in the melee, showing that the Grand Ordinary had a world-made repute. The ladies were mostly young, very condescending in their manners, somewhat overdressed, and for the most part French.

As I knew no one, I waited patiently to be directed where I should sit, and at last was shown to a place between a very fat lady of creole tint—another dip would have made her black—and a little brisk man, whom I soon learned was Monsieur Palamede himself.

The dinner was good; the conversation easiest of the easy, taking in all, from matters commercial to social; the whole seasoned with the greatest good humor, and no small share of smartness. Personal adventures by land and sea—many of the latter recounted by men who made no scruple of confessing that they "dealt in ebony,"—the slave trade. Little incidents of life, that told much for the candor of the recounter, were heard on all sides, until at length I really felt ashamed at my own deficiency in not having even contributed an anecdote for the benefit of the company. This preyed upon me the more, as I saw myself surrounded by persons who really, if their own unimpeachable evidence was to be credited, began the world in ways and shapes the most singular and uncommon.

Not a man or woman of the party that had not slipped into existence in some droll quaint fashion of their own, so that positively, and for the first time, I really grew ashamed to think that I belonged to "decent people," who had not compromised me in the slightest degree. Voilá! un jeune homme qui ne dit pas un mot!" said a pretty-looking woman with fair brown hair, and a very liquid pair of blue eyes. The speech was addressed to me, and

the whole table at once turned their glances towards me.

"Ay, very true," said a short, stout little skipper, with an unmistakeable slash from a cutlass across his nose. "A sharp-looking fellow like that, has a story, if he will only tell it."

"And you may see," cried another, "that we are above petty prejudices here; roguery only lies heavy on the conscience that conceals it." The speaker was a tall sallow man, with singularly intelligent features; he had been a Jesuit tutor in the family of an Italian noble, and after consigning his patron to the Inquisition, had been himself banished from Rome.

Pressing entreaties and rough commands, half imperious instances and very seductive glances, all were directed towards me, with the object of exhorting some traits of my life, and more particularly of that part of it which concerned my birth and parentage. If the example of the company invited the most unqualified candor, I cannot say that it overcame certain scruples I felt about revealing my humble origin. I was precisely in that anomalous position in life when such avowals are most painful. Without ambition, the confession had not cost me any sacrifice; while, on the other hand, I had not attained that eminence which has a proud boastfulness in saying: "Yes I, such as you see me now —great, titled, wealthy, and powerful—I, was the son of a newsvender or lamplighter." Such avowals, highly lauded as they are by the world, especially when made by archbishops or chancellors, or other great folk, at public dinners, are, to my thinking, about as vain-glorious bits of poor human nature as the most cynical could wish to witness. They are the mere victories of vanity over self-esteem.

Now I had no objection that the world should think me a young gentleman of the very easiest notions of right and wrong, with a conscience as elastic as gutta percha, picking my way across life's stream on the stepping-stones made by other men's skulls—being, as the phrase has it, a very loose fish indeed: but I insisted on their believing that I was well-born. Every one has his weakness —this was Con. Cregan's; and as these isolated fissures in strong character are nearly allied with strength, so was it with me; had I not had this frailty, I had never cherished so intensely the passion to become a gentleman. This is all digressionary; but I'll not ask pardon of my dear reader for all that. If he be reading me in his snug well cushioned chair, with every appliance of ease about him, he'll not throw down these "Confessions" for a bit of prosing that invites the sleep that is already hovering round him. If he has taken me up in the few minutes before dinner, he'll not regret the bit of meditation which does not involve him in a story. If he be spelling me out in a mail-train, he'll be grateful for the "skipping" place, which leaves him time to look out and see the ingenious preparations that are making by the "down" or "up" train, to run into and smash the unhappy convoy of which he forms a part.

"Come, my young lad, out with it. Let us hear a bit about the worthy people who took the sin of launching you into the wide ocean. You must have had owners one time or other." This was said by a hearty-looking old man, with hair white as snow, and an enormous pair of eyebrows to match.

"Willingly, sir," said I, with an air of the easiest confidence; "I should be but too proud if anything in a history humble as mine is, could amuse this honorable company. But the truth is, a life so devoid of interest would be only a tax upon its patience to listen to; and as to my birth, I can give little—indeed no information. The earliest record of my existence that I possess. is from the age of two days and three hours."

"That will do—do admirably!" chorused the party, who laughed heartily at the gravity with which I spoke, and which to them seemed an earnest of my extreme simplicity. "We shall be quite satisfied with that," cried they again.

"Well, then, gentlemen, thanking you for the indulgence with which you consent to overlook my want of accuracy, I proceed. At the tender age I have mentioned, I was won in a raffle!"

"Won in a raffle! won in a raffle!" screamed one after the other; and amid shouts of laughter, the phrase continued to be echoed from end to end of the table. "That beats you hollow, Giles!" "By Jove, how scarce babies must be in the part you come from, if people take tickets for 'em!" Such were some of the commentaries that broke out amidst the mirth.

"I move," said a dapper little Frenchman, who had been a barber, and a National Guard once, "I move that the honorable deputy make a statement to the Chamber, respecting the interesting fact to which he has alluded."

The motion was carried by acclamation, and I was accordingly induced to ascend the tribune, a kind of rude pulpit that was brought specially into the room, and stationed at the side of the President's chair; the comments on my personal appearance, age, air, and probable rank, which were made all the while, evidencing the most candid spirit one can well imagine.

"A right down slick and shrewd 'un, darn me if he ain't!"

"A very wide awake young gemman," quoth number two.

"Il a de 'beaux yeux,' celui la,"—this was a lady's remark.

"Set that young 'un among the girls 'down east,' and he'll mow 'em down like grass."

"A Londoner—swell-mobbish a bit, I take it."

"Not at all, he a'nt; he's a bank clerk or a post-office fellow, bolted with a lot of tin."

"Der ist ein echter schelm," growled out an old Dantzic skipper, "I kenn him vehr wohl; steal your wash wid a leetle scheer—scissars you call him, ha! ha?"

"Ladies and gentlemen," said I, assuming a pose of the most dignified importance, "before entering upon the circumstance to which you have so graciously attached a little interest, let me assure you—not that the fact can or ought to have any weight with this distinguished company—that I have no claim upon your sympathy with regard to any of the pleas whispered around me. I am neither thief, pickpocket, runaway postman, burglar, nor highwayman. If I be, as you are pleased to say, 'wide awake,' I believe it is only a common precaution, considering the company I find myself in; and if I really could lay claim to the flattering praise of a fair lady on the left, it would be merely from accidentally reflecting her own bright glances. I present myself, then, with much diffidence before you, for the simple reason that I come in a character somewhat strange in these parts,—I am a gentleman!"

The ineffable impertinence of this address succeeded to a miracle. Some laughed, some applauded, a few muttered an unintelligible discontent; but the majority of the men, and all the women were with me, and I saw that audacity had gained the day. Ay, and so will it ninety-nine times out of the hundred in every thing through life! The strategic axiom, that no fortress is impregnable, is a valuable worldly lesson, and one ought never to forget that a storming-party rarely fails.

"The circumstance to which I alluded a few minutes back—I dare not presume to call it a story—occurred thus:

"There was a large and brilliant party assembled to pass the Christmas at the Duke of Y——'s; you will understand my reserve. The company included many of the first persons in fashionable life, and a Royal Duke to boot, a great friend of her grace, and some said an old admirer of one of her sisters, who—so went the rumor—showed the strength of her attachment to his Royal Highness by never having accepted any of the brilliant offers of marriage made her. She was remarkably beautiful, and although a little past the first bloom of youth, in full possession of her charms at the time I speak of. Old Lord E—— was one of the guests; and I am sure many of the distinguished company to whom I now address myself will not need any more particular description of the man they must have met a hundred times every London season, well known, indeed, as he is, with his light-blue coat and his buckskin tights, his wide beaver hat, and his queue: his eccentricities, his wealth, and his great avarice, are themes all London is acquainted with."—I paused.

A buzz of acknowledgment and recognition followed, and I resumed:

"Lord E——, you are aware, was a great musical amateur; he was the leader of everything of that kind about town, and whenever he could prevail upon himself to open his house in Carlton-terrace, it was always to Lablache, and Rubini, and Marini, and the rest of them. Well, it was just at the period of this Christmas visit—over which I may remark, *en passant*, Lady Blanche's indisposition cast a shade of gloom—that in making some alteration in the mansion, they discovered in a concealed press in the wall a mahogany case, on opening which were found the moth and worm-eaten remains of a violin. A parchment document, enclosed in a little scroll of brass, and which had escaped the ravages of time, explained that this was the instrument of the celebrated Giacomo Battesta Pizzichetoni, the greatest violinist that ever lived—the composer of 'Il Diavolo e la sua Moglia,' and the 'Balla di Paradiso,' and many other great works, with which you are all familiar."

The company chorused assent, and I continued:—"The party had somehow not gone off well—the accustomed spirit and animation of the scene were wanting. Perhaps Lady Blanche's illness had some share in this; in any case, every one seemed low and out of sorts, and the pleasant people talked of taking leave, when his Royal Highness proposed, by way of doing something, that they should have a raffle for this wonderful fiddle, of which, though only seen by the host and another, every one was talking.

"Even this much of stir was hailed with enthusiasm, the secresy and mystery increasing the interest to a high degree. The tickets were two guineas each; and Lord E——, dying to possess 'a real Pizzichetoni,' took twenty of them. The number was limited to a hundred; but such was the judicious management of those who directed the proceedings, that the shares were at a 'high premium,' on the day of drawing, his Royal Highness actually buying up several at five guineas apiece. The excitement, too, was immense: encyclopædias were ransacked for histories of the violin, and its great professors and proficients. The 'Conversations' Lexicon' opened of itself at the letter P., and Pizzichetoni's name turned up in every corner and on every theme, fifty times a-day. What a time I have heard that was! nothing talked of but bow-action, shifting, bridging, double-fingering, and

the like, from morning till night. Lord E—— became, in consequence of this run about a favorite subject, a personage of more than ordinary importance; instead of being deemed, what he was commonly called at the clubs, the Great 'Borassus,' he was listened to with interest and attention; and, in fact, from the extent of his knowledge of the subject, and his acquaintance with every detail of his history, each felt that to his Lordship ought by right to fall the fortunate ticket.

"So did it, in fact, turn out. After much vacillation, with the last two numbers remained the final decision. One belonged to the Royal Duke, the other to Lord E——. 'You shall have a hundred guineas for your chance, F——,' said the Duke, 'what say you?'

"'Your Royal Highness's wish is a command,' said he, bowing and blushing; 'but were it otherwise, and to any other than your Royal Highness, I should as certainly say, nay.'

"'Then, "nay," must be the answer to me also; I cannot accept of such a sacrifice; and, after all, you are much more worthy of such a treasure than I am,—I really only meant it for a present to Mori.'

"A present, your Royal Highness!' cried he, horrified; 'I wouldn't give such a jewel to anything short of St. Cecilia,—the violin, you are aware, was her instrument.'

"'Now, then, for our fortunes!' cried the Duke, as he drew forth his ticket; 'I believe I'm the lucky one—this is number 2000.'

"'Two thousand and one!' exclaimed Lord E——, holding up his, and in an ecstasy of triumph sat down to recover himself.

"'Here is the key, my Lord,' said one of the party, advancing towards him.

"He sprang up, and thrust it into the lock; in his agitation he shook the box, and a slight, soft cadence, like a faint cry, was heard.

"'The soul of music hovers o'er it still,' he exclaimed theatrically, and flinging back the lid, discovered——Me! Yes, ladies and gentlemen, in a very smart white robe, with very tasty embroidery, and a lace cap, which I am assured was pure Valenciennes, there I lay! I am not aware whether my infantine movements were peculiarly seductive or not; but I have been told that I went through my gamut at a key that even overtopped the laughter around me.

"'A very bad jest—a mauvaise plaisanterie of the worst taste, I must say,' said Lord E——, turning away, and leaving the room.

"I never rightly knew how the matter was afterwards made up, but certainly it was by his Lordship's directions, and at his charge, that I was nursed, reared, and educated. My expenses at Eton and Oxford, as well as the cost of my commission, came from him; and, it was only a few days ago, on learning his death, that I also learned the termination of my good fortune in life. He bequeathed me what he styled my 'family mansion'—the fiddle-case; thus repaying by this cruel jest the practical joke passed upon himself so many years before."

"What name did they give you, sir?"

"I was called after the celebrated violinist of Cremona, who lived in the seventh century, who was named Cornelius Crejanus, or as some spell, Creganus; and in compliance with modern usages, they Anglicised me into Con. Cregan."

"I have the honor to propose Con. Cregan's health," said the president, "and may he see many happy years ere he next goes to sleep in a wooden box!"

This very gratifying toast was drank with the most flattering acclamations, and I descended from the tribune the "man of the evening."

If some of the company who put credence in my story, did not hesitate to ascribe a strong interest in me to the Royal Duke himself, others, who put less faith in my narrative, thought less of my parentage and more of myself, so that what I lost on the one hand, I gained on the other.

There was a discretion, a certain shadowy prudery about certain portions of my story, of which I have not attempted to convey any notion here, but which I saw had "told" with the fair part of my audience, who, possibly not over rigid in many of their opinions, were well pleased with the delicate reserve in which I shrouded my direct allusion to my parentage. A rough, red-whiskered skipper, indeed, seemed disposed to pour a broadside into this mystery, by asking, "If his Royal Highness never took any notice of me?" but the refined taste of the company concurred in the diplomatic refusal to answer a question of which the "hon. gentleman on the straw chair" had given "no notice."

The pleasures of the table—a very luscious bowl of the liquid which bore the mysterious epithet of "Thumbo-rig," and which was a concoction of the genus punch, spiced, sugared, and iced to a degree that concealed its awful tendency to anti-Mathewism—bright eyes that were no churls of their glances—merry converse, and that wondrous "magnetism of the board," which we call good fellowship—made the time pass rapidly. Toasts and sentiments of every fashion went round, and we were political, literary, arbitrary, amatory, sentimental, and satiric by turns. They were pleasant varlets! and in their very diversity of humors there was that clash and collision of mind and metal, that tell more effectively than the best packed party of choice wits who ever sat and watched each other.

Then, there was a jolly jumbling up of bad

English, bad Dutch, bad French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, that would drive a sober listener clean mad. Stories began in one tongue merged into another, and so into a third; while explanations, mistakes, and corrections ran alongside of the narrative, often far more amusing than the story to which they were attached. Personalities, too, abounded; but with a most unqualified good temper, and on the whole, I never beheld a merrier set.

M. Palamede alone did not relish the scene; he himself was nobody at such a moment, and he longed for the ball-room and the dance; and it was only after repeated summonses of his bell that we at last arose, and entered the saloon, where we found him standing, fiddle in hand, while rapping smartly a couple of times with his bow, he called out—

"Places! places! Monsieur le Duc de Gubbins, to your place. Ladies, I beg attention. Madame la Marquise, dans la bonne societé on ne donne jamais un soufflet."

"Ah, here's old Rosin again!" cried several of the party, who, with all this familiarity, appeared to view him with no small respect.

"Shall I find you a partner, Monsieur de Congreganne?" said he to me.

"Thanks," said I, "but with your permission I'll not dance just yet."

"As you please, it is but a contre dance," said he, shrugging his shoulders, while he moved away to arrange the figures.

I had not perceived before that a kind of orchestra, consisting of two fiddles, a flute, and a tamborine, was stationed in a long gallery over the door by which we entered; Monsieur Palamede being however the director, not alone of the music, but of the entire entertainment. The band now struck up a well-known English country-dance, and away went the couples, flying down the room to the merry measure; Monsieur de Rosanne, arranging the figures, beating the time, preserving order, and restraining irregularities, with the energy of one possessed.

"Ah, Monsieur le Capetaine de Cocks, c'en est trop. Mademoiselle de Spicer, pas se haut! de arms graceful! Ladies, no keep your hands under your—what ye call him—jupe—apron—ha! ha! Black man—negro—no talk so loud when you make punch!

"Chassez—balancez! La grace! Madame la Marquise, la grace!" then, as he passed me, he muttered with a voice guttural from anger, "Quel supplice!"

As I continued to gaze on the scene, I could not help being struck with the extreme diversity of look and expression; for while there were some faces on which iniquity had laid its indelible stamp, there were others singularly pleasing, and some, actually beautiful. Among the men, the same character prevailed throughout; a rude, coarse good humor—the sailor-type everywhere: but a few seemed persons of a higher class, and on these a life of vice and debauchery had produced the most marked change, and you could still see, amid the traces of nights of riot and abandonment, the remnant of finer features—the expression they had worn before their "fall." If I was surprised at the good looks of many of the women, still more was I by a gracefulness of carriage and an air of deportment that seemed as much out of place as they were unsuited to such companionship. One young fellow appeared to be a general favorite with the company; he was tall, well made, and had that indescribably rakish character about his every gesture that is rarely a bad indication of the possessor's mode of life. I had no difficulty in learning his name, for every one called him by it, at each instant, and "Fred. Falkoner" was heard on all sides. It was he who selected the music for the dance: his partner, for the time being, was the belle of the room, and he lounged about supreme. Nor was his title a bad one—he was the great entertainer of the whole assembly. The refreshments were almost entirely of his ordering, and the clink of his dollars might be heard keeping merry time with the strains of the violins. I watched him with some interest—I thought I could see that, in descending to such companionship, there was a secret combat between his self-respect and a strange passion for seeing life in low places, which, when added to the flattery such a man invariably obtains from his inferiors, is a dangerous and a subtle temptation. The more I studied him, the stronger grew this conviction—nay, at times, the expression of scorn upon his handsome features was legible, even to the least remarking. It was while I still continued to watch him that he passed me, with a dark, Spanish-looking girl upon his arm; when he turned round suddenly, and staring at me fixedly for a few seconds, said, "We met, once before, to-day?"

"I am not aware of it," said I, doubtingly.

"Yes, yes;—I never forget a face, least of all when it resembles yours—I saw you this morning at the Picayune."

"True, I was there."

"What a precious set of rascals those fellows were. You supposed that they were going to join the expedition; not a bit of it—some were gamblers, the greater number thieves and pickpockets. I know them all; and indeed I was going to warn you about them, for I saw you were a stranger, but I lost sight of you in the crowd. But, there's the music—will you have a partner?"

"With all my heart," said I; glad to encourage our further acquaintance.

"You speak Spanish?"

"Not a word."

"Well, no matter; if you did, you should have mine here. But what say you to Mademoiselle Heloise, yonder?—a bit faded or so, but I remember her second "Ballarina" at the Havannah, only two years back."

I made the suitable acknowledgment; and the next moment saw me whirling away in a waltz, at least in such an approximation to that measure as my Quebec experience suggested, with a very highly rouged and black eyebrowed "danseuse." My French was better than my dancing; and so, Mademoiselle Heloise was satisfied to accept my arm, while we paraded the room, discussing the company after the most approved fashion.

The French have a proverb, "Bete comme une danseuse," and I must say that my fair friend did not prove an exception. Her whole idea of life was limited to what takes place in rehearsal of a morning, or, on the night of representation. She recounted to me her history from the time she had been a "Rat,"—such is the technical at the Grand Opera of Paris,—flying through the air on a wire, or sitting perilously perched upon a pasteboard cloud. Thence she had advanced to the state of Fairy Queen, or some winged messenger of those celestials who wear muslin trousers with gold stars, and always stand in the "fifth position." Passing through the grade of Swiss peasant, Turkish slave, and Neapolitan market-girl, she had at last arrived at the legit mate drama of "legs," yclept "ballet d'action:" and although neither her beauty nor abilities had been sufficient to achieve celebrity in Paris, she was accounted a Taglioni in the "provinces," and deemed worthy of exportation to the colonies.

"Non contigit quique adire Corinthiam!" we can not all have our "loges" at the "Grand Opera," and happy for us it is so; or what would become of the pleasure we derive from third, fourth, and fifth-rate performances elsewhere? True indeed, if truffles were a necessary of life, there would be a vast amount of inconvenience and suffering. Now Mademoiselle Heloise, whose pirouettes were no more minded in Paris, nor singled out for peculiar favor, than one of the lamps in the row of foot-lights, was a kind of small idol in the Havannah. She had the good fortune to live in an age when the heels take precedence of the head, and she shared in the enthusiasm by which certain people in our day would bring back the heathen mythology for the benefit of the corps de ballet.

Alas for fame! in the very climax of her glory she grew fat! Now flesh to a danseuse is like cowardice to a soldier, or shame to a lawyer—it is the irreconcilable quality. The gauzy natures who float to soft music must not sup. Every cutlet costs an "entre chat!" Hard and terrible condition of existence, and proving how difficult and self-denying a thing it is to be an angel, even in this world!

So much for Mademoiselle Heloise; and if the reader be weary of her, so was I.

"You'll have to treat her to a supper," whispered Falconer, as he passed me.

"I've not a cent in my purse," said I, thinking it better to tell the truth than incur the reproach of stinginess.

"Never mind—take mine!" said he, as he dropped a very weighty purse into my coat pocket, and moved away before I could make any answer.

Perhaps the greatest flattery an individual can receive is to win some acknowledgment of confidence from an utter stranger. To know that by the chance intercourse of a few minutes you have so impressed another, who never saw you before, that he is impelled at once to befriend and assist you, your self-esteem so pleasantly gratified, immediately re-acts upon the cause, and you are at a loss whether most to applaud your own good gifts, or the ready wittedness of him who appreciated them so instantaneously.

I was still hesitating, revolving doubtless the pleasant sense of flattery aforesaid, when Falconer came flying past, with his partner. "Order supper for four!" cried he, as he whizzed by.

"What does he say, mon cher Comte?" said my partner.

I translated his command, and found that the notion pleased her vastly.

The dining-room by this time had been metamorphosed into a kind of coffee-room, with small supper-tables, at which parties were already assembling; and here we now took our places, to con over the bill of fare, and discuss scolloped oysters, cold lobster, deviled haddock, and other like delicacies.

Falconer soon joined us, and we sat down, the merriest knot in the room. I must have been brilliant! I feel it so, this hour; a kind of warm glow rushes to my cheeks, as I think over that evening; and how the guests from the different parts of the room drew gradually nearer and nearer to listen to the converse at our table, and hear the smart things that kept pattering down like hail! What pressing invitations came pouring in upon me. The great mastadon himself could not have eaten a tithe of the breakfasts to which I was asked, nor would the grog-tub of a seventy-four contain all the rum-and-water I was proffered by skippers lying "in dock."

Falkoner, however, pleased me more than the rest. There was something in his cordiality that did not seem like a passing fancy; and I could not help feeling, that however corrupted and run to waste by dissipation, there was good stuff about him. He interested me, too, on another score: he had formerly made one of a Texan excursion, that had

penetrated even to the Rio del Norte; and his escapes and adventures amused me highly. The ladies, I believe, at last found us very ungallant cavaliers; for they arose and left us talking over prairie life and the wild habits of the chase, till day began to shine through the windows.

"The *Christobal* sails to-morrow," said he, for Galveston; but even she, smart sailer that she is, will scarce arrive in time to catch these fellows. Here we are, at the fifth of the month; the eighth was to be the start: then that, supposing you to reach Galveston by the seventh, gives you no time to get your kit ready, look after arms, and buy a nag. What say you, then, if we make a party of our own?—charter one of these small craft —a hundred dollars or so will do it. We can then take our time to pick up good cattle, look out for a couple of mules for our baggage, and a spare mustang or so, if a horse should knock up."

I concurred at once: the plan was fascination itself. Adventure, liberty, novelty, enterprise, and a dash of danger to heighten all. Falconer talked of dollars as if they macadamized the road to St. Louis; and I, glowing with punch and pride together, spoke of the expense as a mere trifle. To this hour I can not say whether I had really mystified myself into the notion that I possessed ample means, or was merely indulging the passing pleasure of a delightful vision. So was it, however: I smiled at the cheapness of everything, could scarcely fancy such a thing as a Mexican pony for eighty dollars; and laughed, actually laughed, at the price of the rifle, when all my worldly substance, at the moment, would not have purchased copper caps for it.

"Don't go too expensively to work, Cregan," cried he; "and above all, bring no European servant. A Mexican fellow—or, better still, a half-breed—is the thing for the prairies. You have to forget your Old World habits, and rough it."

"So I can," said I, laughing good-humoredly; "I'm in a capital mind for a bit of sharp work, too. Just before I left the 90th, we made a forced march from St. Johns, through the forest country; and I feel up to anything."

"You'll not like the cattle at first. I'm afraid," said he, "they have that racking action the Yankees are fond of. There is a capital mare at Galveston, if we could get her. These fellows will snap her up, most likely."

"Butcher's mare," said I, hazarding a guess.

"Ah! you've been looking after her already!" said he, surprised. "Well, to tell you the truth, that was one of my objects in coming here to-night. I heard that some of these skipper fellows had got the winning ticket; I paid twenty dollars to the office clerk to see the number, and determined to buy it up Here it is. Can you read these figures? for hang me, if the punch, or the heat, or the dancing, has not made me quite dizzy."

"Let me see: Number 438," said I, repeating it a couple of times over.

"Yes, that is it. If I could have chanced on it, I would have run down to-morrow by the *Christobal*. She lies about a mile out, and will weigh with the ebb, at eight o'clock. That mare—she killed Butcher by a down leap, over a rock, but never scratched herself —is worth at least a thousand dollars."

"I offered eight hundred for her on mere character!" said I, sitting back, and sipping my liquid with the most profound quietude.

Falconer was evidently surprised with this announcement; but more so from the rakish indifference it betrayed about money, than as bespeaking me rich and affluent.

And thus we chatted away till the black waiter made his appearance to open the windows, and prepare for the work of the day.

"Where are you stopping?" said Falconer, as we arose from the table.

"At Condor House!" said I, boldly giving the name of a very flash hotel. "But it's too noisy: I don't like it."

"Nor do I. It's confoundedly expensive, too. I wish you would come to Herrick's: it's not quite so stylish, perhaps, but I think the cookery is better, and you'd not pay five dollars a bottle for Madeira and eight for Champagne."

"That *is* smart!" said I. "They've not let me have my bill yet; but I fancied they were costly folk."

"Well, come and dine with me at Herrick's to-morrow, and decide for yourself."

"Why not try the Condor with me?" said I.

"Another day, with all my heart; but I have a friend to-morrow: so come and meet him at six o'clock."

I agreed; and then, we chatted on about London, and town folks, in a way that, even with all I had drunk, amazed me for the cool impudence in which I had indulged.

"You knew De Courcy, of course," said he, after a long run of mutual friends had been disposed of.

"Jack?" cried I,—Jack de Courcy, of the Coldstreams—yes, I think I did. Jack and I were like brothers. The last steeple-chase I rode in Ireland was for poor Jack de Courcy; a little chasnut mare with a good deal of Arab about her."

"I remember her well, an active devil, but she couldn't go for more than half a mile."

"Well, I managed to screw a race out of her."

"You must tell me all about that to-morrow; for I find my unfortunate head is like a bell, with the vibration of the last stroke of

the hammer on it. Don't forget, to-morrow, sharp six. You'll meet nobody but Broughton."

"Dudley—Sir Dudley Broughton?"

"The same. You know him then already? Poor fellow! he's terribly cut up; but he'll be glad to see an old friend. Have you been much together?"

"A great deal. I made a cruise with him in his yacht, the *Firefly*."

"What a rare piece of fortune to have met you!" cried Falconer, as he shook my hand once more. And so, with the most fervent assurances of meeting on the morrow, we parted, he, to saunter slowly toward his hotel, and I, to stand in the middle of the street, and, as I wiped the perspiration from my brow, to ask myself, had I gone clean mad.

I was so overwhelmed by the shock of my own impudence, that I stood where Falconer left me, for full five minutes, motionless and spell-bound. To have boasted of my intimacy with Captain de Courcy, although the Atlantic rolled between us, was bad enough in all conscience; but to have talked of Sir Dudley—the haughty, insolent, overbearing Sir Dudley Broughton—as "my old friend," was something that actually appalled me. How could my vain boastfulness have so far got the better of my natural keenness? how could my silly self-sufficiency have carried me so far? "Ah!" thought I, "it was not the real Con. Cregan who spoke such ineffable folly: these were the outpourings of that diabolical 'Thumbo-rig.'"

While, therefore, I entered into a bond with myself to eschew that insidious compound in future, I also adopted the far more imminent and important resolve, to run away from New Orleans. Another sun must not set upon me in that city, come what might. With a shudder I called to mind Sir Dudley's own avowal of his passion as a hater, and I could not venture to confront such danger.

I accordingly hastened to my miserable lodging, and packing up my few clothes, now reduced to the compass of a bundle in a handkerchief, I paid my bill, and on a minute calculation of various pieces of strange coinage, found myself the possessor of four dollars and a quarter,—a small sum, and something less than a cent for every ten miles I was removed from my native land. What meant the term "Country," after all, to such as me? He, has a country who possesses property in it,—whose interests tie him to the soil, where his name is known, and his presence recognized; but what country belongs to him, where no resting-place is found for his weary feet,—whose home is an inn, whose friends are the fellow-travellers with whom he has journeyed? The ties of country, like those of kindred, are superstitions—high and holy ones sometimes, but still superstitions. Believe in them, if you can, and so much the better for you; but in some hour the conviction will come, that man is of every land.

Thus pondering, I trudged along at a smart pace, my bundle on a stick over my shoulder, never noticing the road, and only following the way because it seemed to lead out of the city. It was a gorgeous morning; the sun glittered on the bright roofs, and lit up the gay terraces of the houses, where creepers of every tint and foliage were tastefully entwined and festooned, as these people knew so well to dispose. Servants were opening windows, displaying handsomely furnished rooms, replete with every luxury, as I passed; busy housemaids were brushing, and sweeping, and polishing; and shining niggers were beating carpets and shaking hearth-rugs, while others were raking the gravel before the doors, or watering the rich magnolias and cactuses that stood sentinel beneath the windows. Carriages, too, were washing, and high-bred horses standing out to be groomed,—all signs of wealth, and of the luxuries of the rich men, whose close-drawn curtains portended sleep. "Ay," thought I, "there are hundreds, here, whose weightiest evil would be, that they awoke an hour earlier than their wont—that their favorite Arab had stood on a sharp stone—that some rude branch had scratched the rich varnish on their chariot; while I wander along, alone and friendless, my worldly substance a few dollars. This disparity of condition of course occurs to the mind of every poor man, but it only is a canker to him who has had a glimpse, be it ever so fleeting, of a life of luxury and ease. For this reason, the servant-class will always be a great source of danger to our present social condition; seeing the weakness, the folly, and sometimes the worse than folly of those they serve,—viewing, from a near point, the interior lives of those, who, seen from afar, are reckoned great and illustrious: they lose the prestige of respect for the distinguishing qualities of station, and only yield it to the outward symbols—the wealth and riches. What Socialists are our Butlers! what Democrats our Footmen! what Red Republicans are our Cooks! what a Leveler is the Gardener! For all your "yellow plush," you are Sans-culottes, every man of you!

Now I deem it a high testimony to my powers of judgment, that I never entertained these views; on the contrary, I always upheld the doctrine, that society, like a broken thigh-bone, did best on an "inclined plane;" and I repudiated equality, with the scorn a man six feet high would feel, were he told that the human standard was to be four and a half. The only grudge I did feel towards the fortunate man of wealth was, that I should lose so many brilliant years of life in acqui-

ring—for acquire it I would—what I would far rather employ in dispensing. A guinea at twenty is worth a hundred at thirty—a thousand at forty—a million at sixty; that's the geometrical mean of life. Glorious youth! that only needs "debentures" to be divine!

My head became clearer and my brain more unclouded, as I walked along in the free air of the morning, and I felt that with a cigar I should both compose my vagrant fancies, and cheat myself out of the necessity of a breakfast.—Excellent weed! that can make dulness imaginative, and imagination plodding; that renders stupid men companionable to clever ones, and gives a meek air of thought to the very flattest insipidity!

I searched my pocket for the little case that contained my Manillas, but in vain; I tried another—like result. How was it? I always carried it in my great-coat; had I been robbed? I could not help laughing at the thought, it sounded so ineffably comic. I essayed again, alas! with no better success. Could I have placed it in the breast pocket? What! there is no breast pocket! How is this, Con.? has Thumbo-rig its influence over you yet? I passed my hand across my brow, and tried to remember if the breast-pocket had only been a tradition of another coat, or what had become of it. Pockets do not close from being empty, like county banks, nor do they dry up, like wells, from disuse.

"No, no; there certainly was once one here." As I said this, what was my amazement to find that the pocket for which I had been searching had changed sides, and gone from left to right! "Oh, this is too bad!" thought I; with a little more punch I could have fancied that I had put my coat on wrong-sided. "Here is a mystery!" said I, "and now, to solve it patiently;" and so, I sat me down by the way-side, and laying my bundle on the ground, began to reflect.

Reflection, I soon found, was of no use. Habit—the instinct of custom—showed me that my pocket had always been to the left; my right hand sought the spot with an almost mechanical impulse, whereas my left wandered about like a man in search of his newly-taken lodging. As I came to this puzzling fact, my fingers, deeply immersed in the pocket, came in contact with a small leather case. I drew it forth; it was not mine—I had never seen it before! I opened it; there was nothing within but a small piece of card, with the words, "Full Share Ticket," on top, and underneath, the figures "438."

From the card, my eyes reverted to the coat itself; and now I saw, with a surprise I cannot convey, that it was not my own coat, but another man's I was wearing. The Negro at the ordinary had assisted me to put it on. It was the only one, indeed, remaining, as I came away, and some other had carried off mine. So far, it was a fair exchange, of which I was not in any way accountable, seeing that I performed a mere passive part; taking—and even that unwillingly—what was left me. Certain thread-bare symptoms about the cuffs, and a missing button or two, also showed me that I was no gainer by the barter. Was it worth while to go back? were the chances of recovering my own equal to the risk of being myself discovered? I thought not. It was decidedly a shabby vestment, and, now that I examined it more closely, a very miserable substitute for my own. I was vexed at the occurrence, and could not help reflecting, in very severe terms, upon the breach of honor such an act displayed. "Lie down with dogs"—Master Con., says the adage—"and see if you don't get up with fleas!" "Such company as you passed the evening with, were assuredly not above a piece of roguery like this." Falkoner it could not be; and I own, that I was glad to know that, since he was much taller than me; nor could I remember one who was near enough my own size to make me suppose him the culprit; and so I ended by attributing the knavery to the Negro, who probably had kept this ancient vestment for a moment of substitution.

It may be inferred from the difficulty of solution in the case of this very simple occurrence, that my faculties were not pre-eminently clear and lucid, and that the vapor of the Thumbo-rig still hung heavily over me; such I am bound to own was the fact. Every event of the previous night was as shadowy and imperfect as might be. It was only during the last half hour of my conversation with Falkoner, that I was completely conscious of all said and done around me. Previous to this, my mind had established a kind of Provisional Government over my rebellious ideas, and like most such bodies, its edicts had little force, for they were based on but a weak prestige.

Now, then, came a question of this strange-looking piece of card, with the numbers on which, by some wonderful process, I seemed to myself perfectly familiar,—nay, I felt that they were, from some hidden cause, recorded facts in my memory. All I could remember of the night before threw little light upon the matter, and I wondered on, striving to pierce the dull mist of uncertainty that enveloped all my thoughts: by this time, I had reached the bank of the river, and could perceive about half a mile off, down the stream, a tall-masted smack, getting ready for sea,—her blue-Peter fluttered at the mast-head, and the pleasant ye-ho! of the sailors kept time with the capstan-bars as they heaved at the anchor. The wind was a nor'-wester, and beat with impatient gusts the loose canvass that hung ready

to be shaken out, while the stream rushed rapidly along her sides.

"Would I were to sail in you, wherever your voyage tended!" was my exclamation; and I sat down to watch the preparations, which the loud commands of the Skipper seemed to hasten and press forward. So occupied was I with the stir and bustle on board the craft, where everything was done with a lightning-speed, that I did not remark a boat's crew, who sat, leaning on their oars, beside the wall of the stream; and it was only when an accidental sound of their voices struck me, that I saw them.

"That's a signal to come away, Ben.!" said one of the men. "He'll wait no longer!"

"And why should he lose a tide, for any land-lubber of them all? It's not every day, besides, we get a nor'-wester like this!"

"Well! what do you mean to do?" asked the former speaker.

"Give him ten minutes more, Ben.," cried another. "Let's have a chance of a dollar a-piece, any how!"

"There goes a shot!" said the man called Ben., as he pointed to the smack; from whose bow port the smoke was lazily issuing. "I'll not stay here any longer! shove her away, lads!"

CHAPTER XIX.

"ON BOARD OF THE 'CHRISTOBAL.'"

Without further delay the men prepared to obey the summons. The boat's chain was cast off, and, as she swung out from the wall, I could see a small standard at her stern, carrying a little white flag, which, as the breeze wafted towards me, showed the enigmatical numbers, 438.

I sprang to my legs and uttered a cry of surprise.

"Well! what is it, master?" said Ben, looking up, and probably expecting to see me take a header into the muddy stream.

"That's the number!" cried I, not knowing what I said. "That's the very number!"

"Very true, master, so it is! but you han't got the counterpart, I guess!"

"Yes, but I have though!" said I, producing the ticket from my pocket-book.

"Why, darn me, if that a'nt himself!" cried the men; and they sung out three hearty cheers at the discovery.

"Were you there long, old fellow?" said Ben.

"About half an hour," said I.

"Tarnation! and why did ye keep us a waitin'? didn't you see the tide was on the ebb, and that Christy was making signals every five minutes, or so?"

"I was waiting—waiting ——"

"Waiting for what? I'd like to know."

"Waiting for my baggage!" said I; taking a long breath.

"An' it ain't come yet?"

"No; I'm afraid they missed the road."

"Be that as it may, master, I'll not stay no longer. Come along without your kit, or stay behind with it, whichever you please."

"Hang the traps," said I, affecting a bold carelessness, "I've a few things there I left out loose, that will do. When shall we be there?" This was a leading question, for I did not yet know whither we were bound.

"At Galveston? Well, to-morrow evening or by nightfall, I guess, if the wind holds. Sit down there, and make yourself snug; there's always a little splash of a sea in this river. And now, lads, pull away! altogether."

A second shot from the smack announced that her anchor was tripped, and we saw her now lurch over as her foresail filled.

The men pulled vigorously, and in about twenty minutes I stood upon the deck of the "Christobal," making sundry excuses to her skipper for being late, and assuring him, on the faith of a gentleman, that I had utterly forgotten all about the voyage till the last moment.

"They only sent me the number from the office late last night," said he, "and told me to look out for the gemman about the docks. But I warn't going to do that, I said. He's got a passage and grub to Galveston—as good as ere a gemman can de-sire; he's won a nag they says is worth seven or eight hundred dollars, with furniture and arms for the new expedition; and I take it them things is worth looking arter—so darn me blue if I gives myself no trouble about 'em."

These scattered hints were all I wanted. The sea-breeze had restored me to my wonted clearness, and I now saw that "438" meant that I had won a free passage to Texas, a horse and a rifle when I got there; so far the "exchange of coats" was, "with a difference." It was with an unspeakable satisfaction that I learned I was the only passenger on board the 'Christobal." The other "gentlemen" of the expedition had either already set out, or abandoned the project, so that I had not to undergo any unpleasant scrutiny into my past life, or any impertinent inquiry regarding my future.

Old Kit Turrel, the skipper, did not play the grand inquisitor on me. His life had been for the most part passed in making the voyage to and from New Orleans and Galveston, where he had doubtless seen sufficient of character to have satisfied a glutton in eccentricity. There was not a runaway rogue, or abandoned vagabond, that had left the coast for years back with whose history he was not familiar. You had but to give him a name,

and out came the catalogue of his misdeeds on the instant.

These revelations had a prodigious interest for me. They opened the book of human adventure at the very chapter I wanted. It was putting a keen edge upon the razor, to give *me* the "last fashions in knavery"—not to speak of the greater advantage of learning the success attendant on each, since "Kit" could tell precisely how it fared with every one who had passed through his hands.

He enlightened me also as to these Texan expeditions, which, to use his own phrase, had never been anything better than "almighty swindles," planned to catch young flats from the north country, the southerns being all too "crank" to be done.

"And is there no expedition in reality?" said I, with all the horror of a man who had been seduced from home, and family, and friends, under false pretences.

"There do be a dash now and then into the Camanche trail, when buffaloes are plenty, or to bring down a stray buck or so. Mayhap, too, they cut off an Injian fellow or two, if he lingers too late in the fall; and then they come back with wonderful stories of storming villages, and destroying war-parties, and the rest of it; but we knows better. Most of 'em ere chaps are more used to pick-locks than rifles, and can handle a 'jemmy' better than a 'bowie-knife.'"

"And in the present case, what kind of fellows are they?"

He rolled a tobacco quid from side to side of his mouth, and seemed to hesitate whether he would speak out.

"There is no danger with me, captain; I am an Englishman, a perfect stranger here, and have never seen or heard of a man amongst them."

"I see *that*," said he, "and your friends must be rank green 'uns to let you go and join this trail, that's a fact."

"But what are they?"

"Well, they call 'emselves horse-dealers; but above Austin there, and along by Bexar, they call 'em horse-stealers!" and he laughed heartily at the excessive drollery of the remark.

"And where do they trade with their cattle?"

"They sells 'em here, or up in the States away north sometimes; but they picks up the critters along the Chehuhua Line, or down by Aguaverde, or San Pueblo. I've known 'em go to Mexico, too. When they don't get scalped they've rather good fun of it; but they squabble a bit now and then among 'em selves; and so there's a Texan proverb, 'that buffalo-meat in spring is as rare as a mustang merchant with two eyes!'"

"What does that mean?"

"They gouge a bit down there, they do,—that's a fact. I've known two or three join the Red men, and say Injins was better living with, than them 'ere."

"I own your picture is not flattering."

"Yes, but it be, though! You don't know them chaps; but I know 'em—aye, for nigh forty year. I'm a livin' on this 'ere passage, and I've seen 'em all. I knew Bowlin Sam, I did!" From the manner this was said, I saw that Bowlin Sam was a celebrity, to be ignorant of whom was to confess one's-self an utter savage.

"To be sure I was only a child at the time; but I saw him come aboard with the negro fellow that he followed up the Red river trail. They were two of the biggest fellows you could see. Sam stood six feet six-an'-a-quarter: the Black was six feet four,—but he had a stoop in his shoulders. Sam tracked him for two years; and many's the dodge they had between 'em: but Sam took him at last, and he brought him all the way from Guajaqualle here, bound with his hands behind him, and a big log of iron-wood in his mouth; for he could tear like a juguar.

"They were both on em ugly men—Sam, very ugly! Sam could untwist the strongest links of an iron boat-chain, and t'other fellow could bite a man-rope clean in two with his teeth. The 'Black' eat nothing from the time they took him; and when they put him into the shore-boat, in the river, he was so weak they had to lift him like a child. Well, out they rowed, into the middle of the stream, where the water is roughest among the 'snags,' and many a whirlpool dashing round 'atween the bows of the 'sawyers.' That's the spot you're sure to see one of these young sharks;—for the big chaps knows better than to look for their wittals in dangerous places—while the water is black, at times, with alligators. Well, as I was sayin', out they rowed; and just as they comes to this part of the stream, the Black fellow gives a spring, and drives both his heavy-ironed feet bang through the flooring-plank of the boat. It was past bailin': they were half swamped before they could ship their oars: the minute after, they were all struggling in the river together. There were three besides the nigger; but he was the only one ever touched land again. He was an Antigua chap, that same nigger; and they knows sharks and caymans as we does dog-fish! but, for all that, he was all bloody, and had lost part of one foot, when he got ashore."

"Why had he been captured? what had he done?"

"What hadn't he done! that same black murdered more men as any six in these parts: he it was burned down Checoat's mill up at Brandy Cove, with all the people fastened up within. Then he run away to the 'washins' at Guajaqualle, where he killed Colonel Rix-

on, as was over the 'Placer.' He cut him in two with a bowie-knife, and never a one guessed how it happened, as the juguars had carried off two or three people from the 'washins'; but the nigger got drunk one night, and began a cuttin' down the young hemlock trees, and sayin'—'That's the way I mowed down Buckra' Georgy'—his name was George Rixon. Then he bolted, and was never seen more. Ah! he was a down-hard 'un! that fellow Crick."

"Crick—Menelaus Crick!" said I, almost springing up with amazement as I spoke.

"Just so. You've heard enough of him 'fore now, I guess."

The skipper went on to talk about the negro's early exploits, and the fearful life of crime which he had always pursued; but I heard little of what he said. The remembrance of the man himself, bowed down with years and suffering, was before me; and I thought how terribly murder is expiated, even in those cases where the guilty man is believed to have escaped. So is it, the dock, the dungeon, and the gallows, can be mercies in comparison with the self-torment of eternal fear, the terror of companionship, or the awful hell of solitude! The scene at Anticosti, and the terrific night in the Lower Town of Quebec, rose both together to my mind, and so absorbed my thoughts, that the old skipper, seeing my inattention, and believing that I was weary and inclined for sleep, left me for the deck; and I lay still, pondering over these sad themes.

At last I roused myself and went on deck. The city had long since disappeared from view, and even the low land at the mouth of the river had faded in the distance; while instead of the yellow polluted flood of the Mississippi, the blue waves, shining and sparkling, danced merrily past, or broke in foamsheets at the bow. The white sails were bent like boards, firm and immoveable before the breeze, and the swift vessel darted her way onward as proudly as though her freight were something prouder and better than a poor adventurer, without one in the wide world who cared whether he won or lost the game with Fortune.

My spirits rose every mile we left New Orleans behind us; I felt besides, that to bring my skill to such a market, was but to carry "coals to Newcastle:" nor, from the skipper's account, did Texas offer a much more favorable field. However, it smacked of adventure; the very name had a charm for me, and I thought I should far rather confront actual danger than live a life of petty schemes and small expedients. But, what a strange crucible is the human heart! here was I, placed in a situation to which an incident had elevated me—of a kind which a more scrupulous sense of honor would have made some shudder at—fancying, ay, and persuading myself too, that in the main, I possessed very admirable sentiments and most laudable ambitions;—that the occasional little straits to which I was reduced, were only so many practical jokes played on me by "Fate," which took, doubtless, a high delight in the ingenuity by which I always fell on my feet,—while I felt certain, that, were I only fairly treated, a more upright, honorable, straightforward young gentleman never lived than I should prove!

"Let Dame Fortune only deal me trumps," said I, "and I'll promise never to look into my neighbor's hand." Gentle reader, you smile at my humility;—well, then, it's clear you are neither a Secretary of State, nor a Railway Director—that's all.

We dropped anchor off Galveston, just as the sun was setting; and the evening being calm, and the reflection of the houses and steeples in the water sharp and defined, the scene was sufficiently striking. The city itself was more important as to size and wealth than I had anticipated, and the office of the "Texan Expedition," held at the "Moon," a great coffee-house on the Quay, impressed me most favorably with the respectability and pretensions of my "Co-expeditionaries." Old Kit presented me to the Secretary—a very knavish-looking fellow in spectacles of black gauze—as the winner of the great prize; which, to my excessive mortification, I learned was at Houston, about eighty miles further up the Bay.

I apologised for my careless dress, by stating that my baggage had been unfortunately left behind at New Orleans; and that in my haste I had been obliged to come on board with actually nothing but the few dollars I had in my pocket.

"That's a misfortune easily repaired, sir," said the gauze-eyed Secretary,—"you can have your 'credit' cashed here, just as liberally as at any town in the country."

"I have no doubt of that," responded I somewhat tartly—for I did not fancy this allusion to banks and bankers—"but all my papers are in my portmanteau."

"Provoking, certainly," said he, taking a long pinch of snuff,—"ain't it, Kit?"

But Kit only scratched his nose; and looked puzzled.

"Are your bankers, Vicars and Bull, sir?"

"No," said I, "my credits are all on a northern house; but I fancy my name is tolerably well known. You've heard of the Cregans, I suppose?"

"Cregan—Cregan," repeated he a couple of times: then opening a huge ledger at the letter C, ran his eye down a long column. "Crabtree—Crossley—Croxam—Crebell—Creffet—Cregmore. It is not Cregmore, sir?"

"No, Cregan is the name."

"Ah! well, there's no Cregan. There was a Cregmore was 'lynched here, I see by the mark in the book, and we have a small trunk waiting to be claimed, belonging to him."

"That ain't the fellow as purtended to be winner of the wagon team that was lotteried here a twelvemonth since, is it?" said Kit.

"Yes, but it is, though. He made out he had the ticket all right and straight, when up comes one Colonel Jabus Harper, and showed the real thing; and the chaps took it up hotly, and they lynched Cregmore that evening."

"Yes, sir that's a fact." quoth Kit.

"What was the penalty?" asked I, with a most imposing indifference.

"They hanged him up at Hall's Court, yonder. I ain't sure if he be n't hanging there still."

"And this packet," said I—for the theme was excessively distasteful—"when does she sail?"

"She starts to-night at twelve—first cabin, two dollars; steerage, one-twenty."

"Thank you," said I, touching my hat, with the condescending air one occasionally employs to humiliate an inferior, by its mingled pride and courtesy; and I turned into the street.

"You ain't a-goin' to Hall's Court, are you?" said Kit, overtaking me.

"Of course not," responded I, indignantly. "Such sights are anything but pleasurable."

"He aint't all right, that 'un," said Gauzo-eyes, as old Kit re-entered the office, and I stepped back to listen.

"Well, I don't know," muttered the other: "I'm a-thinking it be doubtful, sir. He han't got much clink with him, that's a fact."

"I have half a mind to send Chico up in the boat to-night, just to dodge him a bit."

"Well, ye might do it," yawned the other; "but Chico is such an almighty willain that he'll make him out a rogue or a swindler, at all events."

"Chico *is* smart, *that* I do confess," said the other, with a grin.

"And he do look so uncommon like a vagabond, too, Chico; I don't like him."

"He can look like anything he pleases, Chico can. I've seen him pass for a Pawnee, and no one ever diskiver it."

"He's a rank coward, for all that," rejoined the skipper; "and he can put no disguise upon *that*."

The sound of feet, indicative of leaving, made me hasten from the spot, but in a mood far from comfortable. With the fate of my ingenious predecessor in "Hall's Court" before me, and the small possibility of escaping the shrewd investigations of "Chico," I really knew not what course to follow. The more I reflected, however, the less choice was there at my disposal; the bold line, as generally happens, being not a whit more dangerous than the timid path, since, were I to abandon my prize, and not proceed to Houston, the inevitable Chico would only be the more certain to discover me.

My mind was made up, and stepping into a shop I expended two of my four dollars in the purchase of a "revolver"—second-hand, but an excellent weapon, and true as gold. A few cents supplied me with some balls and powder; and, thus provided, I took my way towards the wharf where the steamer lay, already making some indicative signs of readiness.

I took a steerage passage; and not knowing where or how to dispose of myself in the interval before starting, I clambered into a boat on deck, and with my bundle for a pillow, fell into a pleasant doze. It was not so much sleep, as a semi-waking state, that merely dulled and dimmed impressions,—a frame of mind I have often found very favorable to thought. One is often enabled to examine a question in this wise; as they look at the sun through a smoked glass, and observe the glittering object without being blinded by its brilliancy. I suppose the time I passed in this manner was as near an approach to low spirits as I am capable of feeling; for, of regular downright depression I know as little as did Nelson of fear.

I bethought me seriously of the "scrape" in which I found myself, and reflected with considerable misgivings upon the summary principles of justice in vogue around me: and yet the knavery was not of my own seeking. Like Fallstaff's honor, it was "thrust upon me." I was innocent of all plot or device. "Le diable qui se mele en tout"—never was there a truer saying—would have it, that I should exchange coats with another, and that this confounded ticket should be the compensation for worn seams and absent buttons.

I have no doubt, thought I, but that "honesty is the best policy," pretty much upon the same principle that even a dead calm is better than a hurricane. But to him who desires "progress;" on whose heart the word "onward" is written, the calm is lethargy, while the storm may prove propitious. I then tried to persuade myself that even this adventure could not turn out ill; not that I could by any ingenuity devise how it should prove otherwise, but I knew that fortune is as skilful as she is kind, and so I left the whole charge to her.

Is it my fault, I exclaimed, that I am not rich, and well-born, and great? Show me any one who would have enjoyed such privileges more. Is it my fault that being poor, ignoble, and lowly in condition, I have tastes and aspirations at war with my situation?—these ought rather to be stimulants to exertion than caprices of Fortune. I like the theory better too; and is it not hard, to be condemn-

ed for the devices I am reduced to employ to combat such natural evils? If the prisoner severs his fetters with an old nail, it is because he does not possess the luxury of a file or a "cold chisel." As for me, the employment of small and insignificant means is highly distasteful; instead of following the lone mountain path on foot, I'd drive "life's high road," four-in-hand if I could.

The furious rush of the escape-steam, the quick coming and going of feet, the heavy banging of luggage on the deck, and all the other unmistakeable signs of approaching departure, aroused me, as I lay patiently contemplating the bustle of leave-taking, hand-shaking, and embracing, in which I had no share. A lantern at the gangway lit up each face that passed, and I strained my eyes to mark one, the only one, in whom I was interested. As I knew not whether the ingenious Chico were young or old, short, slim, fat, or six foot,—whether brown or fair, smooth faced or bearded, my observations were necessarily universal, and I was compelled to let none escape me.

At first each passenger appeared to be him, and then, after a few minutes I gave up the hope of detection. There were fellows whose exterior might mean anything—large, loose-coated figures, with leather overalls and riding-whips, many of them with pistols at their girdles, and, one or two, wearing swords, parading the deck on every side. It needed not the accompaniment of horse-gear, saddles, holsters, halters, and cavessons, to show that they belonged to a fraternity which, in every land of the old world or the new, has a prescriptive claim to knavery. Although all of them were natives of the United States, neither in their dark-brown complexions, deep moustaches and whiskers, and strange gestures, was there any trace of that land which we persist in deeming so purely Anglo-Saxon. The prairie and the hunting-ground, the life of bivouac and the habit of danger, had imparted its character to their looks; and there was besides, that air of swagger and braggadocio so essentially the type of your trafficer in horse-flesh.

If my attention had not been turned to another subject, I would willingly have studied a little the sayings and doings of this peculiar class, seeing that it might yet be my lot to form one of the "brotherhood;" but my thoughts were too deeply interested in discovering "Chico," whose presence in the same ship with me actually weighed on my mind like the terror of a phantom

"Can this be him?" was the question which arose to my heart as figure after figure passed near me where I lay; but the careless indolent look of the passenger as regularly negatived the suspicion. We were now under weigh, steaming along in still water, with all the tremendous power of our high-pressure engines, which shook the vessel as though they would rend its strong framework asunder. The night was beautifully calm and mild; and although without a moon, the sky sparkled with a thousand stars, many of which were of size and brilliancy to throw long columns of light across the bay.

The throb of the great sea-monster, as she cleared her way through the water, was the only sound heard in the stillness; for, although few had "gone below," the groups seated about the deck either smoked in silence, or talked in low, indistinct tones.

I lay gazing at the heavens, and wondering within myself which of those glittering orbs above me was gracious enough to preside over the life and adventures of Con. Cregan; "some dim, indistinct, little spangle it must be," thought I,—"some forgotten planet, of small reputation, I've no doubt it is. I shouldn't wonder if it were that little sly-looking fellow that winks at me from the edge of yonder cloud, and seems to say, 'Lie still, Con.—keep close, my lad—there's danger near.'" As I half-muttered this to myself, a dark object intervened between me and the sky, a large black disk, shutting out completely the brilliant fretwork on which I had been gazing. As I looked again, I saw it was the huge broad-brimmed hat of a Padre—one of those felted coal-skuttles, which make the most venerable faces grotesque and ridiculous.

Lying down in the bottom of the boat, I was able to take a deliberate survey of the priest's features, while he could barely detect the dark outline of *my* figure. He was thick and swarthy, with jet black eyes, and a long pointed chin. There was something Spanish in the face, and yet more of the Indian; at least, the projecting cheek bones and gaunt hollow cheeks favored that suspicion.

From the length of time he stood peering at me, I could perceive that it was not a passing impulse, but that his curiosity was considerable. This impression was scarcely conceived, ere proved; as, taking a small lantern from the binnacle, he approached the boat and held it over me. Affecting a heavy slumber, I snored loudly, and lay perfectly still, while he examined my face, bending over me as I lay, and marking each detail of my dress and appearance.

As if turning in my sleep, I contrived to alter my position in such a manner that, covering my face with my arm, I could watch the Padre.

"Came on board alone, said you?" asked he of a little dirty urchin of a cabin-boy, at his side.

"Yes, Father; about two hours before we left the harbor."

"No luggage of any kind?"

"A bundle, Father: that, under his head, and nothing more."

"Did he speak to you, or ask any questions?"

"Only at what time we should reach Houston, and if the 'White Hart' was near the Quay."

"And then he lay down in the boat here?"

"Just so! I saw no more of him after."

"That will do!" said the Padre, handing the lantern to the boy.

That will do! thought I, also. Master Chico, if you know *me*, I know *you* as well!

The game was now begun between us—at least, so I felt it. I lay watching my adversary, who slowly paced backwards and forwards, stopping now and then to peep into the boat, and doubtless conning over in his own mind his plan of attack.

We were to land some passengers, and take in some wood, at a little place called Fork Island; and here, I was half determined within myself that my voyage should end. That "Chico" had discovered me was clear; the Padre could be no other than him; and that he would inevitably hunt me down at Austin, was no less evident. Now, discovery and "Lynching" were but links of the same chain; and I had no fancy to figure as "No. 2," in Hall's Court!

The silence on the deck soon showed that most of the passengers had gone below, and, so far as I could see in the uncertain light, "Chico" with them. I arose, therefore, from my hard couch, to take a little exercise, which my cramped limbs stood in need of. A light drizzling rain had begun to fall, which made the deck slippery and uncomfortable; and so, I took my stand at the door of the cook's galley, into which two or three of the crew had sought refuge.

As the rain fell, the fog thickened; so that, standing close in to shore, the skipper slackened our speed, till at last we barely moved through the water. Not aware of the reason, I asked one of the sailors for an explanation.

"It's the dirty weather, I reckon," said he, sulky at being questioned.

"Impatient, I suppose, to get the journey over, my young friend?" said a low silky voice, which at once reminded me of that I had already heard when I lay in the boat. I turned, and it was the Padre, who, with an umbrella over him, was standing beside me.

"I'm not much of a sailor, Father!" replied I, saluting him respectfully as I spoke.

"More accustomed to the saddle than the poop-deck?" said he, smiling blandly.

I nodded assent; and he went on with some passing generalities about sea and land life—mere skirmishing, as I saw, to invite conversation.

Partly weariness, partly a sense of discomfort at the persecution of this man's presence, made me sigh heavily. I had not perceived it myself; but he remarked it immediately, and said:

"You are depressed in spirit, my son; something is weighing on your heart!"

I looked up at him; and, guided possibly by my suspicion of his real character, I saw, or thought I saw, a twinkling glitter of his dark eye, as though he was approaching the theme on which he was bent.

"Yes, Father!" replied I, with a voice of well-feigned emotion; "my heart is indeed heavy; but"—here I assumed a more daring tone—"I must not despond for all that!"

I walked away as I spoke, and retiring, sat down near the wheel, as if to meditate. I judged that the Padre would soon follow me; nor was I wrong: I was not many minutes seated, ere he was at my side.

"I see," said he, in a mild voice; "I see, from the respect of your manner, that you are one of our people—a good son of the church. What is your native country?"

"Ireland, Father!" said I, with a sigh.

"A blessed land, indeed!" said he, benignly; "happy in its peaceful inhabitants—simple-minded and industrious!"

I assented, like a good patriot, but not without misgivings that he might have been just as happy in another selection of our good gifts.

"I have known many of your countrymen,' resumed he; "and they impressed me with the same esteem. All, alike frugal, temperate, and tranquilly disposed."

"Just so, sir; and the cruelty is, nobody gives them credit for it."

"Ah, my son, there you are in error. The Old World may be, and indeed I have heard that it is, ungenerous; but its prejudices can not cross the ocean. Here, we estimate men, not by *our* prejudices, but by *their* merits. Here, we recognise the Irish as Nature has made him—docile, confiding, and single-hearted; slow to anger, and ever ready to control his passions."

"That's exactly his portrait, Father!" said I, enthusiastically. "Without a double or any kind,—a creature that does not know a wile or a stratagem!"

The Priest seemed so captivated by my patriotism and my generous warmth, that he sat down beside me, and we continued to make Ireland still our theme; each vying with the other, who could say most in praise of that country.

It was at the close of a somewhat long discquisition upon the comparative merits of Ireland and the Garden of Eden,—in which, I am bound to say, the balance inclined to the former,—that the Padre, as if struck by a sudden thought, remarked,

"You are the very first of your nation

ever met in a frame of mind disposed to melancholy! I have just been running over to myself, all the Irishmen I ever knew, and I cannot recall one that had a particle of gloom or sorrow about him."

"Nor had I, Father," said I, with emotion; "nor did I know what sorrow was, till three days back! I was light hearted and happy—the world went well with me, and I was content with the world. I will not trouble you with my story; enough when I say, that I came abroad to indulge a taste for adventure and enterprize, and that the New World has not disappointed my expectations. If I spent money a little too freely, an odd grumble or so from 'the governor' was the darkest cloud that shaded my horizon. An only son, perhaps I pushed that prerogative somewhat too far; but our estate is unencumbered, and my father's habits are the reverse of extravagant,—for a man of his class I might call them downright rustic in simplicity. Alas! why do I think of these things? I have done with them forever!"

"Nay, nay; you must not give way thus. It is very unlikely that one young as you are, can have any real guilt upon his conscience."

"Not yet, Father," said I, with a shudder,—"not yet; but who can tell how it may be with me to-morrow or next day?—what a different answer should I have to give your question, then!"

"This is some fancy—some trick of a warm and ill-regulated imagination, my son."

"It is the language my heart pours from my lips," said I, grasping his hand, as if with irrepressible emotion. "I have a heavy crime here—here!" and I struck my breast violently; "and if it be as yet unaccomplished, the shadow of the guilt is on me already."

"Sit still, my son—sit still, and listen to me," said he, restraining me, as I was about to rise; "to whom can you reveal these mysterious terrors more fittingly than to me? Be candid—tell me what weighs upon your heart. It may be that a mere word of mine can give you courage and calm."

"That cannot be," said I, firmly; "you speak in kindness, but you know not what you promise. I am under a vow, Father—I am under a vow."

"Well, my son, there are many vows meritorious. There are vows of penitence, and of chastity, and of abstinence——"

"Mine is none of these," said I, with a low guttural utterance, as if I was biting each word I spoke.

"Vows of chastisement——"

"Not that—not that either!" cried I; then, dropping my voice to a low whisper, I said, "I have sworn a solemn oath to commit a murder! I know the full guilt of what is before me—I see all the consequences, both here and hereafter; but my word is pledged—I have taken the oath with every ceremony that can give it solemnity, and—I'll go through with it!"

"There is a mystery in all this," said the Padre; "you must recount the circumstances of this singular pledge, ere I can give you either comfort or counsel."

"I look for neither—I hope for neither!" said I, wringing my hands; "but you shall hear my story—you are the last to whom I can ever reveal it! I arrived at New Orleans about a fortnight ago, on a Yacht cruise with a friend of mine, of whose name, at least, you may have heard—Sir Dudley Broughton."

"The owner of a handsome schooner, the 'Fire-fly,'" said the Padre, with an animation on the subject not quite in keeping with his costume.

"The same—you are, then, acquainted with him?"

"Oh, no; I was accidentally standing on the wharf when his Yacht came up the river at New Orleans."

"You didn't remark a young man on the poop, in a foraging cap with a gold band round it?"

"I cannot say I did."

"He carried a key-bugle in his hand."

"I did not perceive him."

"That was me; how different was I then! Well, well—I'll hasten on. We arrived at New Orleans, not quite determined whither next we should bend our steps; and hearing, by mere accident, of this Texan expedition, we took it into our heads we would join it. On inquiring about the matter, we found that a lottery was in progress, the prizes of which were various portions of equipment, horses, baggage, negroes, and so on. For this—just out of caprice—we took several tickets; but, as from one cause or other, the drawing was delayed, we lingered on, going each day to the office, and there, making acquaintance with a number of fellows interested in the expedition, but whose manner and style, I need scarcely say, were not good recommendations to intimacy. Broughton, however, always liked that kind of thing; low company with him, had always the charm of an amusement that he could resign whenever he fancied. Now, as he grew more intimate with these fellows, he obtained admission into a kind of club they held in an obscure part of the town, and thither we generally repaired every evening, when too late for any more correct society. They were all, or at least they affected to be, interested in Texan expeditions; and the conversation never took any other turn than what concerned these objects; and if at first our Old World notions were shocked at their indifference to life—the reckless disregard of honor and good faith they evinced—we came, by degrees, to feel that the

moral code of the Prairies permitted many things which were never sanctioned in more cultivated latitudes.

"Broughton entered into all this with a most extraordinary interest. Nothing seemed too wild, too abandoned, and too outrageous for his notions; and I shame to say it, he soon made me a convert to his opinions. His constant speech was 'Be as virtuous as you please, my dear fellow, among ladies and gentlemen; but, pray, fight Choctaws, Pawnees, and half-breeds with their own weapons, which are either a trick or a tomahawk.' I never liked the theory: but partly from daily iteration, partly from a yielding pliancy of disposition, and in great measure from being shamed into it, I gave way, and joined him in all the pledges he gave, to go through with anything the expedition exacted. I must be brief—that light yonder is on Fork Island, where we stop to take in wood, and ere we reach it I must make up my mind to one course or other.

"As the time for the starting of the expedition drew nigh, the various plans and schemes became the theme of nightly discussion; and we heard of nothing but guides and trails, where grass was to be found for the cattle, and where water could be had, with significant hints about certain places and people who were known, or believed to be inimical to these excursions. Thus on the map were marked certain villages which might be put under contribution, and certain log-houses which should be made to pay a heavy impost; here, it was a convent to be mulcted, and there, a store or a mill to be burned! In fact, the expedition seemed to have as many vengeances to fulfil, as hopes of gain to gratify; for each had a friend who was maltreated, or robbed, or murdered, and whose fate or fortunes required an expiation,—but I weary you, Padre, with all this?"

"Not at all, my son!—I recognize perfectly the accuracy of your account. I have heard a good deal about these people."

"There was one individual, however, so universally detested, that you would suppose he must have been a kind of devil incarnate to have incurred such general hate. Every one had a grudge against him, and in fact, there was a kind of struggle who should be alloted to wreak on him the common vengeance of the company. It was at last decided that his fate should be lotteried, and that whoever won the first prize—this mare of which you may have heard—should also win the right to finish this wretched man. I gained this infamous distinction; and here I am, on my way to claim my prize and commit a murder! Ay, I may as well employ the true word,—it is nothing less than a murder! I have not even the poor excuse of revenge. I cannot pretend that he ever injured me: nay, I have not even seen him: I never heard of his name till two days ago; nor, even now, could I succeed in finding him out if I were not provided with certain clues at Houston, and certain guides by whose aid I am to track him. My oath is pledged; I swore it solemnly, that if the lot fell upon me, I'd do the deed, and do it I will; yet, I am equally resolved never to survive it."—Here I produced my revolver.—"If this barrel be for the unlucky Chico, this other is for myself!"

"What name did you say," cried he, with a faltering voice, while his hand, as he laid it on my arm, shook like ague.

"Chico the wretch is called," I said, fixing a cap on my pistol.

"And why call him a wretch, my son? Has he ever injured you? How do you know that he is not some poor kindly-hearted creature, the father of five children, one of them a baby, perhaps? How can you tell the difficulties by which he gains his living, and the hazard to which he exposes his life in doing so? And is it to injure such a man you will go down to your own grave an assassin?"

"I'll do it," said I, doggedly—"I'll keep my oath."

"Such an oath never bound any man—it is a snare of satan."

"So it may—I'll keep it," said I; beating the deck with my foot, with the dogged determination of one not to be turned from his purpose."

"Kill in cold blood a man you never saw before?"

"Just so: I am not going to think of *him*, when I set so little store by myself: I only wish the fellow were here now, and I'd show you whether I'd falter or not."

"Poor Chico—I could weep for him!" said he, blubberingly.

"Keep your pity for *me*," said I: "*I*, that am bound by this terrible oath, and must either stamp myself a coward or a murderer. As for Chico, I believe a more worthless wretch never existed—a poor mean-spirited creature, whose trade is to be a spy, and by whose cursed machinations many a fine fellow has been ruined."

"You are all wrong, sir," said the Padre, warmly, "I know the man myself; he is an amiable, kind-hearted being, that never harmed any one."

"He's the fellow to die then!" said I roughly.

"He has a small family, unprovided for."

"They have the inheritance of his virtues," said I, scoffingly.

"Can you have the heart for such cruelty?" cried he, almost sobbing.

"Come with me when I land at Houston, and see—that's all!" said I. "A few minutes back, I was hesitating whether I would not land at this island, and abandon my purpose,

The weakness is now over: I feel a kind of fiendish spirit growing up within me already; I cannot think of the fellow without a sense of loathing and hatred!"

"Lie down, my son, and compose yourself for an hour or two; sleep and rest will calm your agitated brain, and you will then listen to my counsels with profit: your present excitement overmasters your reason, and my words would be of no effect."

"I know it—I feel it here, across my temples—that it is a kind of paroxysm; but I never close my eyes that I do not fancy I see the fellow, now in one shape, now in another, for he can assume a thousand disguises; while in my ears his accursed name is always ringing."

"I pity you from my heart!" said the other; "and certainly a sadder expression I never saw in any human face before. But go down below,—go down, I beseech you."

"I have only taken a deck-passage," said I, doggedly; "I determined that I would see no one—speak to no one."

"Nor need you, my son," said he, coaxingly. "They are all sound asleep in the after-cabin—take *my* berth—I do not want it—I am always better upon deck."

"If you will have it so," said I, yielding; "but, for your life, not a word of what I have said to you! Do not deceive yourself by any false idea of humanity. Were you to shoot me where I stand, you could not save *him*—*his* doom is spoken. If *I* fail, there is Broughton, and after him, a score of others, sworn to do the work."

"Lie down and calm yourself," said he, leading me to the companion-ladder; "we must speak of this to-morrow."

I squeezed his hand, and slowly descended to the cabin. At first the thought occurred to me that he might give the alarm and have me seized; but then, this would expose him so palpably to my recognition, should I chance to escape, it was unlikely he would do so: the stillness on deck showed me I was correct in this latter estimate, and so, I turned into his comfortable berth; and while I drew the counterpane over me, thought I had made a capital exchange for the hard ribs of the "long-boat."

If my stratagem had succeeded in impressing my friend Chico with a most lively fear, it did not leave my own mind at perfect tranquillity. I knew that he must be a fellow of infinite resources, and that the game between us, in all likelihood, had but commenced. In circumstances of difficulty, I have constantly made a practice of changing places with my antagonist, fancying myself in *his* position, and asking myself how I should act? This taking the "adversary's hand" is admirable practice in the game of life; it suggests an immense range of combinations, and improves one's play prodigiously.

I now began to myself a little exercise after this fashion—but what between previous fatigue, the warmth of the cabin, and the luxury of a real bed, Chico and I had changed places so often, in my brain, that confusion ensued; then, came weariness, and, at last, sound sleep! so sound, that I was only awoke by the steward, as he popped his greasy head into the berth, and said, "I say, master, here we are, standing close in—hadn't you better get up?"

I did as he advised; and as I rubbed the sleep from my eyes, said, "Where's the Padre, steward?—what's become of him?"

"He was took ill last night, and stopped at Fork Island—he'll go back with us to-morrow to Galveston."

"You know him, I suppose?" said I, looking at the fellow with a shrewd intelligence that he knew how to construe.

"Well," cried he, scratching his head; "well, mayhap I do guess a bit who he is."

"So do I, steward; and when we meet again he'll know *me*," said I, with a look of such imposing sternness that I saw the fellow was recording it. "You may tell him so, steward. I'll wait for him here till I catch him; and if he escape both myself and my friend Broughton—Broughton, don't forget the name—he is deeper than I give him credit for."

As I was about to leave the cabin, I caught sight of the corner of a red handkerchief peeping out beneath the pillow of the berth,—I drew it forth, and found it was Chico's travelling kit, which he preferred abandoning to the risk of again meeting me. It contained a small black skull-cap, such as priests wear, a Romish missal, a string of beads, with a few common articles of dress, and eight dollars in silver.

"The spoils of victory," quoth I, embodying the whole in my own bundle—"the enemy's baggage captured."

"Which is the White Hart?" said I, as I came on deck; now crowded with shore folk, porters, and waiters.

"This way, sir,—follow me," said a smart fellow in a waiter's dress; and I handed him my bundle and stepped on shore.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOG-HUT AT BRAZOS.

I was all impatience to see my prize; and scarcely had I entered the inn than I passed out into the stable-yard, now crowded with many of those equestrian-looking figures I had seen on board the steamer.

"Butcher's mare here still, Georgie?" said a huge fellow, with high boots of red brown leather, and a sheep-skin capote, belted round him with a red sash.

"Yes, Master Seth, there she stands. You'll be getting a bargain of her, one of these days."

"If I had her up at Austin next week for the fair, she'd bring a few hundred dollars."

"You'd never think of selling a beast like that at Austin, Seth?" said a bystander.

"Why not? Do you fancy I'll bring her into the States, and see her claimed in every town of the Union? Why, man, she's been stolen once a month, that mare has, since she was a two-year old. I knew an old General up in the Maine frontier had her last year; and he rid her away from a 'stump meeting' in Vermont, in change of his own mule—blind—and never know'd the differ till he was nigh home. I sold her twice myself, in one week. Scott, of Muckleburg, stained her off fore leg white—and sold her back, as a new one, to the fellow, who returned her for lameness; and she can pretend lameness—she can."

A roar of very unbelieving laughter followed this sally; but Seth resumed—

"Well, I'll lay fifty dollars with any gentleman here, that she comes out of the stable dead lame, or all sound, just as I bid her."

Nobody seemed to fancy this wager; and Seth, satisfied with having established his veracity, went on—

"You've but to touch the coronet of the off-foot with the point of your bowie—a mere touch, not draw blood—and see if she won't come out, limping on the toe, all as one as a dead break-down in the coffin-joint: rub her a bit then with your hand—she's all right again! It was Wrecksley, of Ohio, taught her the trick; he used to lame her that way, and buy her in, wherever he found her."

"Who's won her this time?" cried another.

"I have, gentlemen," said I, slapping my boot with my cane, and affecting a very knowing air, as I spoke. The company turned round and surveyed me some seconds in deep silence.

"You an't a-goin' to ride her, young 'un?" said one, half contemptuously.

"No, he an't: the gent's willin' to sell her," chimed in another.

"He's goin' to ax me three hundred dollars," said a third, "an' I an't a-goin to gi' him no more than two hundred."

"You are all wrong, every man of you," said Seth. "He's bringing her to England, a present for the Queen, for her own ridin'."

"And I beg to say, gentlemen, that none of you have hit upon the right track yet; nor do I think it necessary to correct you more fully. But, as you appear to take an interest in my concerns, I may mention that I shall want a hack for my servant's riding—a short-legged square-jointed thing, clever to go, and a good feeder, not much above fourteen hands in height, or four hundred dollars in price. If you chance upon this——"

"I know your mark."

"My roan, with the wall-eye. You don't mind a wall-eye?"

"No, no! my black pony mare's the thing the gent's a-lookin' for."

"I say it's nothing like it," broke in Seth. "He's a-wantin' a half-bred mustang, with a down-east cross—a critter to go through fire and water—liftin' the fore-legs like a high-pressure piston, and with a jerk of the 'stifle,' like the recoil of a brass eight-pounder. An't I near the mark?"

"Not very wide of it," said I, nodding encouragingly.

"She's at Austin now. You an't a-goin' there?"

"Yes," said I; "I shall be in Austin next week."

"Well, never you make a deal, till you see my black pony," cried one.

"Nor the roan cob," shouted another.

"He'd better see 'em 'fore he sees Split-the-wind, then, or he'd not look at 'em arter," said Seth. "You've only to ask for Seth Chiseller, and they'll look me up."

"You an't a-goin' to let us see Butcher's mare afore we go?" said one to the ostler.

"I an't, because I havn't got the key. She's a doub'e-locked, and the Cap'en never gives it to no one, but comes a feedin' time himself, to give her corn."

After a few muttered remarks on this caution, the horse-dealers sauntered out of the yard, leaving me musing over what I had heard, and wondering if this excessive care of the landlord boded any suspicion regarding the winner of the prize.

"Jist draw that bolt across the gate, there, will ye," said the ostler, while he produced a huge key from his pocket. "I know 'em well, them gents. A man must have fourteen eyes in his head, and have 'em back and front too, that shows 'em a horse beast! Darn me coarse! if they can't gi' 'um a blood spavin in a squirt of tobacco! Let's see your ticket, young master, and I'll show you Charcoal—that's her name."

"Here it is," said I, "signed by the agent at Galveston, all right and regular."

"The Cap'en must see to that. I only want to know that ye have the number. Yes that's it: now stand a bit on one side. Ye'l see her when she comes out."

He entered the stable as he spoke, and soon re-appeared, leading a tall mare, fully sixteen hands high, and black as jet; a single white star on her forehead, and a dash of white across the tail, being the only marks on her. She was bursting with condition, and both in symmetry and action a splendid creature.

"An't she a streak of lightnin', and no mistake?" said he, gazing on her with rapture. "An't she glibber to move nor a wag of a comet's tail, when he's taking a lark round the moon? There's hocks! there's pasterns! Show me a gal with ankle's like 'em, and look at her, here! An't she a-made for sittin' on?"

I entered into all his raptures. She was faultless in every point—save, perhaps, that in looking at you she would throw her eye backwards, and show a little bit too much of the white. I remarked this to the ostler.

"The only fault she has," said he, shaking his head, "she mistrusts a body, always, and so she's eternally a lookin' back, and a gatherin' up her quarters, and a holdin' of her tail tight in; but for that, she's a downright reg'lar beauty, and for stride and bottom, there ain't her equal nowhere."

"Her late master was unlucky, I've heard," said I, insinuatingly.

"He was so far unlucky that he couldn't sit his beast over a torrent and a down leap. He would hold her in, and she won't bear it, at a spring, and so, she flung him before she took the leap, and when *she* lit t'other side, with her head high, and her hind legs under her, *he* was a sittin' with his'n under his arm, and his neck bruck,—that was the way o' it. See now, master, if ever ye do want a great streak out of her, leave the head free a bit, press her wi' your calves, and give a right down reg'lar halloo—ha! like a Mexican chap—then, she'll do it!"

The ostler found me a willing listener, either when dwelling on the animal's perfections, or suggesting hints for her future management; and, when at last both these themes were tolerably exhausted, he proceeded to show me the horse-gear of saddle, and bridle, and halter, and holsters, all handsomely finished in Mexican taste, and studded with brass nails in various gay devices. At last, he produced the rifle,—a regular Kentucky one, of Colt's making; and what he considered a still greater prize, a bell-mouthed thing, half horse-pistol, half blunderbus, which he called "a almighty fine 'Harper's Ferry tool,' that would throw thirty bullets through an oak panel two inches thick."

It was evident that he looked upon the whole equipment as worthy of the most exalted possession, and he gazed on me as one whose lot was indeed to be envied.

"Seth and the others leave this to-morrow a'ternoon," said he, "but if ye be a-goin' to Austin, where the 'Spedeshin' puts up, take my advice, and get away before 'em. You've a fine road—no trouble to find the way; your beast will carry you forty, fifty, if you want it, sixty miles between sunrise and 'down;' and you'll be snug over the journey before they reach Killian's Mill—the half-way. An' if ye want to know why I say so, it's just because that's too good a beast to tempt a tramper wi',—and them's all trampers!"

I gave the ostler a dollar for all his information and civility, and re-entered the inn to have my supper. The Cap'en had already returned home, and after verifying my ticket, took my receipt for the mare, which I gave in all form, writing my name "Con. Cregan," as though it were to a cheque for a thousand pounds.

I supped comfortably, and then walked out to the stable to see Charcoal. "Get her corn; you'll see if she don't eat it in less than winkin'," said the ostler,—"and if she wor my beast, she'd never taste another feed, till she had her nose in the manger at Croft's Gulley."

"And where is Croft's Gulley?"

"It's the bottoms after you pass the larch wood; the road dips a bit, and is heavy there, and it's a good baitin' place—just eighteen mile from here."

"On the road to Austin?"

He nodded. "Ye see," he said, "the moon's a risin'—there's no one out this time. Ye know what I said afore."

"Ill take the advice, then. Get the traps ready; I'll pack the saddle bags, and set out."

If any one had asked me, "why I was in such haste to reach Austin?" my answer would have been, to join the Expedition; and if interrogated, "with what object then?" I should have been utterly dumbfoundered. Little as I knew of its intentions, they must all have been above the range of my ability and means to participate in. True, I had a horse and a rifle; but there was the end of my worldly possessions, not to say that my title, even to these, admitted of litigation. A kind of vague notion possessed me, that once up with the Expedition, I should find my place 'somewhere'—a very Irish idea of a responsible situation. I trusted to the "making myself generally useful" category for employment, and, to a ready-wittedness never cramped nor restrained by the petty prejudices of a conscience.

The love of enterprise and adventure is conspicuous among the springs of action in Irish life, occasionally developing a Wellesley or a Captain Rock. Peninsular glories and predial outrage have just the same one origin—a love of distinction, and a craving desire for the enjoyment of that most fascinating of all excitements,—whatever perils life.

Without this element, pleasure soon palls; without the cracked skulls and fractured "femurs," fox-hunting would be mere galloping—a review might vie with a battle, if they fired blank cartridge in both! Who'd climb the Peter Bot, or cross the "petit mulets" of Mont Blanc, if it were not that a false step, or a totter, would send him down a thousand fathoms into the deep gorge below! This playing hide and seek with Death, seems to

have a great charm, and, is very possibly the attraction some folk feel in playing invalid, and passing their lives amid black draughts and blue lotions!

I shrewdly suspect this luxury of tempting peril distinguishes man from the whole of the other animal creation; and if we were to examine it a little, we should see that it opens the way to many of his highest aspirings and most noble enterprises. Now, let not the gentle reader ask, "Does Mr. Cregan include horse-stealing in the list of these heroic darings?" Believe me, he does not; he rather regarded the act of appropriation in the present case, in the light some noble lords did when voting away church property—"a hard necessity, but preferable to being mulct ones-self!" With many a thought like this, I rode out into the now silent town, and took my way towards Austin.

It is a strange thing to find ones-self in a foreign land, thousands of miles from home, alone, and at night! the sense of isolation is almost overwhelming. So long as daylight lasts, the stir of the busy world, and the business of life, ward off these thoughts—the novelty of the scene even combats them: but, when night has closed in, and we see above us the stars that we have known in other lands, the self-same moon by whose light we wandered years ago, and then look around and mark the features of a new world, with objects which tell of another hemisphere; and then, think that we are there, alone, without tie or link to all around us, the sensation is thrilling in its intensity.

Every one of us—the least imaginative even—will associate the strangeness of a foreign scene with something of that adventure of which he has read in his childhood; and we people vacancy, as we go, with images to suit the spot in our own country. The little pathway along the river side suggests the lover's walk at sunset, as surely as the dark grove speaks of a woodman's hut, or a gipsy camp. But abroad, the scene evokes different dwellers; the Sierra suggests the brigand; the thick jungles the jaguar or the rattlesnake; the heavy plash in the muddy river is the sound of the cayman; and the dull roar, like wind within a cavern, is the cry of the hungry lion. The presence around us of objects of which we have read long ago, but never expected to see, is highly exciting; it is like taking our place among the characters of a story, and investing us with an interest to ourselves, as the hero of some unwrought history.

This is the most fascinating of all castle-building, since we have a spot for an edifice—a territory actually given to us.

I thought long upon this theme, and wondered to what I was yet destined,—whether to some condition of real eminence, or to move on among that vulgar herd who are the spectators of life, but never its conspicuous actors. I really believe this ignoble course was more distasteful to me from its flatness and insipidity, than from its mere humility. It seemed so devoid of all interest—so tame and so monotonous—I would have chosen peril and vicissitude any day in preference. About midnight I reached Croft's Gulley, where, after knocking for some time, a very sulky old negro admitted me into a stable while I baited my mare. The house was shut up for the night, and even had I sought refreshment I could not have obtained it.

After a brief halt, I again resumed the road, which led through a close pine forest, and, however much praised, was anything but a good surface to travel on. "Charcoal," however, made light of such difficulties, and picked her steps over holes and stumps with the caution of a trapper, detecting with a rare instinct the safe ground, and never venturing on spots where any difficulty or danger existed. I left her to herself, and it was curious to see that whenever a short interval of better footway intervened, she would, as if to "make play," as the jockeys call it, strike out in a long swinging canter, "pulling up" to the walk the moment the uneven surface admonished her to caution.

As day broke the road improved, so that I was able to push along at a better pace, and by breakfast time, I found myself at a low, poor-looking log-house, called "Brazos." A picture, representing Texas as a young child receiving some admirable counsel from a very matronly lady with thirteeen stars on her petticoat, flaunted over the door, with the motto, "Filial Affection, and Candy Flip at all hours."

A large, dull-eyed man, in a flannel pea-jacket and loose trowsers to match, was seated in a rocking-chair at the door, smoking an enormous cigar, a little charmed circle of expectoration seeming to defend him from the assaults of the vulgar. A huge can of cider stood beside him, and a piece of Indian corn bread. He eyed me with the coolest unconcern as I dismounted, nor did he show the slightest sign of welcome.

"This is an inn, I believe, friend?" said I, saluting him.

"I take it to be a hotel," said he, in a voice very like a yawn.

"And the landlord—where is he?"

"Where he ought to be—at his own door, a-smokin' his own rearin'."

"Is there an ostler to be found? I want to refresh my horse, and get some breakfast for myself too."

"There an't none."

"No help?"

"Never was."

"That's singular, I fancy."

"No it an't."

"Why, what do travellers do with their cattle, then?"

"There bean't none."

"No cattle?"

"No travellers."

"No travellers! and this the high road between two considerable towns!"

"It an't!"

"Why, surely this is the road to Austin?"

"It an't."

"Then this is not Brazos?"

"It be Upper Brazos."

"There are two of them, then; and the other, I suppose, is on the Austin road?"

He nodded.

"What a piece of business!" sighed I; "and how far have I come astray?"

"A good bit."

"A mile or two?"

"Twenty."

"Will you be kind enough to be a little more communicative, and just say where this road leads to; if I can join the Austin road without turning back again; and where?"

Had I propounded any one of these queries, it is just possible I might have had an answer; but, in my zeal, I outwitted myself. I drew my cheque for too large an amount, and consequently was refused payment altogether.

"Well," said I, after a long and vain wait for an answer, "what am I to do with my horse? There is a stable, I hope?"

"There an't," said he, with a grunt.

"So that I can't bait my beast?"

"No!"

"Bad enough! can I have something to eat myself? a cup of coffee——"

A rude burst of laughter stopped me, and the flannel man actually shook with the drollery of his own thoughts. "It bean't Astor House, I reckon!" said he, wiping his eyes.

"Not very like it, certainly," said I smiling.

"What o' that? Who says it ought to be like it?" said he; and his fishy eyes flared up, and his yellow cheeks grew orange with anger. "I an't very like old Hickory I s'pose! and maybe I don't want to be! I 'm a free Texan! I an't a nigger nor a blue-nose! I an't one of your Old Country slaves, that black King George's boots, and ask leave to pay his taxes! I an't!"

"And I," said I, assuming an imitation of his tone, for experiment's sake; "I am no lazy, rocking-chair, whittling, tobacco chewing Texan; but a traveller, able and willing to pay for his accommodation, and who will have it too!"

"Will ye? Will ye, then?" cried he, springing up with an agility I could not have believed possible; while rushing into the hut, he reappeared with a long Kentucky rifle, and a bayonet a-top of it. "Ye han't long to seek your man, if ye want a flash of powder! Come out into the bush and 'see it out,' I say!"

The tone of this challenge was too insulting not to call for at least the semblance of acceptance, and so, fastening my mare to a huge staple beside the door, I unslung my rifle, and cried, "Come along, my friend, I'm quite ready for you!"

Nothing daunted at my apparent willingness, he threw back the hammer of his lock, and said, "Hark ye, young un'! You can't give me a cap or two? mine are *con*siderable rusty!"

The request was rather singular, but its oddity was its success; and so, opening a small case in the stock of my rifle, I gave him some.

"Ah, them's the real chaps—the true 'tin jackets,' as we used to say at St. Louis!" cried he, his tongue seeming wonderfully loosened by the theme. "Now, lad, let's see if one of your bullets fit this bore; she's a heavy one, and carries twenty to the pound; and I've nothing in her now but some loose chips of iron for the bears."

Loose chips of iron for the bears! thought I; did ever mortal hear such a barbarian! "You don't fancy, friend, I came here to supply you with lead and powder, to be used upon myself, too! I supposed when you asked me to come out into the bush, that you had everything a gentleman ought to have for such a purpose."

"Well, I never seed the like of that!" exclaimed he, striking the ground with the butt end of his piece. "If we don't stand at four guns' length ——"

"We'll do no such thing, friend!" said I, shouldering my piece, and advancing toward him. "I never meant to offend *you;* nor have you any object in wounding, mayhap killing, *me.* Let me have something to eat; I'll pay for it freely, and go my ways."

"What on airth is it, eh?" said he, looking puzzled. "Why, that's one of Colt's rifles! you'd have picked me down at two hundred yards, sure as my name is Gabriel!"

"I know it!" said I, coolly; "and how much the better or the happier should I have been, had I done so?" I watched the fellow's pasty countenance, as though I could read what passed in the muddy bottom of his mind.

"If it were not for something of this kind," added I, sorrowfully, "I should not be here to day. You know New Orleans?"—he nodded—"well, perhaps you know Ebenezer York?"

"The senator?"

"The same!"—I made the pantomime of presenting a pistol, and then of a man of feeling—"just so. His brothers have taken up the pursuit, and so I came down into this quarter till the smoke cleared off!"

"He was a plumper at a hundred and

twenty yards. I seen him double up Gideon Mills of Ohio."

"Ah! I could recount many a thing of the kind to you!" said I, leading the way toward the hut; "but my throat is so dry, and I feel so confoundedly weary, just now ——"

"That's cider," said he, pointing to the crock.

I didn't wait for a more formal invitation, but carried it to my lips, and so held it, for full a couple of minutes.

"Ye *wor* droughty,—that's a fact!" said he, peering into the low-watermark of the vessel.

"You haven't got any more bread?" said I, appropriating his own.

"If I hadn't, ye'd not have got that so easy, lad!" said he, with a grin.

"And now for my mare; you see she's a good one ——"

"Good as if she belonged to a richer master!" said he, with a peculiar leer of the eye. "I know her well! Knowed her a foal! Ah, Charry, Miss! do you forget the way to take off your saddle with your teeth?' And he patted the creature with a nearer approach to kindness than I believed he was capable of.

I will not dwell upon the little arts I employed to conciliate my friend Gabriel, nor stop to say how I managed to procure some Indian corn-meal for my horse, and the addition of a very tough piece of dried beef to my meagre breakfast. I conclude the reader will be as eager to escape from his society as I was myself; nor had I ever thrown him into such unprofitable acquaintanceship, were there other means of explaining how first I wandered from the right path, and by what persuasions I was influenced in not returning to it.

If Gabriel's history was not very entertaining, it was at least short, so far as its catastrophe went. He was a Kentucky "bounty man," who had taken into his head to fight a duel with a companion with whom he was returning from New York. He killed his antagonist,—buried him,—and was wending his way homeward, with the watch and other property of the deceased, to restore to his friends, when he was arrested at Little Rock, and conveyed to jail. He was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death, but made his escape the night before the execution was to have taken place. His adventures from the Arkansas river, till the time he found himself in Texas, were exciting in a high degree, and, even with his own telling, not devoid of deep interest. Since his location in the One-star Republic, he had tried various things, but all had failed with him. His family, who followed him, died off by the dreadful intermittents of the Bush, leaving him alone, to doze through the remainder of existence between the half consciousness of his fall, and the stupid insensibility of debauch. There was but one theme could stir the dark embers of his nature; and when he had quitted *that*, the interest of life seemed to have passed away, and he relapsed into his dreamy indifference to both present and future.

How he contrived to eke out subsistence, was difficult to conceive. To the tavern, he had been almost the only customer, and in succession consumed the little stores his poor wife had managed to accumulate. He appeared to feel a kind of semi-consciousness, that if "bears did not fall in his way," during the winter, it might go hard with him; and he pointed to four mounds of earth beside the log-hut, and said that "the biggest would soon be along-side of 'em."

As the heat of mid-day was too great to proceed in, I learned from him thus much of his own story, and some particulars of the road to Bexar, whither I had now resolved on proceeding, since, according to his opinion, that afforded me a far better chance of coming up with the expedition than by following their steps to Austin.

"Had you come a few hours earlier to-day," said he, "you could have joined company with a Friar who is travelling to Bexar; but you'll easily overtake him, as he travels with a little wagon and a sick woman. They are making a pilgrimage to the saints there for her health. They have two lazy mules, and a half-breed driver, that won't work miracles on the roads, whatever the Virgin may after! You'll soon come up with them, if Charry's like what she used to be."

This intelligence was far from displeasing me. I longed for some companionship; and that of a Friar, if not very promising as to amusement, had at least the merit of safety, —no small charm in such a land as I then sojourned in. I learned, beside, that he was an Irishman, who had come out as a missionary among the Choctaws, and that he was well versed in prairie life,—that he spoke many of the Indian dialects, and knew the various trails of these trackless wilds, like any trapper of them all.

Such a fellow-traveller would be indeed a prize; and as I saddled my mare to follow him, I felt lighter at heart than I had for a long time previous. "And his name?' said I.

"It is half Mexican by this: they call him Fra Miguel up at Bexar."

"Now, then, for Fra Miguel!" cried I, springing into my saddle; and with a frank "Good-by," took the road to Bexar.

I rode along with a light heart, my way leading through a forest of tall beech and alder trees, whose stems were encircled by the twining tendrils of the "liana," which oftentimes spanned the space overhead, and tempered the noon-day sun by its delicious shade. Birds of gay plumage and strange note hopped from branch to branch, while hares and rab-

bits sat boldly on the grassy road, and scarcely cared to move at my approach. The crimson-winged bustard—the swallow-tailed woodpecker, with his snowy breast—and that most beautiful of all, the lazuli finch, whose color would shame the blue waters of the Adriatic, chirped and fluttered on every side—the wild squirrel, too, swung by his tail, and jerked himself from bough to bough, in all the confidence of unmolested liberty—while even the deer, timid without danger, stood and gazed at me as I went; doubtless congratulating themselves that they were not born to be beasts of burden.

There was so much of novelty to me in all around, that the monotonous character of the scene never wearied: for, although, as far as human companionship was concerned, nothing could be more utterly solitary and desolate; yet the abundance of animal life, the bright tints of plumage, and the strange concert of sound, afforded an unceasing interest.

Occasionally I came upon the charred fragments of fire-wood, with other signs indicative of a bivouac, showing where some hunting party had halted; but these, with a chance wheel-track, were all the evidence that travellers had ever passed that way. The instincts of the human heart are, after all, linked to companionship, and although it was but a few hours since I had parted with "mine host" of Brazos, I began to conceive a most anxious desire for the society of a fellow-traveller. I had pushed "Charcoal" for some time, in the hope of overtaking the Friar, but not only without success, but even without coming upon any recent tracks that should show where the party passed. I could not have mistaken the road, since there was but one through the forest, and at last I became uneasy lest I should not reach some place of shelter for the night, and obtain refreshment for myself and my horse. From the time that these thoughts crossed my mind, all relish for the scene and its strange associations departed. A scarlet jay might have perched upon my saddle-bow unmolested—a "whip-poor-will" might have chanted her note from my hat or my holsters unminded—the antlered stags did indeed gaze at me as they went, without my once remembering that I was the owner of one of "Colt's" "sharp bores," so intent had I grown upon the topic of personal safety. What, if I had gone astray? What, if I fell in with the Choctaws, who often came within a few miles of Austin? What, if Charcoal fell lame or even tired? What, if——but why enumerate all the suspicions that when chased away on one side, invariably came back on the other? There was not an incident, from a sprained ankle to actual starvation, that I did not rehearse; and, like that respected authority who spent his days speculating what he should do "if he met a white bear," I threw myself into so many critical situations and embarrassing conjectures, that my head ached with overtaxed ingenuity to escape from them.

Æsop's fables have much to answer for. The attributing the gift of speech to animals, by way of characterizing their generic qualities, takes a wondrous hold upon the mind; and as for me, I held "imaginary conversations" with everything that flew or bounded past. From the green lizard that scaled the shining cork-trees, to the lazy toad that flopped heavily into the water, I had a word for all—ay, and thought they answered me too.

Some, I fancied, chirped pleasantly and merrily, as though to say, "Go it, Con., my hearty—Charry has stride and wind for many a mile yet." Some, with a wild scream, would seem to utter a cry of surprise at the pace, as if saying, "Ruffle my feathers, if Con.'s not in a hurry." An old owl, with a horse-shoe wig, looked shocked at my impetuosity, and shook his wise head in grave rebuke; while a fat asthmatic frog nearly choked with emotion as I hurled the small pebbles into his bath of duck-weed. How strange would life be, reduced to such companionship, thought I: would one gradually sink down to the level of this animal existence, such as it appears now, or would one elevate the inferior animal to some equality of intelligence?

The solitude which a short time previous had suggested—I know not how many!—bright imaginings, presented, now, the one sad unvarying reflection—desolation; and it had almost become a doubtful point, whether I should not at once turn my horse's head and make for Upper Brazos and its gruff host of the log-house, rather than brave a night "al fresco" in the forest. It was just at the moment that this question became mooted in my mind, that I perceived the faint track of a wheel on the short grass of the pathway. I dismounted and examined it closely, and soon discovered its counterpart on the other side of the road, and with a little further search I could detect the foot-marks of two horses evidently unshod.

Inspired with fresh courage by these signs, I spurred Charry to a sharper stride, and for above two hours rode on, each turning of the road suggesting the hope of coming up with the Friar, who evidently journeyed at a brisker pace than I had anticipated. The sailor's adage says "that a stern chase is a long chase," and so it is, whether it be on land or sea—whether the pursuit be to overtake a flying Frenchman or Fortune!

The sun had sunk beneath the tops of the tall trees, and only streamed through, in chance lines of light, upon the road, when suddenly I found myself upon the verge of an abrupt descent, at the bottom of which ran a narrow but rapid river. These great fissures,

by which the mountain streams descend to join the larger rivers, are very common in Texas and throughout the region which borders on the Rocky Mountains, and form one of the greatest impediments to travelling in these tracts.

As I gazed upon the steep descent, to have scrambled down which, even on foot, would have been dangerous enough, I remembered that I had passed, about half an hour before, a spot where the road "forked" off into two separate directions, and at once resumed my march to this place, where I had the satisfaction of perceiving that the grass was yet rising under the recent passage of a wagon. A short and sharp canter down a gentle slope brought me once more in sight of the stream, and, of what was far nearer to my hopes, the long-looked for party with the Friar.

The scene I now beheld was sufficiently striking for a picture. About fifty feet beneath where I stood, and on the bank of a boiling, foaming torrent, was a wagon, drawn by two large horses: a covering of canvass formed an awning over head, and curtains of the same materials closed the sides. A large powerful-looking Mexican stood beating the stream with a great pole, while the Friar, with his robes tucked up so as to display a pair of enormous naked legs, assisted in this singular act of flagellation, from time to time addressing a hasty prayer to a small image, which I perceived he had hung up against the canvass covering. The noise of the rushing water, and the crashing sounds of the sticks, prevented my hearing the voices, which were most volubly exerted all the while, and which, by accustoming myself to the din, I at last perceived were used in exhorting the horses to courage. The animals, however, gave no token of returning confidence, nor showed the slightest inclination to advance. On the contrary, whenever led forward a pace or two, they invariably sprang back with a bound that threatened to smash their tackle, or upset the wagon; nor was it without much caressing and encouragement that they would stand quiet again. Meanwhile the Friar's exertions were redoubled at every moment, and both his prayers and his thrashings became more animated. Indeed, it was curious to watch with what agility his bulky figure alternated from the work of beating the water to gesticulating before "the Virgin." Now, as I looked, a small corner of the canvass-curtain was moved aside, and a hand appeared, which even without the large straw fan it carried, might have been pronounced a female one. This, however, was speedily withdrawn on some observation from the Friar, and the curtain was closed rigidly as before.

All my conjectures as to this singular proceeding being in vain, I resolved to join the party, towards whom I perceived the road led by a slightly circuitous descent.

Cautiously wending my way down this slope, which grew steeper as I advanced, I had scarcely reached the river side, when I was perceived by the party. Both the Friar and his follower ceased their performance on the instant, and cast their eyes upwards to the road with a glance that showed they were on "the look out" for others. They even changed their position to have a better view of the path, and seemed as if unable to persuade themselves that I could be alone. To my salutation, which I made by courteously removing my hat and bowing low, they offered no return, and looked—as I really believe they were—far too much surprised at my sudden appearance to afford me any signs of welcome. As I came nearer, I could see that the Friar made the circuit of the wagon, and, as if casually, examined the curtains, and then, satisfied "that all was right," took his station by the head of his beasts, and waited for my approach.

"Good day, Señhor Caballero," said the Friar in Spanish, while the Mexican looked at the lock of his long-barrelled rifle, and retired a couple of paces, with a gesture of guarded caution.

"Good evening, rather, Father," said I, in English. "I have ridden hard to come up with you for the last twenty miles."

"From the States?" said the Friar, approaching me, but with no peculiar evidences of pleasure at hearing his native language.

"From your own country, Fra Miguel," said I, boldly; "an Irishman."

"And how are you travelling here?" said he, still preserving his previous air of caution and reserve.

"A mistake of the road," said I, confidently; for already I had invented my last biographical sketch. "I was on the way to Austin, whither I had despatched my servants and baggage, when, accidentally taking the turn to the Upper Brazos instead of the lower one, I found myself some twenty miles off my track before I knew it. I should have turned back when I discovered my error, but that I heard that a Friar—a countryman too, had just set out towards Bexar. This intelligence at once determined me to continue my way, which I rejoice to find has been so far successful."

To judge from the "Padre's" face, the pleasure did not appear reciprocal. He looked at me and the wagon alternately, and then he cast his eyes towards the Mexican, who, understanding nothing of English, was evidently holding himself ready for any measures of a hostile character.

"Going to Austin!" at last said the Friar "You are a merchant, then?"

"No," said I, smiling superciliously; "I am a mere traveller for pleasure, my object being to make a tour of the Prairies, and by some of the Mexican cities, before my return to Europe."

"Heaven guide and protect you," said he, fervently, with a wave of his hand like leave-taking. "This is not a land to wander in after night-fall. You are well mounted, and a good rider; push on then, my son, and you'll reach Bexar before the moon sets."

"If that be your road, Father," said I, "as speed is no object with me, I'd rather join company with you than proceed alone."

"Ahem!" said he, looking confused; "I am going to Bexar, it is true, Señhor! but my journey is of the slowest: the wagon is heavy, and a sick companion whom it contains cannot travel fast. Go then, 'con Dios! and we may meet again at our journey's end."

"My mare has got quite enough of it!" said I; my desire to remain with him being trebled by his exertions to get rid of me. "When I overtook you, I was determining to dismount and spare my beast; so that *your* pace will not in the least inconvenience me."

The Padre, instead of replying to me, addressed some words to the Mexican in Spanish, which, whatever they were, the other only answered by a sharp slap of his palm on the stock of his rifle, and a very significant glance at his girdle, where a large bowie knife glittered in all the freedom of its unsheathed splendor. As if not noticing this pantomime, I drew forth my "Harper's Ferry" pistol from the holster, and examined the priming. A little bit of display, I had the satisfaction to perceive, was not thrown away on either the Friar or the layman. At a word from the former, however, the latter began once again his operations with the pole; the Friar resuming his place beside the cattle, as if totally forgetful of my presence there.

"May I ask the object of this proceeding, Father," said I, "which, unless it be a devotional exercise, is perfectly unaccountable to me."

The Padre looked at me without speaking; but the sly drollery of his eye showed that he would have had no objection to bandy a jest with me, were the time and place more fitting. "I perceive," said he, at length, "that you have not journeyed in this land, or you would have known that at this season the streams abound with caymans and alligators, and that when the cattle have been once attacked by them, they have no courage to cross a river after. Their instinct, however, teaches them that beating the waters ensures safety, and many a Mexican horse will not go knee deep without this ceremony being performed."

"I see that your cattle are unusually tired in the present case," said I, "for you have been nigh half an hour here to my own knowledge."

"Look at that black mare's fore leg, and you'll see why," said he, pointing to a deep gash which laid bare the white tendons for some inches in length, while a deep pool of blood flowed around the animal's hoof.

A cry from the Mexican here broke in upon our colloquy, as throwing down his pole, he seized his rifle, and dropped upon one knee in the attitude of defence.

"What is it, Sancho?" cried the Friar.

A few words of guttural followed, and the Padre said it was a large alligator that has just carried off a chiguire, a wild pig, under the water with him. This stream is a tributary of the Colorado, along the banks of which these creatures' eggs are found in thousands!

My blood ran cold at the horrid thought of being attacked by such animals, and I readily volunteered my assistance at the single-stick exercise of my companion.

The Friar accepted my offer without much graciousness, but rather as that of an unwelcome guest, who could not be easily got rid of.

CHAPTER XII.

"A NIGHT IN A FOREST OF TEXAS."

THE Friar ceased his efforts, and calling the Mexican to one side, whispered something in a low, cautious manner. The other seemed to demur and hesitate, but, after a brief space, appeared to yield; when, replacing the poles beside the wagon, he turned the horses' heads toward the road by which they had just come.

"We are about to try a ford some miles further up the stream," said the Padre, "and so, we commend you to the Virgin, and wish you a prosperous journey."

"All roads are alike to me, holy Father," said I, with a coolness that cost me something to assume.

"Then take the shortest, and you'll be soonest at your journey's end," said he, gruffly.

"Who can say that?" rejoined I; "it's no difficult matter to lose one's way in a dense forest, where the tracks are unknown."

"There is but one path, and it cannot be mistaken," said he in the same tone.

"It has one great disadvantage, Father," said I.

"What is that?"

"There is no companionship on it; and to say truth, I have too much of the Irishman in me to leave good company for the pleasure of travelling all alone."

"Methinks you have very little of the Irishman about you, in another respect," said he, with a sneer of no doubtful meaning.

"How so?" said I, eagerly.

"In volunteering your society when it is not sought for, young gentleman," said he, with a look of stedfast effrontery; "at least, I can say, such were not the habits of the land as I remember it some forty years ago."

"Ah, holy Father, it has grown out of many a barbarous custom since your time;—the people have given up drinking and faction-fighting, and you may travel fifty miles a day for a week together and never meet with a friar.

"Peace be with you," said he, waving his hand, but with a gesture it was easy to see boded more passion than patience.

I hesitated for a second what to do; and at last, feeling that another word might perhaps endanger the victory I had won, I dashed spurs into the mare's flanks, and, with the shout the ostler had recommended, rushed her at the stream. Over she went, "like a bird," lighting on the opposite bank with her hind legs "well up," and the next moment plunged into the forest.

Scarcely, however, had I proceeded fifty paces than I drew up. The dense wood effectually shut out the river from my view, and even masked the sounds of the rushing water. A suspicion dwelt on my mind, that the Friar was not going back, and that he had merely concerted this plan with the Mexican the easier to disembarrass himself of my company. The seeming pertinacity of his purpose suggested an equal obstinacy of resistance on my part. Some will doubtless say that it argued very little pride, and a very weak self-esteem in Con. Cregan, to continue to impose his society where it had been so peremptorily declined; and so it had been, doubtless, had the scene been a great city, ruled and regulated by its thousand-and-one conventionalities. But the prairies are separated by something longer than mere miles from the land of kid gloves and visiting tickets. Ceremonial in such latitudes would be as unsuitable as a court suit.

Besides, I argued thus:—"a very underdone slice of tough venison, with a draught of spring water, constitute in these regions a very appetizing meal; and for the same reason, a very morose friar, and a still sulkier servant, may be accepted as very tolerable travelling companions. Enjoy better when it can be had, Con.; but prefer even the humblest fare to a famine." A rule more applicable to mental food than to material.

In a little self-colloquy after this kind, I crept stealthily back, leading Charry by the bridle, and halting at intervals to listen. What a triumph to my skill in divination as I heard the Friar's loud voice overtopping the gushing flood, while he exhorted his beasts in the most energetic fashion!

I advanced cautiously till I gained a little clump of brushwood, from which I could see the river and the group perfectly. The Friar had now mounted the wagon, and held the reins; the Mexican was however standing in the stream, and leading the cattle, who appeared to have regained somewhat more of their courage, and were slowly proceeding, sniffing timidly as they went, and pawing the water fretfully.

The Mexican advanced boldly, till the water reached nigh the top of his great "botas vaqueras," immense boots of buffalo hide, which, it is said, resist the bite of either cayman or serpent; and so far the horses went, doubtless from the encouragement. As soon, however, as the deepening flood warned the man to mount the wagon, they halted abruptly, and stood pawing and splashing the stream, while their ears flattened back, and their drawn-in tails evinced the terror that was on them.

Objurgations—entreaties—prayers—curses—menaces—were all in vain,—a step further they would not budge. All that the Spanish contained of guttural was hurled at them without success—the cow-hide whip might welt their flanks and leave great ridges at every stroke—the huge pole of the Mexican might belabor them, with a running accompaniment of kicks,—but to no purpose. They cared as little for the cow-hide as the "calendar," neither saints nor threshings could persuade them to move on. Saint Anthony—and Saint Ursula—Saint Forimund of Cordova, with various others, were invoked to no end. Saint Clement of Capua, to whom all poisonous reptiles, from boas to whip-snakes, owe allegiance, was called upon to aid the travellers; but the quadrupeds took no heed of these entreaties, but showed a most protestant contempt for the whole Litany.

There was a pause: wearied with flogging, and tired out with vain exhortations, both Friar and Mexican ceased; and, as if in compensation to their long pent-up feelings, vented their anger in a very guttural round of maledictions upon the whole animal creation, and in particular on that part of it who would not be eaten by alligators without signs of resistance and opposition. Whether this new turn of events had any influence, or that the matter was more owing to "natural causes," I cannot say; but, just then, the horse which had been already bitten, reared straight up, and with a loud snort plunged forward, carrying with him the other. By his plunge he had reached a deep part of the stream, where the water came half way up his body. Another spring smashed one of the traces, and left him free to kick violently behind him—a privilege he certainly hastened to avail himself of. His fellow, whether from sympathy or not, imitated the performance, and there they were lashing and plunging with all

their might, while the wagon, against which the strong current beat in all its force, threatened at every instant to capsize. The Friar struggled manfully, as did his follower; but, unfortunately, one of the reins gave way, and by the violent tugging at the remaining one, the animals were turned out of their course, and dragged round to the very middle of the stream. About twenty yards lower down, the river fell by a kind of cascade some ten or twelve feet, and towards this spot now the infuriated horses seemed rushing. Had it been practicable, a strong man might, by throwing himself into the water, have caught the horses' heads and held them back, but the stream swarmed with poisonous reptiles, which made such an effort almost inevitable death.

It was now a scene of terrible and most exciting interest. The maddened horses, alternately rising and sinking, writhed and twisted in agonies of pain. The men's voices mingled with the gushing torrent and the splashing water, which rose higher and higher at each plunge, while a shrill shriek from within the wagon topped all, and in its cadence seemed to speak a heart torn with terror. As I looked, the sun had set, and as speedily as though a curtain had fallen, the soft light of evening gave way to a grey darkness. I rode down to the bank, and as I reached it, one of the horses, after a terrific struggle to get free, plunged head foremost down and disappeared. The other, unable by himself alone to resist the weight of the wagon, which already was floating in the stream, swung round with the torrent, and was now dragging along toward the cataract. The dusky indistinctness even added to the terror of the picture, as the white water splashed up on every side, and at times seemed actually to cover the whole party in its scattering foam. The Friar, now leaning back, tore open one of the curtains, and at the same instant I saw a female arm stretch out and clasp him, while a shrill cry burst forth that thrilled to my very heart.

They were already within a few yards of the cataract: a moment or two more they must be over it and lost! I spurred Charry forward, and down we plunged into the water, without the slightest thought of what was to follow. Half swimming, half bounding, I reached the wagon, which now, broadside on the falls, tottered with every stroke of the fast rolling river. The Mexican was standing on the pole and endeavoring to hold back the horse; while the Friar, ripping the canvass with his knife, was endeavoring to extricate the female figure, who, sunk on her knees, seemed utterly incapable of any effort for her own safety.

Whether maddened by the bite of some monster beneath the water, or having lost his footing, I know not, but the horse went over the falls, while the Mexican, vainly endeavoring to hold him, was carried down with him the wagon, reeling with the shock, heeled over to the side, and was fast sinking, when I caught hold of the outstretched hand of the woman and drew her towards me. "Leap—spring towards him!" cried the Friar; and she obeyed the words, and with a bound, seated herself behind me.

Breasting the water bravely, Charry bounded on, and in less than a minute reached the bank, which the Friar, by the aid of a leaping-pole, had gained before us.

Having placed the half lifeless girl on the sward, I hastened to see after the poor Mexican. Alas! of him and the horse we never saw trace afterwards. We called aloud, we shouted, and even continued along the stream for a considerable space, but to no purpose: the poor fellow had evidently perished—perhaps by a death too horrible to think of. The Friar wrung his hands in agony, and mingled his thanksgiving for his own safety with lamentations for his lost companion; and so intent was he on these themes, that he never recognized me, nor, indeed, seemed conscious of my presence. At last, as we turned our steps towards where the girl lay, he said, "Is it possible that you are the Caballero we parted with before sunset?"

"Yes," said I, "the same. You were loath to accept of my company, but you see there is a fate in it after all; you cannot get rid of me so readily."

"Nor shall we try, Señhor," said the girl passionately, but with a foreign accent in her words, as she took my hands and pressed them to her lips.

The Friar said something hastily in Spanish, which seemed a rebuke, for she drew back at once and buried her face in her mantle.

"Donna Maria is my niece, Señhor, and has only just left the convent of the 'Sacred Heart.' She knows nothing of the world, nor what beseems her as a young maiden."

This the Friar spoke harshly, and with a manner that to me sounded far more in need of an apology than did the young girl's grateful emotion.

What was to be done, became now the question. We were at least thirty miles from Bexar, and not a village, nor even a log hut between us and that city. To go back was impossible; so that, like practical people, we at once addressed ourselves to the available alternative.

"Picquet your beast, and let us light a fire," said Fra Miguel, with the air of a man who would not waste life in vain regrets. Thank Providence, we have both grass and water and although the one always brings snakes and the other alligators, it is better than to bivouac on Red River, with iron ore in the stream and hard flints to sleep on."

Fastening my beast to a tree, I unstrapped

my saddle-bags and removed my saddle; disposing which most artistically in the fashion of an arm-chair, for Donna Maria, at the foot of a stupendous beech, I set about the preparation of a fire. The Friar however, had almost anticipated me; and with both arms loaded with dead wood, sat himself down to construct a species of hearth, placing a little circle of stones around in such a way as to give a draught to the blaze.

"We must fast to-night, Señhor," said he; "but it will count to us hereafter. Fan the fire with your hat, it will soon blaze briskly."

"If it were not for that young lady," said I, "whose sufferings are far greater than ours—"

"Speak not of her, Señhor; Donna Maria de los Dolores was called after our Mother of Sorrows, and she may as well begin her apprenticeship to grief. She is the only child of my brother, who had sent her to be educated at New Orleans, and is now returning home to see her father, before she takes the veil of her noviciate."

A very low sigh—so low as only to be audible to myself, came from beneath the beach tree, and I threw a handful of dry chips upon the fire, hoping to catch a glimpse of the features of my fair fellow-traveller. Fra Miguel, however, balked my stratagem, by topping the fire with a stout log, as he said, "You are too spendthrift, Señhor; we shall need to husband our resources, or we'll not have enough for the night long."

"Would you not like to come nearer to the blaze, Señhora?" said I respectfully.

"Thanks, sir, but perhaps——"

"Speak out, child," broke in the father, "speak out and say, that you are counting your rosary, and would not wish to be disturbed. And you, Señhor, if I err not, in your eagerness to aid us, have forgotten to water your gallant beast—don't lead him to the stream, that would be unsafe; take my sombrero, it has often served a like purpose before now. Twice full is enough for any horse in these countries." I would have declined this offer, but I felt that submission in everything would be my safest passport to his good opinion, and so, armed with the Friar's beaver, I made my way to the stream.

Whatever his eulogies upon the pitcher-like qualities of his head-piece—to me they seemed most undeserved; for scarcely had I filled it, than the water ran through like a sieve. The oftener too was the process repeated, the less chance did their appear of success; for instead of retaining the fluid at all, the material became so saturated, that it threatened to tear in pieces every time it was filled, and ere I could lift it, was totally empty. Half angry with the Friar, and still more annoyed at my own inaptitude, I gave up the effort, and returned to where I had left him, confessing my failure as I came forward.

"Steep your 'kerchief in the stream then, and wash the beast's mouth," said he, upon his knees, where, with a great string of beads, he was engaged with his devotions.

I retired, abashed at my intrusion, and proceeded to do as I was directed.

"What, if all these cares for my horse, and all these devotional exercises, were but stratagems to get rid of my company for a season?" thought I; as I perceived, that scarcely had I left the spot, than the Friar arose from his knees, and seemed to busy himself about something in the trees. Full of this impression, I made a little circuit of the place; and what was my surprise to observe, that he had converted his upper robe of coarse-blanket-cloth into a kind of hammock for Donna Maria, in which, fastened at either end to the bow of a tree, she was now swinging to and fro, with apparently all the pleasure of a happy child.

"Don't you like it, uncle, after all," said she, laughing; "it's exactly what one has read of in Juan Cordova's stories, to be bivouacing in a great forest, with a great fire, to keep away the jaguars."

"Hush, and go to sleep, child; I neither like it for thee, nor myself. There are more dangerous creatures than jaguars in these woods."

"Ah! you mean the bears, uncle?"

"I do not," growled he sulkily.

"As for snakes, one gets used to them, besides, they go into the tall grass."

"Ay, ay, snakes in the grass, just so!" muttered the Friar, "but this youth will be back presently, and let him not hear you talk such silly nonsense. Good night, good night."

"Good night," sighed she, "but I cannot sleep; I love so to see the fire-flies dancing through the leaves, and to hear that rushing river."

"Hush; he's coming," said the Friar, and all was still.

When I came up, the Friar was again sunk in his holy meditations, so that, disposing myself beside the fire, with my rifle at one side, and my pistols at the other, I lay down to sleep. Although I closed my eyes, and lay still, I did not sleep. My thoughts were full of Donna Maria, of whom I weaved a hundred conjectures. It was evident she was young; her voice was soft and musical too, and had that pleasant, bell-like cadence, so indicative of a light heart and a happy nature. Why was she called the "Los Dolores?" I asked myself again and again; what had she in her joyousness to do with grief and care? and why should she enter a convent and become a nun? These were questions there was no solving, and apparently, if I might judge from the cadence of her now deep sigh, no less puzzling to herself than to me. The more my interest became excited for her, the stronger grew my dislike to the Friar. That he

was a surly old tyrant, I perfectly satisfied myself. What a pity that I could not rescue her from such cruelty as easily as I saved her from the cataract!

Would that I could even see her! There was something so tormenting in the mystery of her concealment, and so, I deemed, must she herself feel it. We should be so happy together, journeying along day by day through the forest! What tales would I not tell her of my wanderings, and how I should enjoy the innocence of her surprise at my travelled wonders. And all the strange objects of these wild woods—how they would interest and amuse, were there "two" to wonder at and admire them. How I wished she might be pretty—what a disappointment if she were not—what a total rout to all my imaginings if she were to have red hair—how terrible if she should squint! These thoughts at last became too tantalizing for endurance, and so I tried to fall asleep and forget them, but in vain; they had got too firm hold of me, and I could not shake them off.

It was now about midnight, the fire waxed low, and the Friar was sound asleep.—What connexion was there between these considerations, and her of whom I was thinking; who knows? I arose and sat up, listening with eager ear to the low long breathings of the Friar, who, with his round bullet-head pillowed on a pine log, slept soundly;—the gentle hum of the leaves, scarcely moved by the night wind, and the distant sound of the falling water, were lullabies to his slumber. It was a gorgeous night of stars—the sky was studded with bright orbs in all the brilliant lustre of a southern latitude. The fire-flies, too, danced and glittered on every side, leaving traces of the phosphoric light on the leaves as they passed. The air was warm and balmy with the rich odor of the cedar and the acacia—just such a night as one would like to pass in "converse sweet" with some dear friend, mingling past memories with shadowy dreams, and straying along from by-gones to futurity.

I crept over stealthily to where the Friar lay; a lively fear prevailed with me that he might be feigning sleep, and so I watched him long and narrowly. No! it was an honest slumber—the deep guttural of his mellow throat was beyond counterfeiting. I threw a log upon the fire carelessly, and with noise, to see if it would awake him; but he only muttered a word or two, that sounded like Latin, and slept on. I now strained my eyes toward the hammock, of which, under the shadow of a great sycamore-tree, I could barely detect the outline through the leaves.

Should I be able to discern her features, were I to creep over? What a difficult question, and how impossible to decide by mere reasoning upon it. What if I were to try? It was a pure piece of curiosity—curiosity of the most harmless kind. I had been, doubtless, just as eager to scan the Friar's lineaments, if he had taken the same pains to conceal them from me. It was absurd, besides, to travel with a person and not see their face. Intercourse was a poor thing, without that reciprocity which looks convey. I'll have a peep, at all events, said I, summing up to myself all my arguments; and with this resolve, I moved cautiously along, and making a wide circuit, came round to the foot of the sycamore, at the side most remote from the Friar.

There was the hammock, almost within reach of my hand! it seemed to swing to and fro. I cannot say if this were mere deception; and so I crept nearer, just to satisfy my doubts. At last I reached the side, and peeped in. All I could see was the outline of a figure wrapped in a mantle, and a mass of soft silky hair, which fell over and shaded the face. It was some time before my eyes grew accustomed to the deep shadow of the spot; but by degrees I could perceive the profile of a young and beautiful face, resting upon one arm, the other hung negligently at one side, and the hand drooped over the edge of the hammock. The attitude was the very perfection of graceful ease, and such as a sculptor might have modeled. What a study, too, that hand, whose dimpled loveliness the star-light speckled! How could I help touching it with my lips! the first time, with all the hallowed reverence a worshipper would vouchsafe to some holy relic; the second, with a more fervent devotion; the third, I ventured to take the hand in mine and slightly press it. Did I dream? Could the ecstasy be no more than fancy?—I thought the pressure was returned.

She turned gently around, and in a voice of surpassing softness whispered, "Tell me your name, Señhor Caballero?"

I whispered low, "Con. Cregan."

"Yes, but what do your sisters call you?"

"I have none, Señhora."

"Your brothers, then?"

"I never had a brother."

"How strange! nor I either. Then how shall I call you?"

"Call me your brother," said I, trying to repossess myself of the hand she had gently withdrawn from my grasp.

"And will you call me Maria?" said she, gaily.

"If you permit it, Maria. But how will Fra Miguel think of it?"

"Ah! I forgot that. But what can he say? You saved my life. I should have been carried away like poor Sancho, but for you. Tell me how you chanced to be here, and where you are going, and whence you come; and all about you. Sit down there, on that stone. Nay, you needn't hold my hand while talking."

"Yes, but I'm afraid to be alone here in the dark, Maria," said I.

"What a silly creature it is! Now begin."

"I'd rather talk of the future, Maria, dearest. I'd rather we should speak of all the happy days we may spend together."

"But how so? Once at Bexar, I'm to wait at the monastery till my father sends his mules and people to fetch me home: meanwhile, you will have wandered away Heaven knows where."

"And where do you call home, Maria?"

"Far away, beyond the Rio Grande, in the gold country, near Auguaverde."

"And why should I not go thither? I am free to turn my steps whither I will. Perhaps your father would not despise the services of one who has some smattering of knowledge upon many a theme."

"But a Caballero—a real Señhor—turn miner! They are all miners there."

"No matter: fortune might favor me, and make me rich, and then—and then—who is to tell what changes might follow? The Caballero might bid adieu to the 'Placer,' and the fair 'Donna Maria' wave a good-by to the Nunnery—and, by-the-way, that is a very cruel destiny they intend for you."

"Who knows? I was very happy in the 'Sacred Heart.'"

"Possibly, Maria; but you were a child, and you would have been happy anywhere. But the future; think of the time when you will be loved, and will love in turn; think of that bright world of which the convent-window does not admit one passing glance. Think of the glorious freedom to enjoy whatever is beautiful in Nature, and to feel sympathies with all that is great and good; and reflect upon the sad monotony of the cloister, —its cold and cheerless existence, uncared for, almost unfelt."

"And when the Superior is cross!" cried she, holding up her hands.

"And she is always cross, Maria. That austere habit repels every generous emotion, as it defies every expansion of the heart. No, no; you must not be a nun."

"Well, I will not," said she.

"You promise me this, Maria?"

"Yes, upon one condition: that you will come to the 'Placer,' and tell my father all that you have told to me. He is so good and so kind, he'll never force me."

"But will he receive me? Will your father permit me so to speak?"

"You saved my life, Señhor," said she, half proudly, "and little as you reckon such a service, it is one upon which Don Estavan Orales will set some store."

"Ah!" said I, sighing, "how little merit had I in the feat! It did not even cost me the slightest injury."

"I am just as gratified as though you had been eaten by an alligator, Señhor," said she laughing with a sly malice that made me half suspect that some, at least, of her innocence was assumed.

From this we wandered on to speak of the journey for the morrow, which I proposed she should make upon "Charry," while Fra Miguel and myself accompanied her on foot. It was also agreed between us, that we should preserve the most rigid reserve and distance of manner in the Friar's presence, rarely noticing or speaking with each other. One only difficulty existed; which was, by what pretence I should direct my steps to Aguaverde. But here again Donna Maria's ready wit suggested the expedient, as she said, laughing, "Are you not making a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady des los Dolores?"

"So I am," said I. "Shame on me that I should have forgotten it till now!"

"Did you never tell me," said she, archly, "that you intended to enter an 'order?'"

"Certainly," said I, joining the merry humor; "and so will I, on the very same day you take the veil."

"And now, holy man," said she, with difficulty repressing a fresh burst of laughter, "let us say, 'Good night.' Fra Miguel will awake at day-break, and I see that is already near."

"Good night, sweet sister," said I, once again pressing her fingers to my lips, and scarcely knowing when to relinquish them. A heavy sigh from the Friar, however, admonished me to hasten away; and I crept to my place, and lay down beside the now almost extinguished embers of our fire.

"What a good thought was that of the pilgrimage," said I, as I drew my cloak around me; and I remembered that "Chico's" beads, and his "book of offices," were still among my effects in the saddle-bags, and would greatly favor my assumption of the pious character. I then tried to recall some of my forgotten Latin. From this I reverted to thoughts of Donna Maria herself, and half wondered at the rapid strides we had accomplished in each other's confidence. At last I fell asleep, to dream of every incongruity and incoherency that ever haunted a diseased brain. Nunneries, with a crocodile for the Abbess, gave way to scenes in the Placers, where Nuns were gold-washing, and Friars riding down cataracts on caymans. From such pleasant realities a rough shake of Fra Miguel aroused me, as he cried, "When a man laughs so heartily in his sleep, he may chance to keep all the grave thoughts for his waking. Rise up, Señhor; the day is breaking. Let us profit by the cool hours to make our journey."

As day was breaking we set out for Bexar, in the manner I had suggested; Donna Maria riding, the Friar and myself, one either side of her, on foot. Resolved upon winning, se

far as might be, Fra Miguel's confidence, I addressed my conversation almost exclusively to him; rarely speaking a word to my fair companion, and then only upon the commonest questions of the way.

As none of us had eaten since the day previous, nor was there any baiting place till we reached Bexar, it was necessary to make the best of our way thither with all speed. The Fra knew the road perfectly, and by his skill in detecting the marks on trees, the position of certain rocks, and the course of the streams, gave me some insight into the acute qualities necessary for a prairie traveller.—These themes, too, furnished the greater portion of our conversation, which I am free to own offered many a long interval of dreary silence. The Fra's thoughts dwelt gloomily on his late disaster, while Donna Maria and myself were condemned to the occasional exchange of a chance remark.

Once or twice Fra Miguel questioned me on the subject of my own history; but ere I had proceeded any length in detailing my veracious narrative, an accidental word, or remark, would show that he was inattentive to what I was speaking, and only occupied by his own immediate reflections.

Why, then, trouble myself with biographical inventions, which failed to excite any interest? and so, I relapsed into a silence, plodding and moody as his own.

At length, the path became too narrow for us all to go abreast; and as my duties were to guide Charry by the bridle, I became the companion of Maria by force of circumstances; still Fra Miguel kept up close behind, and however abstracted at other times, he now showed himself "wide awake" on the subject of our intercourse. Denied the pleasure of talking to each other, we could at least exchange glances; and this was a privilege no surveillance, however rigid, could deny us. These are small and insignificant details, which were of little moment at the time, and led to even less for the future; but I record them as the first stirrings of love in a heart which might have been deemed too intent upon its own cares to admit of others; and here let me observe that the taste for stratagem,—the little wiles and snares inspired by a first passion, are among the strongest incentives to its origin. It was the secresy of our meeting at night,—the little difficulties of our intercourse by day,—the peril of discovery as we spoke together,—the danger of detection as we exchanged glances, that by giving us a common object, suggested a common feeling. Both engaged in the same warfare, how could we avoid sympathizing with each other? Then, there was that little "dash of romance" about our first meeting, so auxiliary to the tender passion; and, again, we were wandering, side by side, in a silent forest, with only one other nea us. Would we could have disposed of him, too! I shame to say it; but, in honest truth, I often wished that he had followed the Mexican!

We halted during the great heat of the day, and the Fra once more rigging out his "capote" for a hammock, Donna Maria lay down for the siesta, while I cut grass for Charry, and rubbed her down. Long fasting had made us all more disposed to silence, so that a few monosyllables were all that passed. When the time came to resume the road, I am proud to say that the Fra bore his privations with less equanimity than did we. His sighs grew heavy and frequent; any accidental interruption on the road evoked unmistakable signs of irritation; he even expostulated with certain saints, whose leaden images decorated his sombrero, as to the precise reasons for which his present sufferings were incurred; and altogether, as hunger pinched, showed a more rebellious spirit than his holy discourses of the preceding evening could have led me to suspect.

One time, he charged his calamities to the score of having eaten turtle, which was only half fish, on a Friday; at another, it was upon that unlucky day the journey had been begun; then, he remembered that the Mexican was only a half-breed, who possibly if baptized at all, was only an irregular kind of a Christian, admitted into the fold by some stray Missionary—more Trapper than Priest. Then, he bethought him, that his patron, Saint Michel of Pavia, was of an uncertain humor, and often tormented his votaries, by way of trying their fidelity. These various doubts assumed the form of open grumblings, which certainly inspired very different sentiments in Donna Maria and myself than edification. As evening closed in, and darkness favored us, these ghostly lamentations afforded us many a low, quiet laugh; a soft pressure of the hand, which now, by mere accident of course, she had let fall near me, would sometimes show how we concurred in our sentiments, till at length, as the thicker gloom of night fell around, such was our unanimity, that her hand remained clasped in my own without any further attempt to remove it.

If the Fra's gratitude burst forth eloquently as we came in sight of some spangled lights glittering through the gloom, our sensations were far more akin to disappointment.

"Bexar, at last! praised be St. Michel!" exclaimed he. "It has been a long and dreary journey." Here, I pressed Donna Maria's hand, and she returned the pressure.

"Two days of disaster and sore suffering!" Another squeeze of the Señhora's fingers.

"A time I shall never forget," muttered he.

"Nor I," whispered I, to my fair companion.

"A season of trouble and distress!" quoth the Fra.

"Of love and happiness!" muttered I.

"And now, my worthy young friend," said he, addressing me; "as we are so soon to part, —for yonder is Bexar,—how shall we best show our gratitude? Would you like a 'novena' to 'Our Lady of Tears,' whose altar is here? or, shall we vow a candle to St. Nicomede of Terapia?"

"Thanks, holy Father, there is no need for either; mine was a slight service, more than requited by the pleasure of travelling in your company, and that of this pious maiden. I have learned many a goodly lesson by the way, and will think over them as I wander on my future pilgrimage."

"And whither may that tend, Señhor?"

"To the shrine of 'Our Lady of Sorrows,' at Aguaverde, by the help of St. Francis."

"Aguaverde!" exclaimed Fra Miguel, with a voice that bespoke anything rather than pleasure; "It is a long and a dangerous journey, young man!"

"The greater the merit, Father!"

"Treckless wastes, and deep rivers; hostile Indians, and even more cruel half-breeds. These are some of the perils," said he, in a voice of warning; but a gentle pressure from the Señhora's fingers was more than an answer to such terrors.

"You can make your penance here, young man, at the Convent of the Missions. There are holy men who will give you all good counsel; and I will myself speak to them for you."

I was about to decline this polite intervention, when a quiet gesture from Donna Maria arrested my words, and made me accept the offer with thanks.

Thus chatting, we reached the suburbs of Bexar, and soon entered the main street of that town; and here let me record a strange feature of the life of this land, which although one that I soon became accustomed to, had a most singular aspect to my eyes on first acquaintance. It was a hot and sultry night of June; the air as dry and parched as of a summer day in our English climate, and we found that the whole population had their beds disposed along the streets, and were sleeping for the benefit of the cool night air—al fresco. There was no moon, nor any lamplight, but by the glimmering stars we could see this strange encampment, which barely left a passage in the middle for the mule carts.

Some of the groups were irresistibly droll; here was an old lady, with a yellow-and-red handkerchief round her head, snoring away, while a Negro wench waved a plaintain bough to and fro to keep off the musquitoes, which thronged the spot from the inducement of a little glimmering lamp to the Virgin over the bed. There was a thin lanthorn-jawed old fellow sipping his chocolate before he resigned himself to sleep. Now and then there would be a faint scream and a muttered apology, as some one, feeling his way to his nest, had fallen over the couch of a sleeper. Mothers were nursing babies, nurses were singing others to rest; social spirits were recalling the last strains of recent convivialities; while others, less genially given, were uttering their "Carambas" in all the vindictive anger of broken slumber. Now and then a devotional attitude might be detected, and even some little glimpses caught of some fair form making her toilet for the night, and throwing back her disheveled hair, to peer at the passing strangers.

Such were the scenes that even a brief transit presented; a longer sojourn, and a little more light, had doubtless discovered still more singular ones.

We halted at the gate of a large gloomy-looking building, which the Friar informed me was the "Venta Nazionale," the chief inn of the town; and by dint of much knocking, and various interlocutions between Fra Miguel and a black, four stories high, the gates were at length opened. Faint, hungry, and tired, I had hoped that we should have supped in company, and thus recompensed me for my share of the successful issue of the journey; but the Fra, giving his orders hastily, wished me an abrupt "good night," and led his niece up the narrow stairs, leaving me and my mare in the gloomy entrance, like things whose services were no longer needed.

"This may be Texan gratitude, Fra Miguel," said I to myself, "but certainly you never brought it from your own country." Meanwhile the negro, after lighting the others up stairs, returned to where I was, and perhaps not impressed by any high notions of my quality, or too sleepy to think much about the matter, sat down on a stone bench, and looked very much as if about to compose himself to another dose. I was in no mood of gentleness, and so bestowing a hearty kick upon my black "brother," I told him to show me the way to the stable at once. The answer to this somewhat rude summons was a strange one,—he gave a kind of grin that showed all his teeth, and made a species of hissing noise, like "cheet, cheet," said rapidly —a performance I had never witnessed before, nor for certain reasons, have I any fancy to witness again.

"Do you hear me, black fellow," cried I, tapping his bullet-head with the end of my heavy whip, pretty much as one does a tavern-table to summon the waiter.

"Cheet, cheet, cheet," cried he again, but with redoubled energy.

"Confound your jargon," said I, angrily, "get up out of that, and lead the way to the stable." This speech I accompanied by another admonition from my foot, given, I am

free to own, with all the irritable impatience of a thirty-hours' fast.

The words had scarcely passed my lips, ere the fellow sprang to his legs, and with a cry like the scream of an infuriated beast, dashed at me. I threw out my arm as a guard, but stooping beneath it, he plunged a knife into my side and fled. I heard the heavy bang of the great door resound as he rushed out, and then fell to the ground weltering in my blood!

I made a great effort to cry out, but my voice failed me,—the blood ran fast from my wound, and a chill, sickening sensation crept over me, that I thought must be death. "'Tis hard to die thus," was the thought that crossed me, and it was the last effort of consciousness, ere I swooned into insensibility.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAZARETTO OF BEXAR.

KIND-HEARTED reader; you, who have sympathised with so many of the rubs that Fortune has dealt us; who have watched us with a benevolent interest in our warfare with an adverse destiny; who have marked our struggles, and witnessed our defeats; will surely compassionate our sad fate when we tell you that when the curtain next rises on our drama, it presents us no longer what we had been!

Con. Cregan, the light-hearted vagrant, paddling his lone canoe down life's stream in joyous merriment, himself sufficing to himself, his eyes ever upward as his hopes were onward, his crest an eagle's, and his motto "higher," was no more. He had gone—vanished—been dissipated into thin air; and in his place there sat, too weak to walk, a poor emaciated creature, with shaven head and shrunken limbs, a very wreck of humanity, pale, sallow, and miserable as fever and flannel could paint him.

Yes, gentle reader, under the shade of a dwarf fig-tree, in the Leper Hospital of Bexar, I sat, attired in a whole suit of flannel, of a pale brown tint, looking like a faded flea,—all my gay spirits fled, and my very identity merged into the simple fact that I was known as "Convalescent, No. 303," an announcement which for memory's sake, perhaps, was stamped upon the front of my nightcap.

Few people are fortunate enough not to remember the strange jumble of true and false, the incoherent tissue of fact and fancy, which assails the first moments of recovery from illness. It is a pitiable period, with its thronging thoughts, all too weighty for the light brain that should bear them. You follow your ideas like an ill-mounted horseman in a hunt—no sooner have you caught a glimpse of the game than it is lost again; on you go, wearied by the pace, but never cheered by success; often tumbling into a slough, missing your way, and mistaking the object of pursuit; such are the casualties in either case, and they are not enviable ones.

Now, lest I should seem to be a character of all others I detest, a grumbler without cause, let me ask the reader to sit beside me for a few seconds on this bench, and look with me at the prospect around him. Yonder, that large white building, with grated windows, gaol-like and sad, is the Leper Hospital of Bexar, an institution originally intended for the sick of that one malady, but, under the impression of its being contagious, generously extended to those laboring under any other disease. The lepers are that host who sit in groups upon the grass, at cards or dice, or walk in little knots of two and three. Their shambling gait and crippled figures—the terrible evidence of their malady—twisted limbs, contorted into every horrible variety of lameness, hands with deficient fingers, faces without noses, are the ordinary symbols. The voices, too, are either husky and unnatural, or reduced to a thin reedy treble, like the wail of an infant. Worse than all, far more awful to contemplate, to him, exposed to such companionship, their minds would appear more diseased than even their bodies some evincing this aberration by traits of ungovernable passion, some by the querulous irritability of peevish childhood, and some by the fatuous vacuity of idiocy; and here am I, gazing upon all this, and speculating, by the aid of a little bit of broken looking-glass, how long it is probable that I shall retain the "regulation" number of the human features.

Ah, you gentlemen of England who live at home at ease, may smile at such miseries; but let me tell you, that however impertinent you might deem him who told you "to follow your nose," the impossibility of compliance is a yet heavier infliction, and it was with a trembling eagerness that each morning as I awoke, I consulted the map of my face, to be sure that I was master of each geographical feature.

While all who may break a leg or cut a blood-vessel are reckoned fit subjects to expose to the risk of this contagion, the most guarded measures are adopted to protect the world without the walls from every risk. Not only is every leper denied access to his friends and family, but even written communication is refused him, while sentinels are stationed at short intervals around the grounds, with orders to fire upon any who should attempt an escape.

Here, then, was I in gaol, with the danger of a horrible disease superadded. Algebraically my case stood thus:—Letting the letter P represent a prison, L the leprosy, and N my nose, $P \times L - N$, being equal to any given

number of deaths by torture. Such was my case, such my situation; while of the past, by what chain of events I came to be thus a prisoner, I knew nothing. A little memoir at the head of my bed set forth that I was "a case of punctured wound in the thorax," with several accessory advantages, not over intelligible by my ignorance, but which I guessed to imply, that if the doctor didn't finish me off at once, there was every chance of my slipping away by a lingering malady—some one of those "chest affections"—that make the fortunes of doctors, but are seldom so profitable to the patients.

One fact was, however, very suggestive. It was above four months since the date of my admission to the hospital, a circumstance that vouched for the gravity of my illness, as well as showing what number of events might have occurred in the interval.

Four months! and where was Donna Maria now? had she forgotten me—forgotten the terrible scene on the Colorado—forgotten the starlit night in the forest? Had they left me without any interest in my future—deserted me, wounded—perhaps dying?—a sad return for the services I had rendered them! That Fra Miguel should have done this would have caused me no surprise; but the Señhora—she who sprang by a bound into intimacy with me, and called me "Brother!" Alas! if this were so, what faith could be placed in woman?

In vain I sought some information on these points from those around me. My Spanish was not the very purest Castilian, it is true; but here, another and greater obstacle to knowledge existed—no one cared anything for the past, and very little for the future—the last event that held a place in their memory was the day of their admission—the fell malady was the centre round which all thoughts revolved, and I was regarded as a kind of visionary when asking about circumstances that occurred before I entered the hospital. There were vague and shadowy rumors about me and my adventure, so much I could find out; but whatever these were, scarcely two agreed on—not one cared. Some said I had killed a priest; others averred it was a negro; a few opined that I had done both; an old mulatto woman, with a face like a target, the bull's eye being represented by where the nose ought to be, related a more connected narrative about my having stolen a horse, and being overtaken by a negro slave of the owner, who rescued the animal and stabbed *me*.

All the stories tallied in one particular, which was in representing me as a fellow of the most desperate character and determination, and who cared as little for shedding blood as spilling water—traits, I am bound to acknowledge, which never appeared to lower me in general esteem. Of course all inquiries as to my horse, poor Charry, my precious saddle-bags, my rifle, my bowie-knife, and my "Harper's ferry," would have proved less than useless—actually absurd. The patients would have reckoned such questions as little vagaries of mental wandering, and the servants of the house never replied to anything.

My next anxiety was, when should I be at liberty? The doctor, when I asked him, gave a peculiar grin, and said, "We cannot spare you, Amigo; we shall want to have a look at your pericardium one of these days. *I* say it is perforated—Don Emanuel says not. Time will tell who's right."

"You mean when I'm dead, Señhor, of course?" cried I, not fancying the chance of resolving the difficulties by being carved alive.

"Of course I do," said he. "Yours is a very instructive case; and I shall take care that your heart and a portion of the left lung be carefully injected and preserved in the Museum."

"May you live a thousand years!" said I, bowing my gratitude, while a chill crept over me that I thought I should have fainted.

I have already mentioned that sentries were placed at intervals round the walls, to prevent escape, a precaution which, were one to judge from the desolated and crippled condition of the inmates, savored of over care. A few were able to crawl along upon crutches, the majority were utterly helpless, while the most active were only capable of creeping up the bank which formed the boundary of the grounds, to look down into the moat beneath, a descent of some twenty feet, but which, to imaginations such as theirs, was a gulf, like the crater of a volcano.

Whenever a little group, then, would station themselves on the "heights," as they were called, and gazed timidly into the depths below, the guards, far from dispersing them, saw that no better lesson could be administered than what their own fears suggested, and prudently left them to the admonitions of their terrors. I remembered this fact, and resolved to profit by it. If death were to be my lot, it could not come anywhere with more horrors than here; so that happen what might, I resolved to make an effort at escape. The sentry's bullet had few terrors for one who saw himself surrounded by such objects of suffering and misery, and who daily expected to be one of their number. Were the leap to kill me, a circumstance that in my weak and wounded condition I judged far from unlikely, it was only anticipating a few days—and what days were they!

Such were my calculations, made calmly and with reflection. Not that I was weary of life; were the world but open to me, I felt I should resume all my former zest in its sayings and doings: nay, I even fancied that the season of privation would give a higher color to my enjoyment of it; and I knew that

the teachings of adversity are not the least useful accessories of him whose wits must point the road to fortune. True is it, the emergencies of life evoke the faculties, and develope the resources, as the storm and the shipwreck display the hardy mariner. Who knows, Con., but good luck may creep in even through a punctured wound in the thorax?

As the day closed, the patients were always recalled by a bell, and patrol parties of soldiers went round, to see if by accident any yet lingered without the walls. The performance of this duty was, however, most slovenly, since, as I have already said, escape never occurred to those whose apathy of mind and infirmity of body had made indifferent to everything. I lingered, then, in a distant alley as the evening began to fall, and when the bell rung out its dismal summons, I trembled to think—was it the last time I should ever hear it! It was a strange thrill of mingled hope and terror. Where should I be the next evening at that hour! Free, and at liberty—a wanderer wherever fancy might lead me, or the occupant of some narrow bed beneath the earth, sleeping the sleep that knows no waking! and, if so, who could less easily be missed than him who had neither friend nor family, nor fortune. I felt that my departure, like that of some magnificent guest, would meet notice from none: not one to ask what became of him? when did he leave us? to whom did he say farewell?

If there was something unspeakably sad in the solitude of such a fate, there was that also which nerved the heart by a sense of Self-sufficiency—the very brother of Independence; and this thought gave me courage as I looked over the grassy embankment, and peered into the gloomy fosse, which now, in the indistinct light, seemed far deeper than ever. A low marshy tract, undrained and uninhabitable, surrounded the "Lazaretto" for miles; and if this insalubrious neighborhood assisted in keeping up the malaria of fever, it compensated, on the other hand, by interposing an unpopulated district between the sick and the healthy.

These dreary wastes, pathless and untrodden, were a kind of fabulous region among the patients for all kinds of horrors, peopled as the fancy of each dictated, by the spirits of departed "Leperos," by venomous serpents and cobras, or by escaped galley-slaves who led a life of rapine and murder. The flitting jack-o'-lantern that often skimmed along the surface, the wild cry of the plover, the dreary night wind sighing over miles of plain, aided these superstitions and convinced many whose stubborn incredulity demanded corroboration from the senses. As for myself, if very far from crediting the tales I had so often listened to, the theme left its character of gloom upon my mind, and it was with a cold shudder that I strained my eyes over the wide distance from which a heavy exhalation was already rising. Determined to derive comfort from every source, I bethought me that the misty fog would assist my concealment,—as if it were worth while to pursue me through a region impregnated with all the vapors of disease! The bell had ceased: the bang of the great iron wicket had resounded, and all was still. I hesitated, I know not why, a moment, before my mind was made up; and now it seemed like self-destruction to go on! Here was life! a sad and terrible existence truly; but was the dark grave better? or, if it were, had I the right to make the choice?—this was a subtlety that had not occurred till now. The dull tramp of the patrol routed my musings, as in quick time a party advanced up the alley towards me. They were not visible from the darkness, but the distance could not be great, and already I could hear the corporal urging them forward, as the mists were rising and a deadly fog gathering over the earth. Any longer delay now, and my project must be abandoned forever, seeing that my lingering outside the walls would expose me to close surveillance for the future.

I arose suddenly and advanced to the very edge of the cliff: would that I could only have scanned the depth below, and seen where I was about to go! Alas! darkness was on all; a foot beneath where I stood all was black and undistinguishable.

The patrol were now about thirty paces from me; another instant and I should be taken! I clasped my hands together convulsively, and with drawn-in breath and clenched lips, I bent my knees to spring. Alas, they would not! my strength failed me at this last moment, and instead of a leap, my limbs relaxed, and tottering under me, gave way. I lost my balance, and fell over the cliff! Grasping the grassy surface with the energy of despair, I tore tufts of long grass and fern as I fell down—down—down—till consciousness left me, to be rallied into life again by a terrible "squash" into a reedy swamp at the bottom. Up to my waist in duckweed and muddy water, I soon felt, however, that I had sustained no other injury than a shock—nay, even fancied that the concussion had braced my nerves; and as I looked up at the dark mass of wall above me, I knew that my fall must have been terrific.

Neither my bodily energy, nor my habiliments, favored me in escaping from this ditch; but I did rescue myself at last; and then remembering that I must reach some place of refuge before day broke, I set out over the moor, my only pilotage being the occasionally looking back at the lights of the hospital, and in sailor-fashion using them as my point of departure. When creeping along the walks of the Lazaretto, I was barely able to move;

and now, such a good ally is a strong "will," I stepped out boldly and manfully.

As I walked on, the night cleared: a light fresh breeze dissipated the vapour and refreshed me as I went; while over head, myriads of bright stars shone out, and served to guide me on the trackless waste. If I often felt fatigue stealing over me, a thought of the Lazaretto and its fearful inmates nerved me to new efforts. Sometimes, so possessed did I become with these fears, that I actually increased my speed to a run, and thus exerting myself to the very utmost, I made immense progress, and ere day began to break, found myself at the margin of the moor, and the entrance to a dense forest, which I remembered often to have seen of a clear evening from the garden of the Lazaretto. With what gratitude did I accept that leafy shade which seemed to promise me its refuge! I threw my arms around a tree in the ecstacy of my delight, and felt, that now indeed I had gained a haven of rest and safety. By good fortune, too, I came upon a pathway; a small piece of board nailed to a tree bore the name of a village; but this I could not read in the half light; still it was enough that I was sure of a beaten track, and could not be lost in the dense intricacies of a pine-forest.

The change of scene encouraged me to renewed exertion, and I began to feel that so far from experiencing fatigue, each mile I travelled supplied me with greater energy, and that my strength rose each hour, as I left the Lazaretto farther behind me.

"Ah Con., my boy, fortune has not taken leave of you yet!" said I, as I discovered that my severe exercise, far from being injurious, as I had feared, was already bringing back the glow of health to my frame, and spirit to my heart.

There is something unspeakably calming in the solitude of a forest, unlike the lone sensations inspired by the sea or the prairie; the feeling is one of peaceful quietude. The tempered sun-light stealing through the leaves and boughs entangled; the giant trunks that tell of centuries ago—the short smooth mossy turf through which the tiny rivulet runs without a channel,—the little vistas opening like alleys, or ending in some shady nook, bower-like, and retired, fill the mind with a myriad of pleasant fancies. Instead of wandering forth over the immensity of space, as when contemplating the great ocean, or the desert, the heart here falls back upon itself, and is satisfied with the little world around it.

Such were my reveries, as I lay down beneath a tree, at first, to muse, and then, to sleep: and such a sleep as only a weary foot-traveller knows, who, stretched under the shade of a spreading tree, lies dreamless and lost. It must have been late ere I awoke; the sun-light came slanting obliquely through the leaves, and bespoke the decline of day. I arose; at first my limbs were stiff and rigid, and my sensations those of debility; but after a little time, my strength came back, and I strode along freely. Continuing the path, I came, after three hours' fast walking, to a little open spot in the wood, where the remains of a hut and the charred fragments of firewood indicated a bivouac; some morsels of black bread strewn about, and a stray piece of dried venison, argued that the party who had left them had but recently quitted the spot. Very grateful for the negligent abundance of their waste, I sat down, and by the aid of a little spring, the reason, probably, of the selection of the spot for a halt, made a capital supper, some chestnuts that had fallen from the trees furnishing a delicious dessert. Night was fast closing in, and I resolved on passing it where I was, the shelter of the little hut being too tempting a refuge to relinquish easily. The next morning I started early, my mind fully satisfied that I was preceded by some foot party—the path not admitting of any other, with whom, by exertion, I should be perhaps able to come up. I walked from day to dawn with scarcely an interval of rest; but although the tracks of many feet showed me my conjecture was right, I did not succeed in overtaking them. Towards evening, I again came upon their bivouac-ground, which was even more abundantly provided than the preceding one. They appeared to have killed a buck, and though having roasted an entire side, had contented themselves with some steaks off the quarter. Upon this I feasted luxuriously, securing a sufficient provision to last me for the next two or three days.

In this way I continued to travel for eight entire days, each successive one hoping to overtake the party in advance; and if disappointed in this expectation, well pleased with the good luck that had supplied me so far with food, and made my journey safe and pleasant—for it was both. A single beast of prey I never met with, nor even a serpent larger than the common green snake, which is neither venomous nor bold; and as for pleasure, I was free. Was not that alone happiness for him who had been a prisoner among the "Leperos" of Bexar?

On the ninth day of my wandering, certain unmistakable signs indicated that I was approaching the verge of the forest; the grass became deeper—the wood less dense; the undergrowth, too, showed the influence of winds and currents of air. These, only appreciable by him who has watched with anxious eyes every little change in the aspect of Nature, became at last evident to the least observant in the thickened bark, and the twisted branches of the trees, on which the storms of winter were directed. Shall I own it?—my heart grew heavy at these signs, boding

as they did, another change of scene; and to what? Perhaps the bleak prairie stretching away in dreary desolation! Perhaps, some such tract of swampy moor, where forests once had stood; but now lying in mere waste of rottenness and corruption,—"clearings," as they are called, the little intervals which hard industry plants amid universal wildness, I could not hope for; since I had often heard that no settlers ever selected these places, to which access by water was difficult, and the roads few and bad. What then was to come next? Not the sea coast; *that* must be miles away to the eastward; not the chain of the Rocky Mountains; they lay equally far to the west.

While yet revolving these thoughts, I reached the verge of the wood, and suddenly, and without anything which might apprise me of this singular change, I found myself standing on the verge of a great bluff of land, overlooking an apparently boundless plain.—The sight thus unexpectedly presented, of a vast prairie—for such it was—was overwhelming in its intense interest. My position, from a height of seven or eight hundred feet, gave me an uninterrupted view over miles and miles of surface. Towards the far west a ridge of rugged mountains could be seen—but to the south and east a low flat horizon bounded the distance. The surface of this great tract was covered for a short space by dry cedars, apparently killed by a recent fire; beyond that, a tall, rank grass grew, through which I could trace something like a road:—this was, as I afterwards learned, a buffalo-trail—these animals frequently marching in close column, when in search of water. The sun was setting as I looked, and gilded the whole vast picture with its yellow glory: but as it sunk beneath the horizon, and permitted a clearer view of the scene, I could perceive that everything, trees, grass, earth itself, presented one uniform dry, burnt-up appearance.

Not a creature of any kind was seen to move over this great plain; not a wing cleaved the air above—not a sound broke the stillness beneath. It was a solitude the most complete I ever conceived—grand and imposing! How my heart sank within me, as I sat and looked, thinking I was there alone, without one creature near me, to linger out, perhaps, some few days or hours of life, and die unseen, unwatched, uncared for! And to this sad destiny had ambition brought me! Were it not for the craving desire to become something above my station—to move in a sphere to which neither my birth nor my abilities gave me any title—and I should be now the humble peasant, living by my daily labor in my native land—my thoughts travelling in the worn track those of my neighbors journeyed, and I, neither better nor worse off than they.

And for this wish—insensate, foolish as it was—the expiation is indeed heavy. I hid my head within my hands, and tried to pray—but I could not. The mind, harassed by various conflicting thoughts, is not in the best mood for supplication. I felt like the criminal of whom I had once read, that when the confessor came to visit him the night before his execution, seemed eager and attentive for a while, but at last acknowledged that his thoughts were centred upon one only theme—escape! "To look steadfastly at the next world, you must extinguish the light of this one." And how difficult is that!—how hard to close every chink and fissure through which hope may dart a ray!—hope of life, hope of renewing the struggle in which we are so often defeated, and where even the victory is without value.

"Be it so," sighed I, at last, "the game is up!"—and I lay down at the foot of a rock, to die. My strength, long sustained by expectation, had given way at last, and I felt that the hour of release could not be distant. I drew my hand across my eyes—I am ashamed to own there were tears there; and just then, as if my vision had been cleared by the act, I saw, or thought I saw, in the plain beneath, the glittering sparkle of flame. Was it the reflection of a star, of which thousands were now studding the sky, in some pool of rain water? No! it was a real fire, which now, from one red spark, burst forth into a great blaze, rolling out volumes of black smoke, which rose like a column into the air.

Were they Indians who made it, or trappers?—or could it be the party in whose track I had so long been following; and if so, by what path had they descended? Speculation is half-brother to hope; no sooner had I begun to canvass this proposition, than it aroused my drooping energies, and rallied my failing courage.

I set about to seek for some clue to the descent, and by the moonlight, which was now full and strong, I detected foot-tracks in the clayey soil near the verge of the cliff. A little after, I found a narrow pathway, which seemed to lead down the face of the bluff. The trees were scratched, too, in many places, with marks familiar to prairie travellers, but which to me only betokened the fact that human hands had been at work upon them. I gained courage by these, which, at least, I knew were not "Indian signs," no more than the foot-tracks were those of Indian feet.

The descent was tedious, and often perilous; the path, stopping abruptly short at rocks, from which the interval to the next footing should be accomplished by a spring, or a drop of several feet, was increased in danger by the indistinct light. In the transit I received many a sore bruise, and ere I reached the bottom my flannel drapery was

reduced to a string of rags which would have done no credit to a scarecrow.

When looking from the top of the cliff, the fire appeared to be immediately at its foot but now I perceived it stood about half a mile off in the plain. Thither I bent my steps, half fearing, half hoping, what might ensue. So wearied was I by the fatigue of the descent, added to the long day's journey, that even in this short space I was often obliged to halt and take rest. Exhaustion, hunger, and lassitude weighed me down, till I went along with that half-despairing effort a worn-out swimmer makes, as his last, before sinking.

A more pitiable object it would not be easy to picture. The blood oozing from my wound re-opened by the exertion, had stained my flannel dress, which, ragged and torn, gave glimpses of a figure reduced almost to a skeleton. My beard was long, adding to the seeming length of my gaunt and lanthorn jaws, blue with fatigue and fasting. My shoes were in tatters, and gave no protection to my bleeding feet; while my hands were torn and cut by grasping the boughs in my descent. Half stumbling, half tottering, I came onward till I found myself close to the great fire, at the base of a mound—a prairie roll, as it is called—which formed a shelter against the east wind.

Around the immense blaze sat a party, some of whom in shadow, others in strong light, presented a group the strangest ever my eyes beheld. Bronzed and bearded countenances, whose fierce expression glowed fiercer in the ruddy glare of the fire, were set off by costumes the oddest imaginable.

Many wore coats of undressed sheepskin, with tall caps of the same material; others had ragged uniforms of different services.—One or two were dressed in "ponchos" of red brown cloth, like Mexicans, and some, again, had a kind of buff coat, studded with copper ornaments—a costume often seen among the half-breeds. All agreed in one feature of equipment, which was a broad leather belt or girdle, in which were fastened various shining implements, of which a small piekaxe and a hammer were alone distinguishable where I stood. Several muskets were piled near them, and on the scorched boughs of the cedars hung a little armory of cutlasses, pistols, and "bowies," from which I was able to estimate the company at some twenty-eight or thirty in number. Packs and knapsacks, with some rude cooking-utensils, were strewn around; but the great carcass of a deer which I saw in the flames, supported by a chevaux-de-frise of ramrods, was the best evidence that the cares of "cuisine" did not demand any unnecessary aid from "casseroles."

A couple of great earthen pitchers passed rapidly from hand to hand round the circle, and by the assistance of some black-head, served to beguile the time while the "roast" was being prepared.

Creeping noiselessly nearer, I gained a little clump of brushwood scarcely more than half-a-dozen paces off, and then lay myself down to listen what language they were speaking. At first the whole buzz seemed one unmeaning jargon, more like the tongue of an Indian tribe than anything else; but as I listened I could detect words of French, Spanish, and German. Eager to make out some clue to what class they might belong, I leaned forward on a bough, and listened attentively. A stray word—a chance phrase—could I but catch so much, would be enough; and I bent my ear with the most watchful intensity. The spot I occupied was the crest of the little ridge, or "prairie roll," and gave me a perfect view over the group, while the black smoke rolling upwards effectually concealed me from them.

As I listened I heard a deep husky voice say something in English. It was only an oath; but it smacked of my country, and set my heart a-throbbing powerfully. I lay out upon the branch, to catch what might follow, when smash went the frail timber, and with a cry of terror, down I rolled behind them.—In a second every one was on his legs, while a cry of "The jaguars! the jaguars!" resounded on all sides. The sudden shock over, their discipline seemed perfect; for the whole party had at once betaken themselves to their arms, and stood in a hollow square, prepared to receive any attack. Meanwhile the smoke and the falling rubbish effectually shut me out from view. As these cleared away they caught sight of me, and truly never was a formidable file of musketry directed upon a more pitiable object. Such seemed their own conviction; for, after a second or two passed in steady contemplation of me, the whole group burst out into a roar of savage laughter. "What is't?" "It's not human!" being the exclamations which, in more than one strange tongue, were uttered.

Unable to speak, in part from terror, in part from shock, I sat up on my knees, and, gesticulating with my hands, implored their mercy, and bespoke my own defencelessness. I concluded that I made a very sorry exhibition, for again the laughter burst forth in louder tones than before, when one, taking a brand of the burning fire-wood, came nearer to examine me. He threw down his torch, and springing backward with horror, screamed out, a "Lepero!" a "lepero!" In a moment every musket was again raised to the shoulder, and directed towards me.

"I'm not a lepero—never was!" cried I, in Spanish. "I'm a poor Englishman who has made his escape from the Lazaretto." I could not utter more, but fell powerless to the earth

"I know him: we were messmates," cried a gruff voice. "Halt! avast there! don't fire! I say, my lad, crawl over to the leeward of the fire. There, that will do. Dash a bucket of water over him, Perez."

Perez obeyed with a vengeance, for I was soaked to the skin, and at the same time exposed to the scorching glare of the great fire, where I steamed away like a swamp at sundown.

"Ain't you Cregan, I say?" cried the same English voice which spoke before: "ain't you little Con., as we used to call you?"

"Yes," said I, overjoyed by the recognition, without knowing by whom it was made; "I am the little Con. you speak of."

"Ah! I remembered your voice the moment I heard it, said he. "Don't you remember me?"

"Caramba!" broke in a savage-looking Spaniard, "we're not going to catch a leprosy for the sake of your reminiscences. Tell the fellow to move off, or I'll send a bullet through him."

"And I'll follow you."

"And I—and I," cried two or three more, who, suiting the action to the speech, threw back the pan of the flint-muskets to examine the priming.

"And shall I tell you what I'll do?" said the Englishman. "I'll lay the first fellow's skull open with this hanger that fires a shot at him."

"Will you so?" said a thin, athletic fellow, springing to his legs, and drawing a long narrow-bladed knife from his girdle.

"A truce there, Rivas," said another, "would you quarrel with the Capitan for a miserable lepero?"

"He's not a Capitan of my making," said Rivas, sulkily.

"I don't care of whose making," said the Englishman, in his broken Spanish; "I'm the leader of this expedition—if any one deny it, let him stand out and say so. If half-a-dozen of you deny it, come out one by one—I ask nothing better than to show you who's the best man here."

A low muttering followed this speech, but whether it were of admiration or anger, I could not determine. Meanwhile, my own resolve was formed, as, gathering my limbs together, I rose upon one knee and said—

"Hear me for one instant, Señhors. It would be unworthy of you to quarrel about an object so poor and worthless as I am. Although not a lepero, I have made my escape from the Lazaretto, and travelled hither on foot, with little clothing and less food—an hour or two more will finish what fatigue and starving have all but accomplished. If you will be kind enough to throw me a morsel of bread, and give me time to move away, I'll try and do it; or, if you prefer doing the humane thing, you'll come a few paces nearer, and send a volley into me."

"I vote for the last," shouted one; but, strange to say, none seconded his motion. A change had come over them, possibly by the very recklessness of my own proposal. At last one called out, "Creep away some fifty yards or so, and burn those rags of yours—we'll give you something to wear instead of them."

"Ay—just so," said another, "the poor devil doesn't deserve death for what he's done."

"That's spoken like honest fellows and good comrades," said the Englishman. "And now, my hearty, move down to leeward there, and put on your new toggery, and we'll see if a hot supper won't put some life in you."

I could scarcely credit my own alacrity, as this prospect of better days inspired me with fresh vigor; I recovered my feet at once, and in something which I intended should resemble a trot, set out in the direction indicated, and where already a small bundle of clothes had been placed for my acceptance.

A piece of lighted charcoal and some firewood also apprised me of the office required at my hands, and which I performed with a most hearty good will; and as I threw the odious rags into the flames, I felt that I was saying adieu to the last tie that bound me to the horrible Lazaretto of Bexar.

"Let him join us now," said the Englishman; "though I think if the poor fellow has walked from Bexar, you might have been satisfied he couldn't carry the leprosy with him."

"I've known it go with a piece of gun-wadding from Bexar to the Rio del Norte," said one.

"I saw a fellow who caught it from the rind of a watermellon a lepero had thrown away."

"There was a comrade of ours at Puerta Naval, took it from sitting on the bench beside a well on the road where a lepero had been resting the day before," cried a third.

"Let him sit yonder, then," said the Englishman. "You're more afeard of that disease than the bite of a cayman; though you needn't be squeamish most of you, if it's your beauty you were thinking of."

And thus, amid many a tale of the insidious character of this fell disorder, and many a rude jest on the score of precaution against it, I was ordered to seat myself at about a dozen or twenty paces distant, and receive my food as it was thrown towards me by the others—too happy at this humble privilege, to think of anything but the good fortune of such a meeting.

"Don't you remember me yet?" cried the Englishman, standing where the full glare of the fire lit up his marked features.

"Yes," said I, "you're Halkett."

"To be sure I am, lad. I'm glad you don't forget me."

"How should I. This is not the first time you saved my life."

"I scarcely thought I had succeeded so well," said he, "when we parted last—but you must tell me all about that to-morrow, when you are rested and refreshed. The crew here is not very unlike what you may remember aboard the yacht—don't cross them, and you'll do well with them."

"What are they?" said I, eagerly.

"Gambusinos," said he, in a low voice.

"Bandits?" whispered I, misconceiving the word.

"Not quite," rejoined he, laughing; "though I've no doubt, ready to raise a dollar that way, if any one could be found in these wild parts a little richer than themselves;" with this, he commended me to a sound sleep; and the words were scarcely spoken, ere I obeyed the summons.

Before day broke, I was aroused by the noise of approaching departure; the band were strapping on knapsacks, slinging muskets, and making other preparations for the march. Halkett, as their captain, carrying nothing beyond his weapons, and in his air and manner assuming all the importance of command.

The "Lepero," as I was called, was ordered to follow the column at about a hundred paces to the rear; but as I was spared all burthen in compassion to my weak state, I readily compounded for this invidious position, by the benefits it conferred. A rude meal of rye bread and cold venison, with some coffee, made our breakfast, and away we started; our path lying through the vast prairie I have already spoken of.

As during my state of "quarantine," which lasted seven entire days, we continued to march along over a dreary tract of monotonous desolation—nothing varying the dull uniformity of each day's journey, save the chance sight of a distant herd of buffaloes, the faint traces of an Indian war party, or the blackened embers of a bivouac—I will not weary my readers by dwelling on my own reflections as I plodded on; enough, when I say, they were oftener sad than otherwise.

What this band could possibly be, was an insurmountable puzzle to me. I knew they were called Gambusinos—nothing more. Supposing that some of my readers may not be wiser than I then was, let me take this opportunity, while traversing the prairie, to say in a few words what they were.

The Gambusinos are the gold-seekers of the New World; a class, who in number and importance, divide society with the "Vaqueros," the cattle-dealers, into two almost equal sections. Too poor to become possessors of mines; without capital for enterprise on a larger scale, they formed bands of wandering discoverers, traversing the least-known districts of the Sonora, and spending years of life in the wild st recesses of the Rocky Mountains. Associating together, generally, from circumstances purely accidental, they form little communities, subject to distinct laws; and however turbulent and rebellious under ordinary control, beneath the sway of the self-chosen leaders, they are reputed to be submissive and obedient.

Their skill is, as may be judged, rude as their habits. They rarely carry their researches to any depth beneath the surface; some general rules are all their guidance, and these are easily acquired. They are all familiar with the fact, that the streams which descend from the Rocky Mountains, either towards the Atlantic or Pacific, carry in their autumnal floods vast masses of earth, which form deposits in the plains; that these deposits are often charged with precious ores, and sometimes contain great pieces of pure gold. They know, besides, that the quartz rock is the usual bed where the precious metals are found; and that these rocks form spurs from the large mountains, easily known, because they are never clothed by vegetation, and called in their peculiar phraseology "crestones."

A sharp short stroke of the "barreta," the iron-shod staff of the Gambusino, soon shivers the rock where treasure is suspected; and the fragments being submitted to the action of a strong fire, the existence of gold is at once tested. Often the mere stroke of the barreta will display the shining lustre of the metal without more to do. Such is, for the most part, the extent of their skill.

Such, then, is the life of a "Gambusino." In this pursuit he traverses the vast continent of South America from east to west, crossing torrents, scaling cliffs, descending precipices, braving hunger, thirst, heat, and snow, encountering hostile Indians, and the not less terrible bands of rival adventurers, contesting for existence with the wild animals of the desert, and generally at last paying with his life the price of his daring intrepidity!

Upon every other subject than that of treasure seeking, their minds were a perfect blank. For them, the varied resources of a land abounding in the products of every clime, had no attraction. On the contrary; the soil which grew the maize, indigo, cotton, the sugar-cane, coffee, the olive, and the vine, seemed sterile and barren, since in such regions no gold was ever found. The wondrous fertility of that series of terraces which, on the Andes, unite the fruits of the torrid zone with the lichens of the cold, icy north, had no value in the estimation of men who acknowledged but one wealth, and

recognized but one idol. Their hearts turned from the glorious vegetation of this rich garden, to the dry courses of the torrents that fissure the Cordilleras, or the stony gorges that intersect the Rocky Mountains.

The life of wild and varied adventure, too, that they led, was associated with these deserted and trackless wastes. To them, civilization presented an aspect of slavish subjection and dull uniformity; while in the very vicissitudes of their successes there was the excitement of gambling—rich to-day, they vowed a lamp of solid gold to the "Virgin"—to-morrow, in beggary, they braved the terrors of sacrilege, to steal from the very altar they had themselves decorated. What strange and wondrous narratives did they recount as we wandered over that swelling prairie!

Many avowed that their own misdeeds had first driven them to the life of the deserts; and one, who had lived for years a prisoner among the Choctaws, confessed that his heart still lingered with the time when he had sat as a chief beside the war-fire, and planned stratagems against the tribe of the rival Pawnees. To men of hardy and energetic temperament, recklessness has an immense fascination. Life is so often in peril, they cease to care much for whatever endangers it, and thus, through all their stories, the one feeling ever predominated,—a careless indifference to every risk, coupled with a most resolute conduct in time of danger.

I soon managed to make myself a favorite with this motley assemblage; my natural aptitude to pick up language, aided by what I already knew of French and German, assisted me to a knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese; while from a "half-breed," I acquired a sufficiency of the Indian dialect in use throughout the Lower Prairies. I was fleet of foot, besides being a good shot with the rifle,—qualities of more request among my companions than many gifts of a more brilliant order; and lastly, my skill in cookery, which I derived from my education on board the "Firefly," won me high esteem and much honor. My life was, therefore, far from unpleasant. The monotony of the tract over which we marched was more than compensated for, by the marvellous tales that beguiled the way. One only drawback existed on my happiness, and yet that was sufficient to embitter many a lonely hour of the night, and cast a shade over many a joyous hour of the day. I am almost ashamed to confess what that source of sorrow was, the more, as, perhaps my kind reader will already fancy he has anticipated my grief, and say, "It was the remembrance of Donna Maria; the memory of her I was never to see more." Alas, no! It was a feeling far more selfish than this afflicted me. The plain fact is, I was called "the Lepero." By no other name would my companions know or acknowledge me. It was thus that they first addressed me, and so they would not take the trouble to change my appellation. Not that, indeed, I dared to insinuate a wish upon the subject: such a hint would have been too bold a stroke to hazard in a company where one was called "Trise-ces-fers"—another, "Colpo-di-Sangue,"—a third, "Teufel's Blut," and so on.

It was to no purpose that I appeared in all the vigor of health and strength. I might outrun the wildest bull of the buffalo herd; I might spring upon the half-trained "mustang," and outstrip the antelope in her flight; I might climb the wall-like surface of a cliff, and rob the eagle of her young; but when I came back, the cry of welcome that met me was, "Bravo, Lepero!" And thus did I bear about with me the horrid badge of that dreary time when I dwelt within the Lazaretto of Bexar.

The very fact that the name was not used in terms of scoff or reproach increased the measure of its injury. It called for no reply on my part; it summoned no energy of resistance; it was, as it were, a simple recognition of certain qualities that distinguished me and made up my identity, and at last, to such an extent did it work upon my imagination, that I yielded myself up to the delusion that I was all that they styled me,—an outcast and a leper! When this conviction settled down on my mind, I ceased to fret as before, but a gloomy depression gained possession of me, uncheered save by the one hope, that my life should not be entirely spent among my present associates, and that I should yet be known as something else than "the Lepero."

The prairie over which we travelled never varied in aspect, save with the changing hours of the day. The same dreary swell—the same yellowish grass—the same scathed and scorched cedars—the same hazy outlines of distant mountains that we saw yesterday, rose before us again to-day, as we knew they would on the morrow—till at last our minds took the reflection of the scene, and we journeyed along, weary, silent, and foot sore. It was curious enough to mark how this depression exhibited itself upon different nationalities. The Saxon became silent and theughtful, with only a slight dash of more than ordinary care upon his features—the Italian grew peevish and irritable, the Spaniard was careless and neglectful, while the Frenchman became downright vicious in the wayward excesses of his spiteful humor. Upon the half-breeds, two of whom were our guides, no change was ever perceptible. Too long accustomed to the life of the prairie to feel its influence as peculiar, they plodded on, the whole faculties bent upon one fact, the discovery of the Chihuahua trail, from which our

new track was to diverge in a direction nearly due west.

Our march, no longer enlivened by merry stories or exciting narratives, had become wearisome in the extreme. The heavy fogs of the night and the great mist which arose at sunset prevented all possibility of tracing the path, which often required the greatest skill to detect, so that we were obliged to travel during the sultriest hours of the day, without a particle of shade, our feet scorched by the hot sands, and our heads constantly exposed to the risk of sun-stroke. Water too, became each day, more difficult to obtain; the signs by which our guides discovered its vicinity seemed, to me at least, little short of miraculous; and yet if by any chance they made a mistake, the anger of the party rose so near to mutiny, that nothing short of Halkett's own authority could restore order. Save in these altercations, without which rarely a day passed over, little was spoken; each trudged along either lost in vacuity or buried in his own thoughts.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"THE PLACER."

As for myself, my dreamy temperament aided me greatly. I could build castles for ever; and certainly there was no lack of ground here for the foundation. Sometimes I fancied myself suddenly become the possessor of immense riches, with which I should found a new colony in the very remotest regions of the west. I pictured to myself the village of my workmen, surrounded with its patches of cultivation in the midst of universal barrenness,—the smiling aspect of civilized life in the very centre of barbarism,—the smelting furnaces, the mills, the great refining factories, of which I had heard so much; all rose to my imagination, and my own princely abode, looking down upon these evidences of my wealth.

Then, I fancied the influences of education diffusing themselves among the young, who grew up with tastes and habits so different from those of their fathers. How pursuits of refinement by degrees mingled themselves with daily requirements, till at last the silent forests would echo with the exciting strains of music, or the murmuring rivulet at nightfall would be accompanied by the recited verses of poetry.

The primitive simplicity of such a life as I then pictured was a perfect fascination; and when wearied with thinking of it, by day, as I dropped asleep, at night the thoughts would haunt my dreams unceasingly.

This castle-building temperament—which is, after all, nothing but hope engaged practically—may, when pushed too far, make a man dreamy, speculative and visionary; but if restrained within any reasonable limits, cannot fail to support the courage in many an hour of trial, and nerve the heart against many a sore infliction. I know how it kept me up when others of very different thewes and sinews were falling around me. Independently of this advantage, another and a greater one accompanied it. These self-created visions, however they may represent a man in a situation of greatness or power, always do so to exhibit him dispensing—what he imagines at least to be—the virtues of such a station! No one I trust ever fancied himself a monarch for the sake of all the cruelties he might inflict, and all the tyrannies he might practise; so that, in reality, this "sparring against Fortune with the gloves on" is admirable practice—if it be nothing else.

It was on the seventeenth day of our wanderings that the guide announced we had struck into the Chihuahua "trail," and although to our eyes nothing unusual or strange presented itself, Hermose exhibited signs of unmistakable pride and self-esteem. As I looked around me on the unvarying aspect of earth and sky, I could not help remembering my disappointment on a former occasion, when I heard of the "Banks of Newfoundland," and fancied that the Chihuahua trail might have some such unseen existence as the redoubtable "Banks" aforesaid, which, however familiar to cod-fish, are seldom visited by Christians.

"The evening star will rise straight above our heads to-night," said Hermose; and he was correct—our path lay exactly in the very line with that bright orb. The confidence inspired by this prediction increased, as we found that an occasional prickly-pear tree now presented itself, with, here and there, a dwarf box or an acacia. As night closed in, we found ourselves on the skirt of what seemed a dense wood, bordered by the course of a dried-up torrent. A great wide "streak" of rocks and stones attested the force and extent of that river when filled by the mountain streams, but which now trickled along among the pebbles with scarcely strength enough to force its way. Hermose proceeded for some distance down into the bed of the torrent, and returned with a handful of sand and clay, which he presented to Halkett, saying, "The rains have not been heavy enough; this is last year's earth.

Few as were the words, they conveyed to me an immense impression of his skill, who, in a few grains of sand taken at random, could distinguish the deposits of one year from those of another.

"How does it look, Halkett?" cried one.

"Is it heavy?" asked another.

"It is worthless," said Halkett, throwing the earth from him; "but we are on the right track, lads, for all that: there's always gold where the green snake frequents."

It was a mystery at the time to me, how Halkett knew of the serpent's vicinity, for although I looked eagerly around me, I saw no trace of one.

"I vow he's a-sarchin' for the Coppernose," said a Yankee, as he laughed heartily at my ignorance.

"Do you see that bird, there, upon the bough of the cedar-tree?" said Halkett; "that's the 'Choyero;' and wherever he's found, the Coppernose is never far off." The mystery was soon explained in this wise—the "Choyero" is in the habit of enveloping himself in the leaves of a certain prickly cactus, called "Choya," with which armor he attacks the largest of these green serpents, and always successfully—the strong, thorny spines of the plant invariably inflicting death-wounds upon the snake. Some asserted that the bird only attacked the snake during his season of torpor, but others stoutly averred that the Choyero was a match for any Coppernose, in his perfect vigor.

The approach to the long-sought-for "Placer" was celebrated by an extra allowance of rum; and the party conversed till a late hour of the night, with a degree of animation they had not exhibited for a long time previous; stories of the "washings" resumed their sway—strange wild narratives—the chief interest in which, however striking at the time, lay in the manner of those who related them, and were themselves the actors. They nearly all turned upon some incident of gambling, and were strong illustrations of how completely the love of gain can co-exist with a temperament utterly wasteful and reckless, while both can render a man totally indifferent to every feeling of friendship. There was mention, by chance, of a certain Narvasque, who had been the comrade of many of the party.

"He is dead," said one.

"Caramba!" cried another, "that is scarcely true; they told me he was at the Austin fair this fall."

"You may rely on it he's dead," said the first, "for I know it: he died on the Sacramento, and in this wise. We had had a two months' run of luck at the Crestones of Bacuachez—such fortune as I only hope we may soon see again: none of your filthy wash and sieve work, nor any splintering of a steel barreta on a flint rock, but light digging along the stream, and turning up such masses of the real shining metal as would make your heart leap to look at—lumps of thirty—thirty-five—ay, forty pounds."

"There—there, Harsipe!" said an old fellow, with a long pipe of sugar cane, "if we're to swallow what's a comin', don't choke us just now."

"What does an old trapper know of the diggins," said Harsipe, contemptuously, "'tis a bee huntin' and bird's nestin' you ought to be. Smash my ribs! if he ever saw goold, except on the breast of a Gooldfinch." Having silenced his adversary, he resumed:

"We were all rich by the time we reached Aranchez; but what use is metal! one can't eat it, nor drink it, nor even sleep on't, and the fellows up there had got as much as we had ourselves. Everything cost twenty—no, but two hundred and twenty times its value! I used to cut a goold button off my coat every morning for a day's grub, so that we had to make ourselves a kind of log-hut outside the village, and try to vittal ourselves as best we could. There warn't much savin' in that plan neither, for we drank brandy all day long, and it cost half an ounce of goold every bottle of it! Then we stayed up all night and played brag, and it was that finished Narvasque. He was a betting with Shem Avery, and Shem, who felt he was in for a run of luck, layed it on a bit heavy like; and the end o' it was, he won all Narvesque's two months' diggin's, all to a twenty-eight 'ouncer,' and that he wouldn't bet for anybody—no, nor let any one see where he hid it. Shem had his heart on that lump, and said, "I'll go fifty ounces against your lump, Narvasque;" and the other didn't take it at first, but up he gets and leaves the hut. 'Honor bright,' said he, no man follows me.' They all gave their words, and he went out a short distance into the wood, where he had a sheep's heart hanging near a rock, in the centre of which he had concealed his treasure. He wasn't three yards from the spot, when a great spotted snake darts through the long grass, and making a spring at the piece of meat, bolts it and away. Narvasque followed into the deep jungle, unarmed as he was; there a deadly combat must have ensued, for when his cries aroused us, as we sat within the hut, we found him bitten on every part of the body, and so near death, that he had only time to tell how it happened, when he expired."

"And the snake?" cried several in a breath.

"He got clear away; we gave chase for four days after him, in vain; but a fellow with as much spare cash about him must have come to bad ere now."

"The Injuns has ripped him open afore this, depend on't," said another. "There's scarce a snake of any size hasn't an emerald or splice of gold in him."

"There's more gold lies hidden by fellows that have never lived, or come back to claim it, than ye know of," said the old trapper; "and that's the kind of 'Placer' *I'd* like to chance upon, already washed and smelted."

"They talk of martyrs!" said a tall, sallow Spaniard, who had been educated for a priest, "let me tell you that those Injuns, ay, even the Negroes, have endured as much torture for their gold, as ever did zealot for his faith. There was a fellow, in my father's time, up at Guajuaqualla, who, it was said, had concealed immense treasures, not only of gold, but gems, emeralds, diamonds, and rubies: well, he not only refused all offers from the Gobernador of the mines to share the booty, but he suffered his toes to be taken off by the smelting nippers, rather than make a confession. Then, they tried him with what the miners call a "nest-egg," that is, a piece of gold, heated almost red, and inserted into the spine of the back; but it was all to no use, he never spoke a word."

"I heard of him; that was a nigger called Crick," cried another.

As for me, I heard no more. The sound of that name, which brought up the memory of my night at Anticosti and all its terrors, filled my mind, besides, with a strange swelling of hope, vague and ill defined, it is true, but which somehow opened a vision of future wealth and greatness before me. The name, coupled with the place, Guajuaqualla, left no doubt upon my mind that they were talking of no other than the Black Boatswain himself. If I burned to ask a hundred questions about him, a prudent forbearance held me back. I knew that of all men living, none are so much given to suspicion and mistrust as the Gambusiños. The frauds and deceits eternally in practice among them, the constant concealments of treasure, the affected desertion of rich "Placers," in order to return to them later and alone,—these and many like artifices suggest a universal want of confidence, which is ever at work to trace motives or attribute intentions for every chance word or accidental expression. I restrained my curiosity, therefore, but from that hour forward, the negro and his hidden gold were ever before me. It mattered not where I was, in what companionship, or how engaged. One figure occupied the foreground of every picture. If my waking thoughts represented him exactly as I saw him at Anticosti, my sleeping fancies filled up a whole history of his life. I pictured him a slave in the "Baracoons" of his native land, heavily ironed and chained. I saw him on board the slaver, with bent down head and crippled limbs, crouching between the decks. I followed him to the slave-market and the sugar plantation. I witnessed his sufferings, his sorrows, and his vengeance. I tracked him, as he fled to the woods, with the deep-mouthed bloodhounds behind him; and I stood breathless while they struggled in deadly conflict, till pale, bleeding, and mangled, the slave laid them dead at his feet, and tottered onward to staunch his wounds with the red gum of the liana. Then came an indistinct interval; and when I saw him next it was as a gold washer in the dark stream of the "Rio Nero," his distorted limbs and mangled flesh showing through what sufferings he had passed.

Broken incoherent incidents of crime and misery, of tortured agonies and hellish vengeance, would cross my sleeping imagination, amidst which one picture ever recurred,—it was of the negro as I saw him at Anticosti, crouching beast-like on the earth, and while he patted the ground with his hand, throwing a stealthy terrified glance on every side to see that he was not observed. That he fancied himself in the act of concealing the gold for which he had bartered his very blood, the gesture indicated plainly enough; and in the same attitude my fancy would depict him so powerfully, so truthfully, too, that when I awoke, I had but to close my eyes again, and the vision would come back with every color and adjunct of reality.

My preoccupation of mind could not have escaped the shrewd observation of my companions, had not the unexpected discovery of gold in the sands of the river effectually turned every thought into another and more interesting channel. At first it was mere dust that was detected, but, later on, small misshapen pieces of dusky yellow were picked up, which showed the gold in its most valuable form, in combination with quartz rock.

Up to the moment of that discovery all was lassitude and indifference. A few only gave themselves the trouble to wet their feet; the greater number sitting lazily down upon the river's bank, and gazing on the "washers" with a contemptuous negligence. The failures they experienced, even their humble successes, were met with sneers and laughter; till at last Hermose held up aloft a little spicula of gold about the thickness of a pencil. No sooner had the brilliant lustre caught their eyes, than, like hounds at the sight of the stag, they sprung to their feet and dashed into the stream.

What a sudden change came over the scene! Instead of the silence of that dark river, through whose dull current three or four figures waded noiselessly, while in lazy indolence their companions lay smoking or sleeping near, now, in an instant, the whole picture became animated. With plashing water and wild shouts of various import the deep glen resounded, as upwards of thirty men descended into the river; and while some examined the bed of the stream with the "barretas," others dived beneath the water to explore it with ther hands, and bring up mingled masses of earth and dust, over which they bent with earnest gaze for many minutes together.

Then what cries of joy or disappointment

broke forth at every instant. There seemed at once to come over that hardened, time-worn group of men, all the changing fickleness of childhood. The wayward vacillations of hope and despair,—bright visions of sudden wealth, with gloomy thoughts of disappointment, when, suddenly, one brought up from the bed of the stream something which he showed to his neighbor, then to another, and another, till a knot had gathered close around him, among which I found myself. "What is it?" said I, disappointed at not seeing some great mass of yellow gold.

"Don't you see! It is the fossil bone of the antelope," said Hermose; "and when the floods have penetrated deep enough to unbury that, there's little doubt but we shall find gold enough."

"Who says enough?" cried a Mexican, as emerging half-suffocated from the water he held aloft a pure piece of metal, nearly the size of a small apple; "of such fruit as this one can never eat to indigestion!"

Halkett's whistle was soon heard, summoning the whole party to a council on the bank; nor was the call long unanswered. In an instant the tanned and swarthy figures were seen emerging, all dripping as they were, from the stream, ascending the banks, and then throwing themselves in attitudes of careless ease around the leader.

A short discussion ensued as to the locality upon which we had chanced, some averring that it was an unexplored branch of the "Brazo," others that it was one of those wayward courses into which mountain streams are directed in seasons of unusual rain. The controversy was a warm, and might soon have become an angry one, had not Halkett put an end to all altercation by saying, "It matters little how the place be called, or what its latitude; you know the Mexican adage, 'It's always a native land where there's gold.' That there is some here, I have no doubt; that there is as much as will repay us for the halt, is another question. My advice is, that we turn the river into another course, leave the present channel dry and open, and then explore it thoroughly."

"Well spoken, and true," said an old white-headed Gambusino; "that is the plan in the far west, and they are the only fellows who go right about their work."

The proposal was canvassed ably on all sides, and adopted with scarcely anything like opposition; and then parties were "told off," to carry into execution different portions of the labor. The section into which I fell was that of the scouts or explorers, who were to track the course of the stream upwards, and search for a suitable spot at which to commence operations. Hermose took the command of this party, and named the "Lepero" as his lieutenant.

The "sierra" through which our path lay was singularly wild and picturesque. The rocks, thrown about in every fantastic shape, were actually covered with the tendrils of the liana, whose great blue flowers hung in luxuriant clusters from every cliff and crag. Wild fig and almond trees loaded with fruit, red guavas and limes, met us as we advanced, till at length we found ourselves in the very centre of a tract rich in every production of our gardens, and all growing in spontaneous freedom and wildness. The yellow-flowering cactus, and the golden lobelia, that would have been the choicest treasures of a conservatory in other lands, we here broke branches off to fan away the mosquitoes and the gallinippers. The farther we went, the more fruitful and luxuriant did the tract seem. Oranges, peaches and grapes, in all the profusion of their wildest abundance, surrounded us, and even littered the very way beneath our feet. To feel the full enchantment of such a scene, one should have been a prairie traveller for weeks, long-wearied and heart-sore with the dull monotony of a tiresome journey, with fevered tongue and scorching feet, with eyeballs red from the glaring sun, and temples throbbing from the unshaded lustre. Then, indeed, the change was like one of those wondrous transformations of a fairy tale, rather than mere actual life. In the transports of our delight we threw ourselves down among the flowering shrubs, and covered ourselves with blossoms and buds; we bound the grape clusters on our foreheads like bacchanals, and tied great branches of the orange-tree round us as scarfs. In all the wantonness of children, we tore the fruit in handfuls, and threw it around us. The wasteful prodigality of nature seemed to suggest excess on our part, prompting us to a hundred follies and extravagances. As if to fill up the measure of our present joy by imparting the brightness of future hope, Hermose told us that such little spots of luxuriant verdure were very often found in the regions richest with gold, and that we might be almost certain of discovering a valuable placer in our immediate vicinity. There was another, and that no inconsiderable, advantage attending these "Oases" of fertility. The Indians never dared to intrude upon these precincts; their superstition being that the "Treasure God," or the "Genius of the Mine" always had his home in these places, and executed summary vengeance upon all who dared to invade them. This piece of red man faith, however jocularly recorded, did not meet that full contempt from my comrades I could have expected. On the contrary, many cited instances of disasters and calamities which seemed like curious corroborations of the creed. Indeed, I soon saw how naturally superstitious credences become matter of faith to him who lives the life of the prairies.

"Then you think we shall have to pay the price of all this enjoyment, Hermose?" said I, as I lay luxuriously beneath a spreading banana.

"Quien Sabe! who knows?" exclaimed he in his Mexican dialect, and with a shrug of the shoulders that implied doubt.

Although each event is well marked in my memory, and the incidents of each day indelibly fixed upon my mind, it is needless that I should dwell upon passages which, however, at the time full of adventure and excitement, gave no particular direction to the course of my humble destiny. We succeeded in finding a spot by which the bed of the river might be changed; and after some days of hard labor, we accomplished the task.

The course of the stream thus left dry for a considerable distance, became the scene of our more active exertions. The first week or two little was discovered, save gold dust, or an occasional "spicula" of the metal, heavily alloyed with copper; but as we followed up the course, towards the mountain, a vein of richest ore was found, lying near the surface, too, and presenting masses of pure gold, many of them exceeding twenty ounces in weight.

There could be no doubt that we had chanced upon a most valuable placer; and now orders were given to erect huts, and such rude furnaces for testing, as our skill stood in need of. A strict scale of profits was also established, and a solemn oath exacted from each, to be true and faithful to his comrades in all things. Our little colony demanded various kinds of service; for, while the gold-seeking was our grand object, it was necessary, in order to subsist the party, that a corps of trappers and hunters should be formed, who should follow the buffalo, the red deer, and the wild hog, over the prairies.

Many declined serving on this expedition; doubtless suspecting that the share of treasure which might be alloted to the absent man, would undergo a heavy poundage. Hermose, however, whose adventurous spirit inclined more willingly to the excitement of the chase than the monotonous labor of a washer, volunteered to go, and I offered myself to be his companion. Some half-dozen of the youngest agreed to follow us, and we were at once named "The Hunters to the Expedition."

The rivalry between the two careers, good-natured as it was, served to amuse and interest us; and while *our* blank days were certain to obtain for us a share of scoffs and jibes, *their* unsuccessful ones did not escape their share of sarcasm. If one party affected to bewail the necessity of storing up treasure for a set of walking gentlemen, who passed the day in pleasure-rambles about the country, the other took care to express their discontent at returning loaded with spoils for a parcel of lazy impostors, that lounged away their time on the bank of a river. Meanwhile, both pursuits flourished admirably. Practice had made us most expert with the rifle; and as we were fortunate enough to secure some of the "mustangs," and train them to the saddle, our "chasse" became both more profitable and pleasant. By degrees, too, little evidences of superfluity began to display themselves in our equipment: our saddles, at first made of a mere wooden trestle, with a strip of buffalo-hide thrown across it, were now ornamented with black bear-skins, or the more valuable black fox-skin; our own costume, if not exactly conformable to Parisian models, was comfortable and easy—a brown deer-skin tunic, fastened by a belt around the waist; short breeches, reaching to the knee-cap, which was left bare, for climbing; "botas vaqueras," very loose at top, and serving as holsters for our pistols; and a cap of fox or squirrel, usually designed by the wearer, and exhibiting proofs of ingenuity, if not taste: such was our dress. Our weapons of rifle, and bowie-knife, and pistols, giving it a character, which, on the boards of a minor theatre, would have been a crowning "success." We were also all mounted; some, Hermose and myself in particular, admirably so. And although I often in my own heart regretted the powers of strength and endurance of poor "Charry," my little mustang steed, with his long forelock and his bushy moustaches, a strange peculiarity of this breed, was a picture of compactnes and agility.

We had also constructed a rude wagon, so rude that I can even yet laugh as I think on it, to carry our spoils, which were far too cumbrous for a mere horse-load, and when left on the prairies, attracted such numbers of prairie-wolves and vultures as to be downright perilous. If this same wagon was not exactly a type for "Long Acre," it was at least strong and serviceable; and although the wheels were far nearer oval than circular, they *did* go round; the noise they created in so doing might have been disagreeable to a nervous invalid, being something between the scream of a railway train and the yell of a thousand peacocks. But I believe we rather liked it; at least I know that when some luckless Sybarite suggested the use of a little bear's fat around the axle, he was looked on as a kind of barbarian to whom Nature denied the least ear for music.

As for the "chasse" itself, it was glorious sport. Glorious in the unbounded freedom to wander whither one listed!—Glorious in the sense of mastery we felt, that we alone of all the millions of mankind had reached this far-away unvisited tract!—Glorious in its successes, its dangers, and its toils! There was, besides, an endless variety of adventure prairie hunting affords. Now, it was the heavy

buffalo, lumbering lazily along, and tossing his huge head in anger, as the rifle-ball pierced his dense hide. Now, it was the proudly-antlered stag, careering free over miles and miles of waste. At another time, the grizzly bear was our prey, and our sport lay in the dense jungle, or among the dwarf scrub, through which the hissing rattlesnake was darting, affrighted at the noise. In more peaceful mood the antelope would be the victim; while the wild turkey, or the great cock of the wood, would grace with his bright wavy feathers the cap of him whose aim was true at longest rifle range.

And these were happy days—the very happiest of my whole life!—for if, sometimes, regrets would arise about that road of ambition from which I had turned off, to wander in the path of mere pleasure, I bethought me that no career the luckiest fortune could have opened to me would have developed the same manly powers of endurance of heat and cold, and of peril in a hundred shapes. In no other pursuit could I have educated myself to the like life of toils and dangers, bringing me daily, as it were, face to face with death, till I could look on him without a shudder or a fear!

I will not say that Donna Maria may not have passed across the picture of my mind-drawn regrets. But if her form did indeed flit past, it was to breathe a hope of some future meeting, some bright time to come—the recompense of all our separation. And I thought with pride how much more worthy of her would I be as the prairie-hunter—the fearless follower of the bear and the buffalo—accustomed to the life of the wild woods—than as the mere adventurer, whose sole stock in trade was the subterfuge and deceit he could practise on the unwary.

It was strange enough all this while that I seemed to have lost sight of my old guide-star—the great passion of my earlier years, the desire to be a "gentleman." It was stranger still—but after reflection has shown me that it was true—I made far greater progress towards that wished-for goal, when I ceased to make it the object of my ambition.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FATE OF A GAMBUSINO.

The "Life of the Prairie," with all its seeming monotony, was very far from wearisome. The chase, which to some might have presented the same unvarying aspect, to those who passionately loved sport, abounded in new and exciting incidents. If upon one day the object of pursuit was the powerful bison bull, with his shaggy mane and short straight horns, on another, it was the swift antelope or the prairie-fox, whose sable skin is the rarest piece of dandyism a hunter's pelisse can exhibit; now and then the wide-spread paw of a brown bear would mark the earth, and give us days of exciting pursuit; or, again, some Indian "trail"—some red man "sign"—would warn us that we were approaching the hunting-grounds of a tribe, and that all our circumspection was needed. Besides these, there were changes inappreciable to the uninitiated, but thoroughly understood by us, in the landscape itself, highly interesting. It is a well-known fact that the shepherd becomes conversant with the face of every sheep in his flock, tracing differences of expression, where others would recognise nothing but a blank uniformity; so did the prairie, which at first presented one unvarying expanse, become at last marked by a hundred peculiarities, with which close observation made us intimate. Indeed I often wondered how a great stretching plain, without a house, a tree, a shrub, or a trickling brook, could supply the materials of scenic interest, and the explanation is almost as difficult as the fact. One must have lived the life of solitude and isolation which these wild wastes compel, to feel how every moss-clad stone can have its meaning—how the presence of some little insignificant lichen indicates the vicinity of water—how the blue foxbell shows where honey is to be found—how the faint spiral motion of the pirn grass gives warning that rain is nigh at hand. Then with what interest at each sunset is the horizon invested, when the eye can pierce space to a vast extent, and mark the fog-banks which tower afar off, and distinguish the gathering clouds from the dark-backed herd of buffaloes, or a group of Indians on a march. Every prairie "roll," every dip and undulation of that vast surface, had its own interest, till at length I learned to think that all other prospects must be tame, spiritless, and unexciting, in comparison with that glorious expanse, where sky and earth were one, and where the clouds alone threw shadows upon the vast plain.

The habit of a hunter's life in such scenes, the constant watchfulness against sudden peril, inspire a frame of mind in which deep reflectiveness is blended with a readiness and promptitude of action, gifts which circumstances far more favorable to moral training do not always supply. The long day passed in total solitude, since very often the party separates to rendezvous at nightfall, necessarily calls for thought; not indeed the dreamy reverie of the visionary forgetful of himself and all the world, but of that active, stirring, mental operation, which demands effort and will. If fanciful pictures of the future as we would wish to make it, intervene, they come without displacing the stern realities of the

present, any more than the far distances of a picture interfere with the figures of the foreground.

Forgive, most kind reader, the prolix fondness with which I linger on this theme. Fortune gave me but scant opportunity of cultivation, but my best schooling was obtained upon the Prairies. It was there I learned the virtue of self-reliance, the only real independence. It was there I taught myself to endure reverses without disappointment, and bear hardships without repining. It was there I came to know that he who would win an upward way in life must not build upon some self-imagined superiority, but boldly enter the lists with others, and make competitorship the test of his capacity. They were inferior acquirements, it is true; but I learned also to bear hunger and cold, and want of rest and sleep, which in my after-life were not without their value. It would savor too much of a "bull" for him who writes his own memoirs to apologize for egotism, still I do feel compunctions of conscience about the length of these personal details—and now to my story.

While we pursued our hunting pastime over the prairies, the "expedition" was successful beyond all expectation. No sooner was the bed of the river laid bare, than gold was discovered in quantities, and the "washers" despising the slower process of "sifting," betook themselves to the pick and the "barreta" like their comrades. It was a season of rejoicing, and, so far as our humble means permitted, of festivity; for though abounding in gold, our daily food was buffalo and "tough doe," unseasoned by bread, or anything that could prove its substitute. If the days were passed in successful labor, the evenings were prolonged with narratives of the late discoveries, and gorgeous imaginings of the future, as each fancied that bright vista should be. Some, were for a life of unbounded excess and dissipation—the "amende," as they deemed it, for all their toil and endurance: others, anticipated a career of splendor and display in the Old World. The Frenchman raved of Paris and its cafés and restaurants, its theatres and its thousand pleasures. A few speculated upon setting forth on fresh expeditions with better means of success. Halkett alone bethought him of home and of an aged mother in the far away valley of Llanberris, whose remainder of life he longed to render easy and independent.

Nor was it the least courageous act of his daring life, to avow such a feeling among such associates. How they laughed at his humility! how they scoffed at the filial reverence of the Gambusino! Few of them had known a parent's care. Most were outcasts from their birth, and started in life with that selfish indifference to all others which is so often the passport to success. I saw this, and perceived how affection and sympathy are so much additional weight upon the back of him "who enters for the plate of Fortune;" but yet my esteem for Halkett increased from that moment. I fancied that his capacity for labor and exertion was greater, from the force of a higher and a nobler impulse than that which animated the others; and I thought I could trace to this source the untiring energy for which he was conspicuous above all the rest. It was evident, too, that this "weakness," as they deemed it, had sapped nothing of his courage, nor detracted in aught from his resolute daring—ever foremost, as he was, wherever peril was to be confronted.

I ruminated long and frequently over this, to me, singular trait of character, whole days as I rambled the prairies alone in search of game; the tedious hours of the night I would lie awake, speculating upon it, and wondering if it were impulses of this nature that elevated men to high deeds and generous actions; and —to realize my conception in one word—made them "gentlemen."

To be sure, in all the accessory advantages of such, Halkett was most lamentably deficient, and it would have been labor in vain to endeavor to conform him to any one of the usages of the polite world; and yet, I thought, might it not be possible that this rude unlettered man may have within him, in the recesses of his own heart, all those finer instincts all those refinements of high feeling and honor that make up a gentleman,—like a lump of pure virgin gold encased in a mass of pudding-stone. The study of this problem took an intense hold upon me; for while I could recognise in myself a considerable power of imitating all the observances of the well-bred world, I grieved to see that these graces were garments, which no more influenced a man's real actions than the color of his coat or the shape of his hat will affect the stages of an ague or the paroxysms of a fever.

To become a "gentleman," according to my very crude notions of that character, was the ruling principle of my life. I knew that rank, wealth, and station, were all indispensably requisite; but these I also fancied might be easily counterfeited, while other *gifts* must be absolutely possessed;—such as a good address; a skill in all manly exercises; a personal courage ever ready to the proof; a steady adherence to a pledged word. Now I tried to educate myself to all these; and, to a certain extent, I succeeded. In fact, I experienced what all men have who have set up a standard before them, that constant measurement will make one grow taller. I fancied that Halkett and myself were on the way to the same object, by different roads. Forgive the absurd presumption, mild benevolent reader; for there is really something insufferably ludicrous in the very thought; and I

make the "confession" now only in the fullness of a heart which is determined to have no concealments.

That I rode my "mustang" with a greater air—that I wore my black fox pelisse more jauntily,—that I slung my rifle at my back with a certain affectation of grace,—that I was altogether "got up" with an eye to the picturesque did not escape my companions, who made themselves vastly merry at pretensions which, in their eyes, were so supremely ridiculous; but which amply repaid me for all the sarcasm, by suggesting a change of their name for me,—my old appellation, "Il Lepero," being abandoned for that of "Il Condé,"—the Count. It matters little in what spirit you give a man a peculiar designation: the world takes it up in their own fashion, and he himself conforms to it, whether for good or evil.

As the "Condé," I doubtless displayed many a laughable affectation, and did many things in open caricature of the title; but, on the other hand, the name spurred me on to actions of most perilous daring, and made me confront danger for the very sake of the hazard; till, by degrees, I saw that the designation conferred upon me—at first in mockery, became a mark of honorable esteem among my comrades.

The Prairie was fruitful in incidents to test my courage. As the season wore on, and game became more scarce, we were compelled to pursue the "bison" into distant tracks, verging upon the hunting-grounds of an Indian tribe called the Camanches. At first our "rencontres" were confined to meeting with a scout, or some small outlaying party of the tribe; but later on, we ventured further within their frontier, and upon one occasion we penetrated a long and winding ravine, which expanded into a small plain, in the midst of which, to our amazement, we beheld their village.

The scene was in every way a striking one. It was a few minutes after sunset, and while yet the "yellow glory" of the hour bathed the earth, that we saw the cane wigwams of the "Camanches," as they stood at either side of a little river that, with many a curve, meandered through the plain. Some squaws were seated on the banks, and a number of children were sporting in the stream, which appeared too shallow for swimming. Here and there, at the door of the wigwams, an old man was sitting smoking. Some mustangs, seemingly fresh caught, were picketed in a circle, and a few boys were amusing themselves tormenting the animals into bounds and curvets,—the laughter the sport excited being audible where we stood. The soft influence of the hour—the placid beauty of the picture—the semblance of tranquil security impressed on everything—the very childish gambols—were all images so full of home and homelike memories, that we halted and gazed on the scene in speechless emotion. Perhaps each of us at that moment had traversed in imagination half a world of space, and was once again a child! As for myself, infancy had been "no fairy dream," and yet my eyes filled up, and my lip quivered as I looked.

It was evident that the warriors of the tribe were absent on some expedition. The few figures that moved about were either the very old, the very young, or the squaws, who, in all the enjoyment of that gossipping, as fashionable in the wild regions of the west, as in the gilded boudoirs of Paris, sat enjoying the cool luxury of the twilight.

Our party consisted of only four and myself; and standing, as we did, in a grove of nut-trees, were perfectly concealed from view; no sense of danger then interfered with our enjoyment of the prospect; we gazed calmly on the scene on which we looked.

"Señhor Condé," whispered one of my party, a swarthy Spaniard from the Basque, "what a foray we might make yonder; their young men are absent; they could make no defence. Caramba! it would be rare sport."

"Condé mio!" cried a Mexican, who had once been a horse-dealer; "I see mustangs yonder worth five hundred dollars, if they are worth a cent; let us have a dash forward and carry them off."

"There is gold in that village," muttered an old Ranchero, with a white moustache; "I see sifting-sieves drying beside the stream."

And so, thought I to myself, these are the associates, who, a moment back, I dreamed were sharing my thoughts, and whose hearts, I fancied, were overflowing with softest emotions. One, indeed, had not pronounced, and to him I turned in hope. He was a dark-eyed, sharp-featured Breton. "And you, Claude," said I, "what are your thoughts on this matter!"

"I leave all in the hands of my captain," said he, saluting in military fashion; "but if there be a pillage, I claim the woman that is sitting on the rock yonder, with a yellow girdle round her, as mine."

I turned away in utter disappointment. The robber-spirit was the only one I had evoked, and I grew sick at heart to think of it. How is it, that, in certain moods of mind, the vices we are conversant with assume a double coarseness, and that we feel repugnance to what daily habit had seemed to have inured us?

"Is it to be, or not?" growled the Spaniard, who, having tightened his girths, and examined the lock of his rifle, now stood in somewhat impatient anxiety.

"Since when have we become banditti," said I, insultingly, "that we are to attack and

pillage helpless women and children? Are these the lessons Halkett has taught us? Back to the camp. Let us have no more of such counsels."

"We meet nothing but scoffs and jibes when we return empty-handed," muttered the Spaniard. "It is seldom such an opportunity offers of a heavy booty."

"Right-about," said I imperiously, not caring to risk my ascendancy by debating the question further. They obeyed without a word; but it was easy to see that the spirit of mutiny was but sleeping. For some miles of the way a dreary silence pervaded the party. I tried all in my power to bring back our old good understanding, and erase the memory of the late altercation; but even my friend Narvasque held aloof, and seemed to side with the others. I was vexed and irritated to a degree the amount of the incident was far from warranting! nor was the fact that we were returning without any success, without its influence. Moody and sad, I rode alone at their head, not making any further effort to renew their confidence, when suddenly a spotted buck started from the shelter of a prairie roll, and took his way across the plain. To unsling my rifle, and fire at him, was the work of half a minute. My shot missed; and I heard, or thought I heard, a burst of contemptuous laughter behind me. Without turning my head, I spurred my horse to a sharp gallop, and proceeded to reload my rifle as I went. The buck had, however, got a "long start" of me; and although my mustang had both speed and endurance, I soon saw that the chase would prove unrewarding; and after a hot pursuit of half a mile, I pulled up and wheeled about. Where was my party? not a trace of them was to be seen. I rode up a little slope of the prairie, and then, at a great way off, I could descry their figures, as with furious speed they were hastening back in the direction of the Camanche village. I cannot express the bitterness of the feeling that came over me.

It was no longer the sense of outraged humanity which filled my heart. Selfishness usurped the ground altogether, and it was the injured honor of a leader, whose orders had been despised. It was the affront to my authority, wounded me so deeply. Then I fancied to myself their triumphant return to the camp, laden with the spoils of victory, and full of heroic stories of their own deeds; while I, the captain of the band, should have nothing to contribute but a lame narrative of misplaced compassion, which some might call by even a harsher name. Alas for weak principle! I wished myself back at their head a hundred times over. There was no atrocity that, for a minute or two, I did not feel myself capable of; I really believe that, if any other course were open to me, I had never turned my steps back toward the camp. Crest-fallen and sad indeed was I, as I rode forward—now, cursing the insubordinate rabble that deserted me—now, inveighing against my own silly efforts to change the ferocious instincts of such natures. In my bitterness of spirit I attributed all to my foolish ambition of being "the gentleman." What business had such a character there? or what possible link could bind him to such companionship? In my discontent, too, I fancied that these "gentlemen" traits, were like studding-sails, only available in fine weather, and with a fair wind; but that, for the storms and squalls of life, such fine-spun canvass was altogether unsuited. Is it needful I should say that I lived to discover this to be an error?

To reach the camp ere nightfall, I was obliged to ride fast; and the quick stride of my "half-breed" did more to rally my spirits than all my philosophisings.

The slight breeze of sunset was blowing over the prairie, when I came in sight of the skirting of nutwood which sheltered the camp to the "south'ard." It was like home, somehow, that spot. The return to it, each evening, had given it that character; and one's instincts are invariably at work to make substitutes for all the "prestiges" that tell of family and friends. I experienced the feeling strongly now, as I entered the wood, and spurred my nag onward, impatient to catch a glimpse of the watch-fires. As I issued from the copse, and looked up towards the little table-land where the camp used to stand, I saw nothing that spoke of my friends. There were no fires—not a figure moved on the spot. I pressed eagerly forward to ascertain the reason; my mind full of its own explanation of the fact, in which, I own it, fears were already blending. Perhaps they had removed somewhat higher up the stream; perhaps the Camanches had been there, and a battle had been fought; perhaps——. But why continue? Already I stood upon the spreading surface of table land, and was nearing the spot where all our huts were built, and now, a deep, booming noise filled my ears—a hollow, cavernous sound, like the sea surging within some rocky cave. I listened; it grew fuller and louder, or seemed to do so, and I could mark sounds that resembled the crashing of timber and the splintering of rocks.

My suspense had now risen to torture, and my poor mustang, equally frightened as myself, refused to move a step, but stood with his ears flattened back, fore legs extended, and protruded nostril, sniffing, in a very paroxysm of fright.

I dismounted, and fastening his head to his fore leg, in Mexican fashion, advanced on foot. Each step I made brought me nearer to the

sounds, which now, I perceived, were those of a fast rolling river. A horrid dread shot through my heart—my senses reeled as it struck me; but, with an effort, I sprang forward—and there, deep below me, in a boiling ocean of foam, rolled the river along the channel which we had succeeded in damming up, on the mountain side, and in whose dry bed all our labors had been followed. In an instant the whole truth revealed itself before me; the stream, swollen by rain falling in the distant mountains, had overborne the barrier, and descending with all its force, had carried away village, mines, and every trace of the ill-fated "Expedition." The very trees that grew along the banks were at first undermined, and then swept away, and might be seen waving their great branches above the flood, and then disappearing for ever—like gigantic figures struggling in the agony of drowning. The rude smelting-house, built of heavy stones and masses of rock, had been carried down with the rest. Trees, whose huge size attested ages of growth, reeled with the shock that shook the earth beside them, and seemed to tremble at their own coming destiny.

The inundation continued to increase at each instant, and more than once the "yellowest" waves compelled me to retire. This it was which first led me to despair of my poor comrades, since I inferred that the torrent had burst its barrier only a short space before my arrival; and as the sunset was the hour when all the gold discovered during the day was washed, before being deposited in the smelting-house, I conjectured that my companions were all overtaken at that moment by the descending flood, and that none had escaped destruction.

However the sad event took place, I never saw any of them after, and although I tracked the stream for miles, and spent the entire of two days in search of them, I did not discover one trace of the luckless expedition. So changed had everything become—such a terrible alteration had the scene undergone—that whenever I awoke from a sleep, short and broken as my feverish thoughts would make it, it was with difficulty I could believe that this was once the "camp:" that, where that swollen and angry torrent rolled, had been the dry, gravelly bed where joyous parties labored; that, beneath those cedars, where now the young alligator stirred the muddy slime, we used to sit and chat in pleasant companionship: that human joys, and passions, and hopes, once lived and flourished in that little space, where ruin and desolation had now set their marks; and where the weariest traveller would not linger, so sorrow-struck and sad was every feature of the scene.

Poor Halkett was uppermost in my thoughts; his remembrance of his old mother—his plans for her future happiness and comfort—formed, doubtless, many a long year before, and only realised to be dashed for ever! How many a wanderer and outcast doubtless, like him, have sunk into unhonored graves in far-away lands, and of whom no trace exists, and who are classed among the worthless and the heartless of their families; and yet, if we had record of them, we might learn, perhaps, how thoughts of home—of some dear mother—of some kind sister—of some brother, who had been more than father—had spirited them on to deeds of daring and privation; and how, in all the terrible conflict of danger in which their days were spent, one bright hope of returning home at last—glittered, like a light ship on a lonely sea, and shed a radiance when all around was dark and dreary.

The third day broke, and still found me lingering beside the fatal torrent, not only without meeting with any of my former comrades, but even of that party who had returned to the Indian village, not one came back. In humble imitation of prairie habit, I erected a little cross on the spot, and with my penknife inscribed poor Halkett's name. This done, I led my horse slowly away, through the tangled underwood, till I reached the open plain, then I struck out in a gallop, and rode in the direction where the sun was setting.

The mere detail of personal adventures, in which the traits of character or the ever-varying aspects of human nature find no place, must always prove wearisome. The most "hair-breadth 'scapes" require for their interest the play of passions and emotions, and in this wise the perils of the lonely traveller amid the deserts of the far west could not vie in interest with the slightest incident of domestic life, wherein human cares and hopes and joys are mingled up.

I will not longer trespass on the indulgence of any one who has accompanied me so far—by lingering over the accidents of my prairie life—nor tell by what chances I escaped death in some of its most appalling forms.—The "Choctaw," the jaguar, the spotted leopard of the jungle, the cayman of the sand lakes, had each in turn marked me for its prey—and yet, preserved from every peril, I succeeded in reaching the little village of "La Noria," or the "Well," which occupies one of the opening gorges of the Rocky Mountains, at the outskirts of which some of the inhabitants found me asleep, with clothing reduced to very rags, nothing remaining of all my equipment save my rifle, and a little canvass pouch of ammunition.

My entertainers were miners, whose extreme poverty and privation would have been inexplicable, had I not learned that the settlement was formed exclusively of convicts, who

had either been pardoned during the term of their sentence, or, having completed their time, preferred passing the remainder of their lives in exile. As a "billet of conduct' was necessary to all who settled at the village, the inhabitants, with a very few exceptions, were peaceable, quiet, and inoffensive, and of the less well disposed, a rigidly severe police took the most effective charge.

Had there been any way of disposing of me, I should not have been suffered to remain; but as their was no "parish" to which they could "send me on," nor any distinct fund upon which to charge me, I was retained in a spirit of rude compassion, for which, had it even been ruder, I had been grateful. The "Gobernador" was an old Mexican officer of Santa Anna's staff, called Salezar, and whose "promotion" was a kind of penalty imposed upon him for his robberies and extortions in the commissariat of the army. He was not altogether unworthy of the trust, since it was asserted that there never was a convict vice nor iniquity in which he was not thoroughly versed, nor could any scheme be hatched, the clue to which his dark ingenuity could not discover.

I was summoned before him on the day of my arrival, and certainly a greater contrast could not have been desired than was the bravery of his costume to the rags of mine. A Spanish hat and feathers, such as is only seen upon the stage, surmounted his great red and carbuncled face; a pair of fiery red moustaches, twisted into two complete circles, with a tail out of them like an eccentric "Q;" a sky-blue jacket covered with silver buttons; tight pantaloons of the same color, and Hessian boots, made up the details of a figure, whose unwieldy size the tightness of the dress did not by any means set off to advantage. He wore besides a quantity of daggers, pistols, and stilettos, suspended around his person, and a huge Barcelona blade hung by two silver chains from his side, the rattle and jingle of which, as he spoke, appeared to give him the most lively pleasure. I was ordered to stand before a table, at which he sat with a kind of secretary at his side, while he interrogated me as to who I was, whence I came, the object of my journey, and so forth. My account of myself was given in the very briefest way I could devise—totally devoid of all coloring or exaggeration, and *for me*, with a most singular avoidance of the romantic; and yet, to my utter discomfiture, from the announcement of my name, down to the last incident of my journey, he characterized every statement by the very short and emphatic word, "a lie," desiring the secretary to record the same in his "ledger," as his own firm conviction; "and add," said he solemnly, "that the fellow is a spy from the States of North America—that he probably belonged to some exploring party into our frontier—and that he will most certainly be hanged whenever the smallest offence is proved against him." These benign words were most royally spoken, and I made my acknowledgments for them, by taking off my tattered and greasy cap and with a most urbane bow wishing him health and happiness for half a century to come, to pronounce similar blessings upon many others.

The bystanders did look, I confess, somewhat terrified at my impromptu courtesy, but Salezar, upon whom my rags and my grotesque appearance, generally, produced a rather amusing effect, laughed heartily, and bade them to give me something to eat. The order, simple and intelligible as it was, at least to me, seemed to evoke the strangest signs of surprise and astonishment, and not unreasonably; for, as I afterwards came to know, no Lazarus eat of the crumbs that fell from this "rich man's table," while from the poor herd of the settlers, not a crust nor a parched pea could be expected, as they were fed by rations so scantily doled out as barely to support life. The order to feed me was therefore issued pretty much in the same spirit which made Marie Antoinette recommend the starving people to eat "brioche." As no one was to be found, however, bold enough to express a doubt as to the facility of the measure, I was led away in silence.

A very animated little discussion arose in the street, as to what I was to get? where to have it? and who to give it? difficulties which none seemed able to solve by any explanation save the usual Mexican one of "quien sabe?" or "who knows?" Having uttered this in accents of very convincing embarrassment, each went his way, leaving me standing with an old mule-driver, the only one who had not delivered himself of this speech.

Now it chanced that the well from which the village derived its name of "La Noria" had originally been worked by mules, who having died off, their places were supplied by two miserable asses of the prairie breed, creatures not much bigger than sheep, and scarcely stronger. These wretched beasts had been for years past stimulated to their daily labor by the assiduous persecutions of a fierce English bull-dog, who, with bark and bite, made their lives a very pretty martyrdom. Either worn out by his unremitting exertions, or tha asses' flesh, (of which, from their hocks and hind-quarters generally, he freely partook) disagreed with him, the animal sickened and died, leaving the poor mulero to his own unaided devices to drive the donkeys round the charmed circle. I believe that he did all that mere man was capable of—in fact, in every thing, save using his teeth, he imitated closely the practices of the illustrious defunct. But asses, though they were, they soon discovered that the "great motive-principle" was wantin

and betook themselves to a far easier and more congenial mode of doing the day's work.

Now the mulero was a man of thought and reflection, and it occurred to him, that if asses, however inadequately, could yet, in some sort, perform the functions of mules, there was no reason why a man, even a very poor-looking and ragged one, should not replace a bull-dog. There was that hungry, half-starved look about me, too, that vouched my temper would not be of the sweetest: and he eyed me with the glance of a connoisseur. At last Mijo—for such was he called—made the proposal to me in all form—explaining that my predecessor had had his rations allowed him like a regular colonist, and was entitled to sleep under cover at the house of his former mistress, La Señhora Dias, "who," he added with a sly wink, "was my countrywoman." Well knowing that a Mexican never boggles at a lie, no matter how broad and palpable, I took no notice of what I at once concluded to be impossible; but proceeded to inquire as to the precise functions I might be expected to perform in my canine capacity.

"A mere nothing," said he with a shrug of his shoulders; "we harness the beasts at day-break, say three o'clock; by eight the water is all up; then you can sleep or amuse yourself till four of the afternoon, when the Commandante Salezar likes to have cool water for his bath; that only takes an hour; then you are free again till night closes in."

"And what then?" asked I impatiently.

"You have your rounds at night."

"My rounds! where, and what for?"

"Against the prairie wolves, that now and then are daring enough to come down into the very settlement, and carry off kids and lambs; ay, and sometimes don't stop there."

He winked with a terrible significance at the last words.

"So then, I am not only to bark at the asses all day, but I am to bay at the wolves by night?" said I, half indignantly.

"Lupo did it," responded he, with a nod.

"*He* was a dog," Señhor Mijo," said I.

"Ah, that he was!" added he in a tone very different from my remark, accompanying it with a most disparaging glance at my ragged habiliments. I read the whole meaning of the look at once, and hung my head, abashed at the disparaging comparison.

He waited patiently for a reply, and perceiving that I was still silent, he said, "Well, is it a bargain?"

"Agreed," said I with a sigh; and wondering if Fortune had yet any lower depths in store for me, I followed him to his hut. Mijo proceeded to acquaint me with the details of my office, and also with certain peculiarities of the two beasts for whose especial misery I was engaged. If compassion could have entered into my nature, it might have moved me at the sight of them. Their haunches and hocks were notched and scored with the marks of teeth, while their tails were a series of round balls, like certain old-fashioned bell-ropes, the result of days of suffering.

"I am so accustomed to the name, I must call you 'Lupo,'" said Mijo; "you have no objection?"

"Not in the least," said I; "if a 'dog in office,' why not a dog in name?"

That same day I was conducted to the "Tienda del Gato," the shop of "The Cat," at the sign of which animal La Señhora Dias resided. It was a small cottage at the very extremity of the village, in a somewhat pretty garden, and here a kind of canteen was held, at which the settlers procured cigars, brandy, and other luxuries, in exchange for their "tickets of labor."

Of the Señhora, some mystery existed: the popular rumor was, that she had been the favorite mistress of Santa Anna, whose influence, however, could not rescue her from the fate of a convict, to which she was sentenced for forgery. Her great patron contrived however to release her from the indignity of a penal settlement, and place her at "La Noria," where she had resided two years. Some said that it was to conceal herself from the prying curiosity of the vulgar; another, that it was to hide the brand of the letter "F," burned with a hot iron in her forehead: others, again, that it was by Santa Anna's express order (but what the reason?) she always wore a black velvet mask, which, since her arrival at the village, none had seen her remove.

A hundred stories, one more absurd than another, were circulated about her high birth and condition, and the vast wealth she had once possessed. The only real clue I could discover to these narratives, being the simple fact that her dog, a fierce English bull-dog—my own predecessor, and who by peculiar favor was permitted to accompany her—used to wear a massive silver collar, richly chased and ornamented; fiction, indeed, had invested it with precious stones and gems, but these were purely imaginative ornaments. Even devoid of jewels, such was deemed an unequivocal proof of riches among those whose poverty was of the very lowest order, and La Señhora Dias bought her "millionaire" character at a cheap price. To me, the most interesting part in her story was that which called her my countrywoman, and yet this seemed so unlikely, and was coupled with so much that I knew to be impossible, that I did not venture to believe it.

It was the hour of the siesta when we reached "the Cat," so that I had no opportunity of seeing the Señhora. Mijo conducted me to a little building in the garden, originally built as a hut for a man who watched the fruit, but latterly inhabited by Lupo.

There, I was installed at once. Some chestnut leaves were my bed, a small spring afforded me water; I was to receive eight ounces of maize bread each day, with half an ounce of coffee—Lupo had "taken" the latter "out" in sausages. Of the fruit of the garden, consisting of limes, oranges, peaches, and mangoes, I was free of whatever fell to the ground—a species of black-mail that never failed me at the desert. These were my perquisites, my duties I already knew; and so Mijo left me, to recruit myself by one day's rest, and on "the morrow" to begin my labors.

I shall never forget the strange melange of feelings, pleasurable and the reverse, which came over me as I first found myself alone, and had time to think over my condition. Many would perhaps have said that the degradation would have mastered all other thoughts, and that the life to which I was reduced would have tended to break down all self-respect and esteem. Whether to my credit or otherwise, I know not, but I did not feel thus—nay, I even went so far as to congratulate myself that a source of livelihood was open to me, which did not involve me in forced companionship, and that I might devote so many hours of each day to my own undisturbed thoughts, as I wandered about the vast garden, in which no other than myself appeared ever to set foot.

Culture it had none, nor seemed to need it: one of my duties was, to pluck the ripe fruit each day, ere I issued forth to the "Well," and place the baskets at the Señhora's door; and save this, I believe all was left to Nature. What a wilderness of rank luxuriance it was! The earth had become so fertilized by the fallen fruit left to rot as it fell, that the very atmosphere was loaded with the odor of peaches, and oranges, and pomegranates. A thousand gaudy and brilliant flowers too glittered among the tall grass that tried to overtop them: and insects and creatures, of colors still more beauteous, fluttered and chirped among the leaves, making a little chorus of sounds, that mingled deliciously with the rippling stream that murmured near.

CHAPTER XXV.

LA SENHORA.

To this very hour I am unable to say how long I remained at the village of La Noria. Time slipped away unchronicled: the seasons varied little, save for about two winter months, when heavy snows fell, and severe cold prevailed; but spring followed these with a suddenness that seemed like magic, and then came summer and autumn, as it were, blended into one,—all the varied beauties of the one season vieing with the other. This was all that was wanting to complete the illusion which the monotony of my daily life suggested: for me there was no companionship—no link that bound me to my fellow-men; the "Sunday," too, "shone no Sabbath-day for me." The humble range of my duties never varied; nor, save with Mijo, did I ever exchange even a passing word. Indeed, the hours of *my* labor were precisely those when all others slept; and whether I tracked the wayworn asses at their dreary round, or pursued my solitary path at night, my own was the only voice I ever heard. It was the "life of a dog," but after all, how many states of existence there are far less desirable! I had always wherewithal to subsist upon; I had no severe labor, nor any duty incompatible with health; and I had—greatest blessing of all—time for self-communing and reflection—that delicious leisure, in which the meanest hovel ever raised by hands becomes one's "Home." I was happy, then, after my own fashion: various little contrivances to lighten my tasks amused and occupied my thoughts. To bring the garden into order was also a passion with me; and, although necessitated to invent and fashion the tools to work with, I was not deterred by this difficulty, but manfully overcame it. I greatly doubt if Watt ever gazed at a new improvement in steam machinery, with half the delight I looked upon my first attempt at a rake. Then what pleasure did I experience as I saw the trim beds covered with blooming flowers,—the clearly-raked walks,—the grass plats close shaven and weedless! How the thoughts of changes and alterations filled my mind, as I wandered in the dreary night! What trellices did I not invent!—what festoons of the winding vine-branches!—what bowers of the leafy banana! Like the old gardener, Adam, I began at last to think that all these things were too beautiful for one man's gaze; that such ecstasies as mine deserved companionship, and that the selfishness of my enjoyment was the greatest blot upon its perfection. When this notion caught hold of me, I wandered away in fancy to the "Donna Maria de los Dolores;" and how fervently did I believe that, with her to share it, my present existence had been a life of Paradise!

These thoughts at last exhausted themselves, and I fell a thinking why the Señhora Dias never had the curiosity to visit her garden, nor see the changes I had wrought in it. To be sure, it was true, she knew nothing of them: how, then, was I make the fact reach her ears? The only hours that *I* was at liberty were those when every close-drawn curtain and closed shutter proclaimed the "siesta."

It was clear enough that a whole life might

ship over in this fashion, without my ever seeing her. There was something in the difficulty, that prompted a desire to overcome it; and so I set myself to plan the means by which I might make her acquaintance. Of the windows which looked towards the garden, the blinds were always closed; the single door that led into it, as invariably locked; I bethought me of writing a humble and most petitionary epistle, setting forth my utter solitude and isolation: but where were pen and ink and paper to come from?—these were luxuries the Gobernador himself alone possessed. My next thought was more practicable;—it was to deposit each morning upon her basket of fruit a little bouquet of fresh flowers. But then, would they ever reach her hands?—would not the servant purloin and intercept my offering?—ay, that was to be thought of.

By most assiduous watching I at last discovered that her bed-room looked into the garden by a small grated window, almost hidden by the gnarled branches of a wild fig-tree. This at once afforded me the opportunity I desired, and up the branches of this I climbed every morning of my life to fasten to the bars my little bouquet of flowers.

With what intense expectancy did I return home the first morning of my experiment! what vacillations of hope and fear agitated me, as I came near the garden, and, looking up, saw, to my inexpressible delight, that the bouquet was gone! I could have cried for very joy! At last I was no longer an outcast, forgotten by my fellows. One, at least, knew of my existence, and possibly pitied and compassionated my desolation.

I needed no more than this to bind me again to the love of life; frail as was the link, it was enough whereupon to hang a thousand hopes and fancies, and it suggested matter for cheering thought, where, before, the wide waste of existence stretched pathless and purposeless before me. How I longed for that skill by which I might make the flowers the interpreters of my thoughts! I knew nothing of this, however; I could but form them into such combinations of color and order as should please the senses, but not appeal to the heart; and yet I did try to invent a language, forgetting the while, that the key of the cipher must always remain with myself.

It chanced that one night, when on my rounds outside the village, I suddenly discovered that I had forgotten the caps for my rifle. I hastened homeward to fetch them, and entered the garden by a small door, which I had myself made, and of which few were cognizant. It was a night of bright moonlight; but the wind was high, and drifted large masses of cloud across the sky, alternately hiding and displaying the moon. Tracking, with an instinct too well trained to become deceptive, the walks of the garden, while a dark mass shut out the "lamp of night," I reached my hut, when suddenly, on a little stone bench beside the door, I beheld a female figure seated. She was scarcely four yards from where I stood, and in the full glare of the moonlight, as palpable as at noonday. She was tall and elegantly formed; her air and carriage, even beneath the coarse folds of a common dress of black serge, such as bespoke condition; her hands, too, were white as marble, and finely and delicately formed: in one of them she held a velvet mask, and I watched with anxiety to see the face from which it had been removed, which was still averted from me. At last she turned slowly round, and I could perceive that her features, although worn by evident suffering and sorrow, had once been beautiful; the traits were in perfect symmetry; the mouth alone had a character of severity, somewhat at variance with the rest, but its outline was faultless—the expression only being unpleasing. Two dark circles around the eyes, attested the work of years of grief—bitter and corroding.

What should I do? advance boldly, or retire noiselessly from the spot? If the first alternative presented, perhaps, the only chance of ever speaking to her, it might also prevent her ever again visiting the garden. This was a difficulty, and ere I had time to solve it, she arose to leave the spot. I coughed slightly—she halted and looked around, without any semblance of terror or even surprise, and so we stood face to face.

"You should have been on your rounds at this hour!" said she, with a manner of almost stern expression, and using the Spanish language.

"So I should, Señhora; but having forgot a part of my equipment, I returned to seek it."

"They would punish you severely if it were known," said she, in the same tone.

"I am aware of that," replied I, "and yet I would incur the penalty twice over to have seen one, of whom my thoughts for every hour these months past have been full."

"Of me? you speak of me?"

"Yes, Señhora, of you. I know the presumption of my words; but bethink you that it is not in such a spirit they are uttered, but as the cry of one humbled and humiliated to the very dust, and who, in looking at you, remembers the link that binds him to his fellows, and for the instant rises above the degradation of his sad condition."

"And it is through *me*—by looking at *me*—such thoughts are inspired?" said she, in an accent of piercing anguish. "Are you an English youth?"

"Yes, Señhora, as much so as an Irishman can call himself."

"And is this the morality of your native land," said she, in English, "that you can fee'

an elevation of heart and sentiment from the contemplation of such as I am? Shame, sir, —shame upon your falsehood—or worse shame upon your principle."

"I only know you as my day and night dreams have made you, lady,—as the worshipper creates his own idol."

"But you have heard of me?" said she, speaking with a violence and rapidity that betokened a disordered mind. "All the world has heard of me, from the Havannah to Guajaqualla, as the poisoner and the forger!"

I shook my head, dissentingly.

"It is then because you are less than human!" said she, scoffingly, "or you *had* heard it. But mind, sir, it is untrue. I am neither." She paused; and then in a voice of terrible emotion, said, "There is enough of crime upon this poor head, but not that! And where have you lived, not to have heard of La Señhora Dias?" said she, with a hysteric laugh.

In a few words I told her how I had made part of a great gold-searching expedition, and been utterly ruined by the calamity which destroyed my companions.

"You would have sold yourself for gold, wherewith to buy pleasure?" muttered she to herself.

"I was poor, lady,—I must needs do something for my support."

"Then why not follow humble labor? What need of wealth? Where had you learned its want, or acquired the taste to expend it? You could only have imitated rich men's vices, not their virtues that sometimes ennoble them."

The wild vehemence of her manner, as with an excessive rapidity she uttered these words, convinced me that her faculties were not under the right control of reason, and I followed her with an interest even heightened by that sad impression.

"You see no one—you speak to none," said she, turning round suddenly, "else I should bid you forget that you have ever seen me."

"Are we to meet again, Señhora?" said I, submissively, as I stood beside the door of which she held the key in her hand.

"Yes—perhaps—I don't know;" and so saying, she left me.

Two months crept over, and how slowly they went! without my again seeing the Señhora. Were it not that the bouquets which each morning I fastened to the window-bars were removed before noon, I could have fancied that she had no other existence than what my dreamy imagination gave her. The heavy wooden "jalousies" were never opened—the door remained close locked—not a foot-tread marked the gravel near it. It was clear to me that she had never crossed the threshhold since the night I first saw her.

I fell into a plodding, melancholy mood. The tiresome routine of my daily life—its dull unvarying monotony began to wear into my soul, and I ceased either to think over the past, or speculate on the future; but would sit for hours long in a moody reverie, actually unconscious of everything.

Sometimes I would make an effort to throw off this despondency, and try, by recollection of the active energy of my own nature, to stir up myself to an effort of one kind or other; but the unbroken stillness—the vast motionless solitude around me—the companionless isolation in which I lived, would resume their influence, and with a weary sigh I would resign myself to a hopelessness that left no wish in the heart save for a speedy death.

Even castle-building—that last resource of imprisonment—ceased to interest. Life had also resolved itself into a succession of dreary images, of which the voiceless prairie, the monotonous water-wheel, the darkened path of my midnight patrol were the chief: and I felt myself sinking day by day, hour by hour, into that resistless apathy through which no ray of hope ever pierces.

At last I ceased even to pluck the flowers for the Señhora's window. I deemed any exertion which might be avoided, needless; and taxed my ingenuity to find out contrivances to escape my daily toil. The garden I neglected utterly, and in the wild luxuriance of the soil the rank weeds soon effaced every sign of former culture. What a strange frame of mind was mine! even the progress of this ruin gave me a pleasure to the full as great as that once felt in witnessing the blooming beauty of its healthful vegetation. I used to walk among the rank and noisome weeds, with the savage delight of some democratic leader who saw his triumph, amid the downfall of the beautiful, the richly-prized and the valued, experiencing a species of insane pleasure in the thought of some fancied vengeance.

How the wild growth of the valueless weed overtopped the tender excellence of the fragrant plant—how the noisome odor overpowered its rich perfume—how, in fact, barbarism lorded it over civilization, became a study to my distorted apprehension and I felt a diabolical joy at the victory.

A little more, and this misanthropy had become madness! but a change was at hand.

I was sitting one night in the garden, it was already the hour when my "patrol" should have begun; but latterly I had grown indifferent to the call of duty; as Hope died out within me, so did Fear also, and I cared little for the risk of punishment; nay, more, a kind of rebellious spirit was gaining upon me, and I wished for some accident which might bring me into collision with some one. As I sat thus, I heard a footstep behind me; I turned, and saw the Señhora close to me.

I did not rise to salute her, but gazed calmly and sternly, without speaking.

"Has the life of the dog imparted the dog's nature?" said she, scoffingly. "Why don't you speak?"

"I have almost forgotten how to do so," said I, sulkily.

"You can hear, at least?"

I nodded assent.

"And understand what you hear?"

I nodded again.

"Listen to me then, attentively, for I have but a short time to stay, and have much to tell you!—and first of all, do you wish to escape from hence?"

"Do I wish it!" cried I; and in the sudden burst, long dried-up sources of emotion opened out afresh, and the heavy tears rolled down my cheeks.

"Are you willing to incur the danger of attempting it?"

"Ay; this instant!"

"If so, the means await you. I want a letter conveyed to a certain person in the town of Guajuaqualla, which is about two hundred miles distant."

"In which direction?" asked I.

"You shall see the map for yourself; here it is," said she, giving me a small package, which contained a map and a mariner's compass; "I only know that the path lies over the prairie, and by the banks of a branch of the Red River. There are villages and farm-houses when you have reached that region."

"And how am I to do so, unmolested, Señhora?—a foot-traveller on the prairie must be overtaken at once."

"You shall be well mounted on a mustang worth a thousand dollars; but ride him without spurring. If he bring you safe to Guajuaqualla he has paid his price." She then proceeded to a detail, which showed how well and maturely every minute circumstance had been weighed and considered. The greatest difficulty lay in the fact that no water was to be met with nearer than eighty miles, which distance I should be compelled to compass on the first day. If this were a serious obstacle on one side, on the other it relieved me of all apprehension of being captured after the first forty or fifty miles were accomplished, since my pursuers would scarcely venture farther.

The Señhora had provided for everything. My dress, which would have proclaimed me as a runaway "settler," was to be exchanged for the gay attire of a Mexican horse-dealer; a green velvet jacket and hose, all slashed and decorated with jingling silver buttons, pistols, sabre, and rifle to suit. The mustang, whose saddle was to be fitted with the usual accompaniment of portmanteau and cloak, was also to have the leathern purse of the "craft," with its massive silver lock, and a goodly ballast of doubloons within. Two days' provisions, and a gourd of brandy, completed an equipment which to my eyes was more than the wealth of an empire.

"Are you content?" asked she, as she finished the catalogue.

I seized her hand, and kissed it with a warm devotion.

"Now for the reverse of the medal. You may be overtaken; pursuit is almost certain; it may be successful; if so, you must tear the letter I shall give you to fragments, so small that all detection of its contents may be impossible. Sell your life dearly: this I counsel you, since a horrible death would be reserved for you if taken prisoner. Above all, don't betray me."

"I swear it!" said I, solemnly, as I held up my hand in evidence of the oath.

"Should you, however, escaping all peril, reach Guajuaqualla in safety, you will deliver this letter to the Señhor Estevan Olarey, a well-known banker of that town. He will present you with any reward you think sufficient for your services, the peril of which cannot be estimated beforehand. This done—and here, mark me! I expect your perfect fidelity—all tie is severed between us. You are never to speak of me so long as I live; nor, if by any sun of fortune we should chance to meet again in life, are you to recognise me. You need be at no loss for the reasons of this request: the position in which I am here placed—the ignominy of an unjust sentence, as great as the shame of the heaviest guilt—will tell you why I stipulate for this. Are we agreed?"

"We are. When do I set out?"

"To-morrow, by day-break; leave this a little before your usual time, pass out of the village, and, taking the path that skirts the beech-wood, make for the Indian ground—you know the spot,—at the cedar-tree, close to that, you will find your horse all ready—the letter is here." Now for the first time her voice trembled slightly, and for an instant or two she seemed irresolute. "My mind is sometimes so shaken by suffering," said she, "that I scarcely dare to trust its guidance; and even now I feel as if the confidence I am about to place in an utter stranger, in an——"

"Outcast, you would say," said I, finishing what she faltered at. "Do not fear, then; one humbled as I have been can take no offence at an epithet."

"Nor is it one such as I am, who have the right to confer it," said she, wiping the heavy drops from her eyes:—"Good-bye, for ever!—since, if you keep your pledge, we are never to meet again." She gave me her hand, which I kissed twice, and then turning away, she passed into the house; and before I even knew that she was gone, I was standing alone

in the garden, wondering if what had just occurred could be real.

If my journey was not without incident and adventure, neither were they of a character which it is necessary I should inflict upon my reader, who doubtless ere this has felt all the wearisome monotony of prairie life by reflection. Enough that I say, after an interesting mistake of the "trail," which led me above a hundred miles astray, I crossed the Conchos River within a week, and reached Chihuahua, a city of considerable size, and far more pretensions than any I had yet seen in the "Far West."

"Built on the narrow gorge of two abrupt mountains, the little town consists of one great straggling street, which occupies each side of a torrent that descends in a great tumbling mass of foam and spray along its rocky course. It was the time of the monthly market or fair when I arrived, and the streets were crowded with peasants and muleteers in every imaginable costume. The houses were mostly built with projecting balconies, from which gay-colored carpets and bright draperies hung down, while female figures sat lounging and smoking their cigarettes above, —the aspect of the place was at once picturesque and novel. Great wooden wagons of melons and cucumbers, nuts, casks of olive oil and wine; bales of bright scarlet cloth, in the dye of which they excel; pottery ware; droves of mustangs, fresh caught and capering in all their native wildness; flocks of white goats, from the Cerio Gorde, whose wool is almost fine as the Llama's; piles of fire-arms from Birmingham and Liege, around which groups of admiring Indians were always gathered; parroquets and scarlet jays, in cages; richly ornamented housings for mule teams; brass-mounted saddles, and a mass of other articles littered and blocked up the way, so that all passage was extremely difficult.

Before I approached the city, I had been canvassing with myself, how best I might escape from the prying inquisitiveness to which every stranger is exposed, on entering a new community. I might have spared myself the trouble, for I found that I was unnoticed in the motley throng with which I mingled.

My strong-boned, high-bred mustang, indeed, called forth many a compliment as I rode past; but none had any eye, nor even a word, for the rider. At last, as I was approaching the inn, I beheld a small knot of men, whose dress and looks were not unfamiliar to me: and in a moment after, I remembered that they were the Yankee horse-dealers I had met with at Austin, some years before. As time had changed me far more than them, I trusted to escape recognition, not being by any means desirous of renewing he acquaintance. I ought to say, that besides my Mexican costume, I wore a very imposing pair of black moustaches and beard, the growth of two years at "La Noria," so that detection was not very easy.

While I was endeavoring to push my way between two huge hampers of tomatoes and lemons, one of this group, whom I at once recognised as Seth Chiseller, laid his hand on my beast's shoulder, and said in Spanish, "the mustang is for sale?"

"No, Señhor," said I, with a true Mexican flourish; he and all mine stand at your disposal, but I would not sell him."

Not heeding much the hackneyed courtesy of my speech, he passed his hands along the animal's legs, feeling his tendons, and grasping his neat pasterns. Then proceeding to the hocks, he examined them carefully; after which he stepped a pace or two backwards, the better to survey him, when he said, "move him along in a gentle trot."

"Excuse me, Señhor, I came here to buy, not to sell. This animal I do not mean to part with."

"Not if I were to offer you five hundred dollars?" said he, still staring at the beast.

"Not if you were to say a thousand, Señhor," said I, haughtily; "and now pray let me pass into the court, for we are both in need of refreshment."

"He ain't no Mexican, that 'ere chap," whispered one of the group to Chiseller.

"He sits more like a Texan," muttered another.

"He'll be the devil, or a Choctaw outright, but Seth will have his beast out of him," said another, with a laugh; and with this the group opened to leave me a free passage into the inn-yard.

All the easy assurance I could put on did not convince myself that my fears were not written in my face as I rode forward. To be sure, I did swagger to the top of my bent; and as I flung myself from the saddle, I made my rifle, my brasss scabbard, my sabretasche, and my spurs perform a crash that drew many a dark eye to the windows, and set many a form fluttering in attractive coquetry.

"What a handsome caballero! how graceful and well-looking!" I thought I could read in their flashing glances; and how pleasant was such an imaginary "*amende*" for the neglect I had suffered hitherto.

Having commended my beast to the hands of the ostler, I entered the inn with all the swaggering assurance of my supposed calling; but in good earnest, with anything but an easy heart at the vicinity of Seth and his followers. The public room into which I passed was crowded with the dealers of the fair, in busy and noisy discussion of their several bargains; and had I been perfectly free of all personal anxieties, the study of their varied countenances, costumes, and manners

had been most amusing—combining as they did every nationality,—from the pale-faced, hatchet-featured New Englander, to the full-eyed, swarthy descendant of old Spain; the mongrel Frenchman of New Orleans, with the half-breed of the prairies, more savage in feature than the Pawnee himself; the shining negro, the sallow Yankee, the Jew from the Havannah, and the buccaneer-like sailor, who commanded his sloop, and accompanied him as a species of body-guard,—were all studies in their way, and full of subject for after-thought.

In this motley assemblage it may easily be conceived that I mingled unnoticed, and sat down to my mess of "frigoles with garlic" without even a passing observation. As I ate on, however, I was far from pleased by remarking that Seth and another had taken their seats at a table right opposite, and kept their eyes full on me with what in better society had been a most impudent stare. I affected not to perceive this, and even treated myself to a flask of French wine, with the air of a man revelling in undisturbed enjoyment. But all the rich banquet, all the delicious flavor were lost upon me; the sense of some impending danger overpowered all else, and let me look which way I would, Seth and his buff-leather jacket, his high boots, immense spurs, and enormous horse-pistols, rose up before me like a vision.

I read in the changeful expression of his features, the struggle between doubt and conviction as to whether he had seen me before. I saw what was passing in his mind, and I tried a thousand little arts and devices to mystify him. If I drank my wine, I always threw out the last drops of each glass upon the floor; when I smoked, I rolled my cigar between my palms, and squeezed it in genuine Mexican fashion. I turned up the points of my moustache like a true hidalgo, and played Spaniard to the very top of my bent.

Not only did these airs seem not to throw him off the scent, but I remarked that he eyed me more suspiciously, and often conversed in whispers with his companion. My anxiety had now increased to a sense of fever, and I saw that if nothing else should do so, agitation alone would betray me. I accordingly arose, and called the waiter to show me to a room.

It was not without difficulty that one could be had, and that was a miserable little cell, whitewashed, and with no other furniture than a mattrass and two chairs. At least, however, I was alone; I was relieved from the basilisk glances of that confounded horse-dealer, and I threw myself down on my mattrass in comparative ease of mind, when suddenly I heard a smart tap at the door, and a voice called out, with a very Yankee accent, "I say, friend, I want a word with you."

I replied, in Spanish, that if any one wanted me, they must wait until I had taken my "siesta."

"Take your siesta another time, and open your door at once; or mayhap I'll do it myself!"

"Well, sir," said I, as I threw it open, and feigning a look of angry indignation, the better to conceal my fear; "what is so very urgently the matter, that a traveller cannot take his rest without being disturbed in this fashion?"

"Hoity-toity! what a pucker you're in, boy!" said he, shutting the door behind him; "and we old friends, too!"

"When, or where, have we ever met before?" asked I, boldly.

"For the 'where,'—it was up at Horeston, in Texas; for the 'when,'—something like three years bygone."

I shook my head, with a saucy smile of incredulity.

"Nay, nay; don't push me farther than I want to go, lad. Let bygones be bygones—and tell me what's the price of your beast, yonder."

"I'll not sell the mustang!" said I, stoutly.

"Ay, but you will, boy—and to me, too! And it's Seth Chiseller says it!"

"No man can presume to compel another to part with his horse against his will, I suppose?" said I, affecting a coolness I did not feel.

"There's many a stranger thing than *that* happens in these wild parts. I've known a chap ride away with a beast—just without any question at all!"

"That was a robbery!" exclaimed I, in an effort at virtuous indignation.

"It warn't far off from it," responded Seth; "but there's a reward for the fellow's apprehension, and there it be!" And as he spoke he threw a printed handbill on the table, of which all that I could read with my swimming eyes were the words, "One Hundred Dollars Reward,"—"a man named Charcoal,"—"taking the down trail towards San Jose."

"There was no use in carrying that piece of paper so far," said, I, pitching it contemptuously away.

"And why so, lad?" asked he, peering inquisitively at me.

"Because this took place in the Texas, and here we are in Mexico."

"Mayhap, in strict law, that might be some thing," said he, calmly; "but were I to chance upon him, why shouldn't I pass a running knot over his wrists, and throw him behind me on one of my horses? Who's to say, "you shan't?" or who's to stop a fellow that can ride at the head of thirty well-mounted lads, with Colt's revolvers at the saddle-bow—tell me that, boy!"

"In the first place," said I, "the fellow who

would let himself be taken and slung on your crupper, like a calf for market, deserves nothing better; and particularly so long as he owned a four-barrelled pistol, like this!" —and here I drew the formidable weapon from my breast, and held it presented towards him, in a manner that it is rarely agreeable to confront.

"Put down your irons, lad," said he, with the very slightest appearance of agitation in his manner, "We'll come to terms without burning powder."

"I ask for nothing better," said I, putting up my weapon; "but I'll not stand being threatened."

He gave a short dry laugh, as though the conceit of my speech amused him, and said, "Now to business—I want that mustang."

"You shall have him, Seth," said I, "the day he reaches Guajuaqualla, whither I am bound in all haste."

"I am going north," said Seth, gruffly, "and not in that direction."

"You can send one of your people along with me, to fetch him back."

"Better to leave him with me now, and take a hack for the journey," said he. This was rather too much for my temper; and I ventured to say, that he who was to receive a present should scarcely dictate the conditions accompanying it.

"It's a ransom, boy—a forfeit—not a present," said he, gravely.

"Let us see if you can enforce it then," said I, instinctively grasping the weapon within my coat breast.

"There, now, you're angry again!" said he, with his imperturbable smile; "if we're to have a deal together, let us do it like gentlemen."

Now probably a more ludicrous caricature of that character could not have been drawn than either in the persons, the manners, and the subject of the transaction in hand; but the word was talismanic, and no sooner had he uttered it than I became amenable to his very slightest suggestion.

"Let me have the beast—I want him; and I see your holsters and saddle-bags have a jingle in them that tells me dollars are plenty with you; and as to this"—he threw the piece of paper offering the reward at his feet —"the man who says anything about it will have to account with Seth Chiseller—that's all."

"How far is it from this to Guajuaqualla?"

"About a hundred and twenty miles by the regular road, but there's a trail the miners follow makes it forty less. Not that I would advise you to try that line; the runaway niggers and the half-breeds are always loitering about there, and they're over ready with the bowie-knife, if tempted by a dollar or two."

Our conversation now took an easy, almost a friendly tone. Seth knew the country and its inhabitants perfectly, and became freely communicative in discussing them, and all his dealings with them.

"Let us have a flask of 'Aguadente,'" said he, at last, "and then we'll join the fandango in the court beneath."

Both propositions were sufficiently to my taste; and by way of showing that no trace of any ill-feeling lingered in my mind, I ordered an excellent supper and two flasks of the best Amontillado.

Seth expanded, under the influence of the grape, into a most agreeable companion. His personal adventures had been most numerous, and many of them highly exciting; and although a certain Yankee suspiciousness of every man and his motives tinged all he said, there was a hearty tone of good-nature about him, vastly different from what I had given him credit for.

The Amontillado being discussed, Seth ordered some Mexican "Paquaretta," of delicious flavor, of which every glass seemed to inspire one with brighter views of life; nor is it any wonder if my fancy converted the rural belles of the court-yard into beauties of the first order.

The scene was a very picturesque one. A trellissed passage, roofed with spreading vines in full bearing, ran around the four sides of the building, in the open space of which the dancers were assembled. Gay lamps of painted paper, and rude pine-torches lit up the whole, and gave to the parti-colored and showy costumes an elegance and brilliancy which the severer test of daylight might have been ungenerous enough to deny. The olive-brown complexion—the flashing dark eyes—the graceful gestures—the inspiriting music—the merry voices—the laughter; were all too many ingredients of pleasure to put into that little crucible, the human heart, and not amalgamate into something very like enchantment, —a result to which the Paquaretta perhaps contributed.

Into this gay throng Seth and I descended, like men determined, in Mexican phrase, to "take pleasure by both horns." It was at the very climax of the evening's amusement we entered. The dance was the Mexican fandango, which is performed in this wise:—a lady stepping into the circle, after displaying her attractions in a variety of graceful evolutions, makes the "tour" of the party in search of the caballero she desires to take as her partner. It is at his option either to decline the honor, by a gesture of deferential humility, or accepting it, he gives her some part of his equipment—his hat, his scarf, or his embroidered riding-glove, to be afterwards redeemed as a forfeit; the great amusement of the scene consisting in the strange penalties exacted, which are invariably awarded with a scrupu-

lous attention to the peculiar temperament of the sufferer. Thus, a miserly fellow is certain to be mulcted of his money; an unwieldy mass of fears and terrors is condemned to some feat of horsemanship; a gourmand is sentenced to a dish of the least appetizing nature, and so on: each is obliged to an expiation which is certain to amuse the bystanders. While these are the "blanks" in the lottery, the prizes consist in the soft, seductive glances of eyes that have lost nothing of Castilian fire in their transplanting beyond seas—in the graceful gestures of a partner to whom the native dance is like an expressive language, and whose motions are more eloquent than words—in being, perhaps, the favored of her whose choice has made you the hidalgo of the evening; and all these, even without the aid of Paquaretta, are no slight distinctions.

Were the seductions less attractive, it is not a man whose Irish blood has been set a-glowing with Spanish wine, who is best fitted to resist them, nor assuredly ought Con. Cregan to be selected for such self-denial. I stood in the circle with wondering admiration, delighted with everything. Oh, happy age! glorious hour of the balmy night! excellent grape-juice! how much of delicious enjoyment do I owe you all three! I suppose it is the case with every one, but I know it to be with me, that wherever I am, or however situated, I immediately single out some particular object for my especial predilection. If it be a landscape, I at once pitch upon the spot for a cottage, a temple, or a villa; if it be a house, I instantly settle in my mind the room I would take as my own, the window I would sit beside, the very chair I'd take to lounge in; if it be a garden, I fix upon the walk among whose embowering blossoms I would always be found: and so, if the occasion be one of festive enjoyment, I have a quick eye to catch her whose air and appearance possess highest attractions for me. Not always for me the most beautiful—whose faultless outlines a sculptor would like to chisel; but one whose fair form and loveliness are suggestive of the visions one has had in boyhood, filling up, in rich colors, the mind-drawn picture we have so often gazed on, and made the heroine of a hundred little love-stories, only known to one's own heart. And, oh dear! are not these about the very best of our adventures? At least if they be not, they are certainly those we look back on with fewest self-reproaches.

In a mood of this kind it was, that my eye rested upon a slightly-formed, but graceful girl, whose dark eyes twice or thrice had met my own, and been withdrawn again with a kind of indolent reluctance—as I fancied—very flattering to me. She wore the square piece of scarlet cloth on her head, so fashionable among the Mexican peasantry, the corners of which hung down with heavy gold tassels among the clusters of her raven locks: a yellow scarf, of the brightest hue, was gracefully thrown over one shoulder, and served to heighten the brilliancy of her olive tint: her jupe, short and looped up with a golden cord, displayed a matchless instep and ankle. There was an air of pride—"fierté," even,—in the position of the foot, as she stood, that harmonized admirably with the erect carriage of her head, and the graceful composure of her crossed arms, made her a perfect picture. Nor was I quite certain that she did not know this herself: certain is it, her air, her attitude, her every gesture, were in the most complete "keeping" with her costume.

She was not one of the dancers, but stood among the spectators; and, if I were to pronounce from the glances she bestowed upon the circle, not one of the most admiring there: her features either wearing an expression of passive indifference, or changing to a half smile of scornful contempt. As, with an interest which increased at each moment, I watched her movements, I saw that her scarf was gently pulled by a hand from behind: she turned abruptly, and, with a gesture of almost ineffable scorn, said some few words, and then moved proudly away to another part of the "court."

Through the vacant spot she had quitted, I was able to see him who had addressed her. He was a young, powerfully-built fellow, in the dress of a mountaineer; and though evidently of the peasant class, his dress and arms evinced that he was well to do in the world. The gold drop of his sombrero, the rich bullion tassels of his sash, the massive spurs of solid silver, being all evidences of wealth. Not even the tan-colored hue of his dark face, could mask the flush of anger upon it, as the girl moved off; and his black eyes, as they followed, glowed like fire. To my amazement, his glance was next bent upon me, and that, with an expression of hatred there was no mistaking. At first, I thought it might have been mere fancy on my part; then I explained it as the unvanished cloud still lingering on his features; but at last, I saw plainly that the insulting looks were meant for myself. Let me look which side I would, let me occupy my attention how I might, the fellow's swarthy sullen face never turned from me for an instant.

I suppose something must have betrayed to my companion what was passing within me, for Seth whispered in my ear, "Take no notice of him—he's a Ranchero, and they are always bad 'uns to deal with."

"But what cause of quarrel can he have with me?" said I, "we never saw each other before."

"Don't you see what it is?" said Seth, "it's the Muchacha, she's his sweetheart, and she's been looking too long this way to please him."

"Well, if the girl has got such good taste," said I, with a saucy laugh, "he ought to prize her the more for it."

"She *is* a neat 'un, that's a fact," muttered Seth; and at the same instant the girl walked proudly up to where I stood, and making a low curtsey before me, held out her hand. I suppose there must have been a little more than the ordinary enthusiasm in the manner I pressed my lips upon it, for *she* blushed, and a little murmur ran round the circle. The next moment we were whirling along the waltz; I, at least, lost to everything, save the proud pleasure of what I deemed my triumph. The music suddenly changed to the fandango, of which dance I was a perfect master; and now the graceful elegance of my partner, and the warm plaudits of the company called forth my utmost exertions. As for her, she was the most bewitching representative of her native measure it is possible to conceive, her changeful expression following every movement of the dance; now retiring in shrinking bashfulness, now advancing with proud and haughty mien, now enticing to pursuit by looks of languishment, now, as if daring all advances, her flashing eyes would almost sparkle with defiance.

What a terrible battery was this to open upon the defenceless breastwork of a poor Irishman! How withstand the showering grape-shot of dark glances?—how resist the assault of graces that lurked in every smile and every gesture! Alas! I never attempted a defiance; I surrendered not "at," but "without" discretion, and tearing off the great embroidered scarf which I wore, all heavy with its gold fringe, I passed it round her taper waist, in a very transport of enthusiasm.

While a buzz of approbation ran round the circle, I heard the words uttered on all sides, "Yes, yes!"

"I'll try his gallantry," said the girl, as darting back from my arms she retired to the very verge of the circle, and holding up the rich prize, gazed at it with wondering eyes; and now exclamations of praise and surprise at the beauty of the tissue broke from all in turn.

"The Muchacha should keep the 'capotillo,'" said an old lynx-eyed duenna, with a fan as large as a fire-board.

"A caballero rich as that should give her a necklace of real pearls," said another.

"I'd choose a mustang, with a saddle and trappings all studded with silver," muttered a third in her ear.

"I'll have none of these," said the girl, musing; 'I must bethink me well if I cannot find something I shall like to look at with pleasure, when mere dress and finery would have lost their charm. I must have that which will remind me of this evening a long time hence, and make me think of him who made its happiness; and now what shall it be?"

"His heart's blood, if that will content you!" cried the mountaineer, as springing from his seat he tore the scarf from her hands, and dashed it on the ground, trampling it beneath his feet, and tearing it to very rags.

"Ah! malditto!" shouted out a number of voices; and now the crowd closed in upon the dancing space, and a hundred tongues mingled in wild altercation. Although a few professed themselves indignant, that a stranger should be thus insulted, I saw plainly that the majority were with their countryman, whom they agreed in regarding as a most outraged and injured individual. To my great astonishment, I discovered that my friend Seth took the same view of the matter, and was even more energetic than the others in reprobating my conduct.

"Don't you see," cried he to me, "that you have taken his sweetheart from him? The Muchacha has done all this to provoke his jealousy."

"*Oui, oui*," said a thin, miserable-looking Frenchman, "*vous avez tiré la bouteille; il faut payer se rien.*"

In all probability, had not the crowd separated us most effectually, these comments and counsels had been all uttered "after the fact;" for I dashed forward to strike my antagonist, and was only held back by main force, as Seth whispered in my ear, "Take it coolly, lad; it must be a fight now, and don't unsteady your hand, by flying into a passion."

Meanwhile the noise and confusion waxed louder and louder, and from the glances directed towards me there was very little doubt how strongly public opinion pronounced against me.

"No, no!" broke in Seth—in reply to some speech whose purport I could only guess at, for I did not hear the words—"that would be a downright shame. Let the lad have fair play. There's a pretty bit of ground outside the garden, for either sword or pistol-work, whichever you choose it to be. I'll not stand anything else."

Another very fiery discussion ensued upon this; the end of which was, that I was led away by Seth and one of his comrades to my room, with the satisfactory assurance that at the very first dawn of day I was to meet the Mexican peasant in single combat.

"You have two good hours of sleep before you," said Seth, as we entered my room, "and my advice is, don't lose a minute of them."

It has been a mystery to me, up to the very hour I am writing in, how far my friend Seth Chiseller's conduct on this occasion accorded with good faith. Certainly, it would have been impossible for any one to have evinced a more chivalrous regard for my

honor, and a more contemptuous disdain for my life, than the aforesaid Seth. He advanced full one hundred reasons for a deadly combat; the results of which, he confessed, were speculative matters of a most dreamy indifference. Now, although it has almost become an axiom in these affairs that there is nothing like a bold decided friend, yet even these qualities may be carried to excess; and so I began to experience.

There was a vindictiveness in the way he expatiated upon the gross character of the insult I had received, the palpable openness of the outrage, that showed the liveliest susceptibility on the score of my reputation; and thus it came to pass, I suppose, from that spirit of divergence and contradiction so native to the human heart, that the stronger Seth's argument ran in favor of a most bloody retribution, the more ingenious grew my casuistry on the side of mercy: till grown weary of my sophistry, he finished the discussion by saying—"Take your own road, then; and if you prefer a stiletto under the ribs to the chance of a sabre-cut, it's your own affair, not mine."

"How so?—why should I have to fear such?"

"You don't thinkthat the villano will suffer a fellow to take his muchacha from him, and dance with her the entire evening before a whole company, without his revenge? No! no! they have different notions on that score, as you'll soon learn."

"Then what is to be done?"

"I have told you already, and I tell you once more: meet him to-morrow;—the time is not very distant now. You tell me that you are a fair swordsman: now these chaps have but one attack and one guard. I'll put you up to both; and if you are content to take a slight sabre-cut about the left shoulder, I'll show you how to run him through the body."

"And then?"

"Why, then," said he, turning his tobacco about in his mouth, "I guess you'd better run for it. There'll be no time to lose.—Mount your beast, and ride for the Guajuaqualla road; but don't follow it long, or you'll soon be overtaken. Turn the beast loose, and take to the mountains, where, when you've struck the miner's track, you'll soon reach the town in safety."

Overborne by arguments and reasons—many of which Seth strengthened by the pithy apothegm of "Bethink ye, where ye are, boy! This is not England, nor Ireland neither!"—all my scruples vanished, and I set about the various arrangements in a spirit of true activity. The time was brief, since, besides taking a lesson in the broadsword, I had to make my will! The reader will probably smile at the notion of Con. Cregan leaving a testament behind him; but the over-scrupulous Seth would have it so, and assured me, with much feeling, that it would save a world of trouble hereafter, if anything were to go a bit "ugly."

I therefore bequeathed to the worthy Seth my mustang and his equipments of saddle, holsters, and cloak-bag: my rifle, and pistols, and bowie-knife, were also to become his, as well as all my moveables of every kind. I only stipulated that, in the event of the "ugly" termination alluded to, he would convey the letter with his own hands to Guajuaqualla,—a pledge he gave with the greater readiness that a reward was to be rendered for the service. There were some seventy dollars in my bag, which, Seth said, need not be mentioned in the will, as they would be needed for the funeral. "It's costly hereabouts," said he, growing quite lively on the theme.—"They puts ye in a great basket, all decked with flowers, and they sticks two big oranges or lemons in your hands; and the chaps as carry you are dressed like devils or angels, I don't much know which,—and they do make such a cry!—my eye for it, but if you wasn't dead you'd not lie there long and listen to 'em!"

Now, although the subject was not half so amusing to me as it seemed to Seth, I felt that strange fascination which ever attaches to a painful theme—and asked a variety of questions about the grave, and the ceremonies, and the masses, reminding my executor, that as a good Catholic I hoped I should have the offices of the church in all liberality.

"Don't distress yourself about that," said he, "I'll learn a lot of prayers in Latin myself—'just to help you on'—as a body might say. But as I live, there goes the chaps to the 'Melino;'" and he pointed to a group of about a dozen or more, who, wrapped up in their large cloaks, took the way slowly and silently through the tall wet grass at the bottom of the garden.

I have ever been too candid with my kind reader to conceal anything from him. Let him not, therefore, I beg, think the worse of me, if I own that, at the sight of that procession, a strange and most uncomfortable feeling pervaded me. There seemed something so purpose-like in their steady, regular tramp. There was a look of cold determination in their movement that chilled me to the heart. "Only to think!" muttered I, "how they have left their beds on this raw, damp morning, at the risk of colds, catarrhs, and rheumatisms, all to murder a poor young fellow who never injured one of them!"

Not a thought had I for the muchacha—the cause of all my trouble—my faculties were limited to a little routine of which I myself was the centre, and I puzzled my brain in thinking over the human anatomy, and trying to remember all I had ever heard of the

most fatal localities, and where one could be carved and sliced with the fullest impunity.

"Come along!" said Seth, "we've no time to lose—we must look out for a cheap mustang to wait for you on the Guajuaqualla road, and I have to fetch my sword, for this thing of yours is full eight inches too short." Seth now took my arm, and I felt myself involuntarily throwing a glance at the little objects I owned about the room—as it were a farewell look.

"What are you searching for?" said he, as I inserted my hand into my breast-pocket.

"It's all right," said I, "I wanted to see that I had the Señhora's letter safe. If—if—anything—you understand me—eh!"

"Yes, yes—I'll look to it. They shan't bury you with it," said he, with a diabolical grin, which made me positively detest him for the moment.

If Mr. Chiseller was deficient in the finer sympathies of our nature, he was endowed with a rare spirit of practical readiness. The "mustang" was found in the very first stable we entered, and hired for a day's pleasuring—so he called it—for the sum of two crowns. A mountain lad was dispatched to hold him for my coming, at a certain spot on the road. The sabre was fetched from his chamber, and in less than five minutes we were on our way to the Melino, fully equipped and "ready for the fray."

"Don't forget what I told you about the face guard—always keep the hilt of your weapon straight between your eyes, and hold the elbow low." This he kept repeating continually, as we went along, till I found myself muttering the words after him mechanically, without attaching the slightest meaning to them. "The villain is a strong muscular chap, and perhaps he'll be for breaking down your guard by mere force, and cleaving you down with a stroke. If he tries it—you've only to spring actively to one side and give him your point anywhere about the chest."—From this he proceeded to discuss a hundred little subtelties and stratagems—the Mexicans are familiar with—so that at last I regretted from the very bottom of my soul, that the gage of battle had not fallen upon Seth himself, so much more worthy in every way of the distinction.

If I seemed full of attention to all he was saying, my thoughts, in truth be it spoken, were travelling a vastly different road. I was engaged in the performance of a little mental chatechism, which ran somewhat in this wise: "If you escape this peril, Master Con., will it not be wise to eschew fandangoes in future, or, at least, not indulge in them with other men's sweethearts? Beware, besides, of horse-dealers, of Xeres and Paqueretto, and above all, of such indiscretions as may make the 'Seth Chisellers' of this world your masters!" Ay, there was the sum and substance of my sorrows. that unlucky step about "Charry" and the lottery-ticket placed me in a situation from which there was no issue. I now saw, what many have often seen before, and many will doubtless see again, that crime has other penalties besides legal ones, and that the difficulty of conforming to an assumed good character, with even *one* lapse from the path of honesty, is very considerable.

"Are you attending to me lad?" cried Seth, impatiently; "I was telling you about the cross-guard for the head."

"I have not heard one word of it," said I, frankly, "nor is it of the least consequence. All the talk in the world couldn't make a swordsman—still less would a few passing hints like those you give me. If the villano be the better man, there's an end of the matter."

Seth, less convinced by my reasonings than offended at them, spoke no more, and we approached the Melino in silence. As we neared the spot, we perceived the party seated in a little arbor, and by their gestures, as well as by a most savory odor of garlic, evidently eating their breakfast.

"The fellows are jolly," said Seth; "had we not better follow their example? Here is a nice spot, and a table just at hand." At the same time he called out, "Muchacho, pan el vino en la mesa, and we'll think of somewhat to eat."

I tried to play indifferent, and seem at ease, but it was no use. The vicinity of the other group, and in particular, of a certain broad-shouldered member of it, whom I could detect through the leaves, and who certainly did not eat with the air of a man who felt it to be his last breakfast, spoiled all my efforts, and nipped them even as they budded.

"You don't eat," said Seth; "look at the villano yonder."

"I see him," said I, curtly.

"See how he lays in his prog!"

"Let him show that he can be as dexterous with the broadsword as with a carving-knife," said I, with a tremendous effort.

"Egad! I'll tell him that," cried Seth, jumping up, and hastening across the garden. I had not long to wait for the effect of the speech; scarcely had Chiseller uttered a few words, than the whole party arose, and such a volley of "Maledicion!" and "Caramba!" and other like terms I never heard before or since.

"I knew that would make 'em blaze up," said he; "they're all ready now—follow me." I obeyed, and walked after him into a little paddock, which, from the marks of feet and other signs, seemed to be a spot not chosen for the first time for such an amusement. The others entered by an opposite gate, and

taking off their cloaks, folded them carefully, and laid them on the benches. They were armed to the very teeth, and really did look amazingly like the troop of brigands Drury-lane would produce in a new melodrame.

One of the party advanced towards Seth to arrange preliminaries, while the rest lighted their cigars and began smoking—an example I deemed it wise to imitate; at least, it looked cool.

As I sat, affecting to admire the landscape, and totally careless of what was going on behind me, I overheard Seth in a warm altercation on the subject of my sabre, which, the villano's friend insisted, was at least eight or nine inches too long. Seth, however, was equally obstinate in asserting that I had always used it, had fought repeated duels with it, and if we could not call the principals as witnesses, it was for certain cogent reasons that need not be mentioned. How I chuckled at this bit of boastfulness! how I prayed that it might terrify the enemy! Nothing of the kind; the semi-savage stepped out into the circle, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up to the shoulder, displaying an arm whose muscular development was like knotted cordage. As if to give a foretaste of what he intended for me, he clove down the stout branch of an elm-tree with a single stroke, and with the ease of a man slicing a cheese. Never did I think so meanly of a fandango as at that moment; never was I in a mood less lenient to female coquetry!

"All's ready, Con., my hearty," whispered Seth, leaning over my shoulder; "here's the tool."

If I had followed the instinct then strongest, I should have treated my "friend" Seth to the first of my maiden sword. But for him—but it was too late for regrets; and already the group had retired, leaving the villano, standing in a position of formidable defence, alone, in the circle.

I can remember that I walked calmly and slowly forward to the spot assigned me; I can remember the word being given to draw swords; and I even yet can see the flashing steel as it glistened, and hear the clang of the scabbards as we flung them from us; but of the encounter itself I have only the vaguest impression. Cuts, thrusts, parries, advances and retirings, feints and guards, are all blended up, with the exclamations of the bystanders, as, in praise or censure, they followed the encounter. At last, without knowing why, after a warm rally, my antagonist uttered a faint cry, and tottering a few paces back, let fall his sword, and sank heavily to the earth. I sprung forward in dread anxiety, but two of the others held me back, while they cried out "Basta—Basta, Señor!" I tried to force my way past them, but they held me fast; and all that I could see was one of the group take up the villano's arm, and let it go again, when it fell heavily to the ground with a dull bang! I shall never forget. They then threw his cloak over him, and I saw no more of him.

"What are ye waitin' for, lad?" whispered Seth. "You don't want to attend his funeral, I reckon."

"Is he—is he——?" I couldn't get the word out for worlds.

"By course he is, and so will you be, if ye don't make a bolt of it."

I have some recollection of an angry altercation between Seth and myself,—I refusing, and he insisting on my instant flight; but it ended, somehow, in my finding myself galloping along the Guajaqualla road at a furious pace, and to my extreme surprise, feeling now as eager about my safety as before I had been indifferent to it.

I became conscious of this, from the sense of uneasiness I experienced, as each horseman neared me, and the danger of pursuit aroused in me the instinct of self-preservation.

A rude sign-post at the foot of a rugged mountain path apprised me where the "miner's trail" led off to Guajuaqualla; so, dismounting from my "mustang," now wearied and blown by a pretty sharp pace for above seven miles, I turned the animal loose, and set off on foot. I know of no descent so great in life as from the "saddle" to the "sole!" from the inspiriting pleasure of being carried along at will, to the plodding slowness of mere pedestrianism. In the one case you "shoot your sorrows flying," in the other, they jog along-side of you all the way, halting with you when you lie down at noon, and taking share of the spring from which your parched lips are refreshed. Like an underbred acquaintance, they will not be denied; they are always "going your way," and in their cruel civility, they insist on bearing you company.

At a little cabaret of the very humblest order, I obtained some breakfast, and made purchase of a stock of bread and a gourd of wine, as I learned that nothing was to be had before I reached "Sanchez," the hut of an old miner, which was reckoned half-way to Guajuaqualla. This done, again I set forth on my journey.

The scenery was wild without being grand; there was bareness and desolation, but no sublimity. It was evidently a tract of such inferior fertility, that few in a land so rich as this would select it for a resting-place; and accordingly I came upon no signs of habitation other than the shealings the shepherds raise at certain seasons, when migrating with their flocks among the mountains.

It was exactly the character of landscape likely to increase and thicken the gloom of sad thoughts; and indeed mine wanted little

assistance. This last exploit left a weight like lead upon my heart. All my sophistry about self-defence and wounded honor, necessity and the like, could not cover the fact that I had taken away a man's life in a foolish brawl, from the very outset of which the whole fault lay on my side.

"So much," said I, "for trying to be 'a gentleman;' every step in this disastrous pursuit would seem to have a penalty attached to it; and, after all, I am just as far from the goal as when I set out."

That day seemed a year in length, and were I to attempt to chronicle it, the reader would confess himself convinced, before I had half finished; so that, for both our sakes, I'll not "file my bill of particulars," as my respected father would have said, but at once come to the hour when the sun approached the horizon, and yet not anything like a human dwelling came in sight; and I still plodded along, sad and weary, and anxious for rest. If the events which I am about to record have little in them of extraordinary interest, they at least were the turning-points in my humble destiny, and therefore, kind reader, with your permission, we'll give them a chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"THE DISCOVERY."

I HAD walked now for nearly twelve hours without discovering any appearance of Sanchez' cabin, in which I had hoped to pass the night. My prairie experience assured me that I had not lost the "trail," and yet if any light were burning for miles around, the elevated spot on which I stood should make it visible. Although much fatigued, there was nothing for it but to proceed, and, at length, I found myself in a narrow valley, which Seth had heard described as the situation in which the miner's hut stood. It was dark and gloomy, but the hope that I was nearing the spot cheered me, and I walked on, footsore and tired as I was. Once or twice I thought I heard the bark of a dog. I stopped to listen. I shouted aloud, I whistled, but to no end. After an interval, however, the sounds were repeated, and now, I could detect,—not the bark,—but the low plaintive wail of an animal seemingly in pain. As it not unfrequently happens that the sheep-dogs are attacked by wolves, it immediately occurred to me such might be the present case: so I looked to the caps of my revolver and hastened on in the direction of the cries.

The wailing sounds grew fuller and louder as I advanced, and now I could distinguish that they were the cries of an animal in grief, and not of one in bodily pain. I increased my speed to the utmost, and suddenly I felt the warm tongue of a dog touch my hand, and his tail brush my legs, in sign of friendly welcome. I stopped to pat and caress him, but the poor creature uttered another cry, so full of sorrow, that all other thoughts were routed on the instant.

He now preceded me, turning at each moment as if to see that I followed, and whining in a low faint tone, as before. We had not long proceeded thus, when he stopped suddenly, and set up a cry the most shrill and heart-thrilling. I saw that we were in front of a miserable shieling, the door of which lay open; but all was dark within. I struck a light with my flint, and lighted a taper. To my surprise, the hut contained several articles of furniture; but I had not more than time to notice them, when the dog, darting forward, placed his fore-paws upon a low settle-bed, and gave a dismal howl. I turned, and beheld the figure of a very old man, his white beard hanging down to his chest as he lay in what seemed a heavy sleep. I touched him; he was cold. I placed my hand on his heart; it was still. I tried to detect breathing; there was none—he was quite dead!

The poor dog appeared to watch me with intense interest, as, one by one, I tried these different signs of life; but when he saw the hand fall heavily from my own, he again set up his cries, which now lasted for several minutes. The scene was a sad and touching one. The poor old miner,—for such his dress and the scattered implements of the craft bespoke him,—forgotten by all the world save by his dog, lay in all the seeming calm of sleep. A cup of water stood near him, and a little wooden crucifix lay on the bed, where probably it had fallen from his fingers. Every thing around betokened great poverty. The few articles of furniture seemed as if they had been fashioned by himself, being of the rudest workmanship: his lamp was a dried gourd, and his one chair had been a stump, hollowed out with a hatchet. The most striking feature of all was a number of printed paragraphs, cut from old newspapers and magazines, and nailed against the planking of the hut; and these seemed to convey a little history of the old miner, so far, at least, as the bent and object of his life were implied. They were all, without exception, exaggerated and high-flown accounts of newly-discovered "placers,"—rich mines of gold,—some, in the dark plains of the Ukraine, some, in the deep forests of Mexico, some, in the interior of Africa, and on the far-away shores of the Pacific. Promises of golden harvest, visions of wealth rolling in vast abundance, great oceans of gain before the parched and thirsting lips of toil and famine! Little thought they who, half in the wanton-

ness of fancy, colored these descriptions, what seeds they were sowing in many a rugged nature! what feverish passions they were engendering! what lures to wile men on and on, through youth, and manhood, and age, with one terrible fascination to enslave them!

If many of these contained interesting scraps of adventure and enterprise in remote and strange countries, others were merely dry and succinct notices of the discovery of gold in particular places, announcements, which nothing short of an innate devotion to the one theme, could possibly have dwelt upon; and these, if I were to judge from the situations they occupied, were the most favored paragraphs, and those most frequently read over: they were the daily food with which he fed his hope, through, doubtless, long years of suffering and toil. It was the oil which replenished the lamp, when the wick had burned to the very socket!

How one could fancy the old Gambusino as he sat before his winter fire, half dozing in the solitude of his uncompanionable existence, revelling in all the illusions with which his mind was filled! With what sympathy must he have followed his fellow-laborers in every far-away quarter of the globe! how mourned over their disappointments, how exulted in their successes! These little scraps and sentences were the only links that tied him to the world—they were all that spoke to him of his own species!

As I went about the hut, the appearance of the greatest poverty and privation struck me on every side: his clothing, worn to very tatters, had been mended by skins of beasts and patches of canvass; the tools with which he worked showed marks of rude repair, that proved how "he to himself sufficed," without aid from others.

I passed the night without sleep, my mind full of the melancholy picture before me. When day broke, I walked forth into the cool air to refresh myself, and found, to my astonishment, that the spot had been a placer of once great repute, at least so the remains around attested. The ruined framework of miners' huts—the great massive furnaces for smelting—huge cradles, as they are called, for gold sifting—long troughs, formed of hollowed trunks, for washing—lay scattered on all sides. The number of these showed what importance the spot had once possessed, and the rotten condition in which they now were, proved how long it had been deserted by all save him who was now to take his rest, where, for many a weary year, he had toiled and labored.

A little cross, decorated with those insignia of torture so frequently seen in Catholic countries—the pincers, the scourge, and the crown of thorns—showed where Piety had raised an altar beside that of Mammon, and underneath this I resolved to lay the poor old Gambusino's bones, as in a Christian grave. I could not divest myself of the impression, that some power, higher than mere chance, had led me to the spot, to perform those last offices to the poor outcast. Having eaten my breakfast, which I shared with the dog, I set to work to fashion something that should serve as a coffin. There was timber in abundance, and the old miner's tools sufficed for all I needed. My labor, however, was only completed as night closed in, so that I was obliged to wait for morning to finish my task.

Wearied by my exertions, I slept soundly, and never awoke till the bright sunbeams pierced through the chinks of the log-hut, and streamed in amidst its dusky atmosphere; then I arose, and placed the old man in his coffin. I sat down beside it, and, as I looked at the calm cold features, I could not help reflecting, that even he had not been more an outcast from his fellows, than I was myself. If Fate had cast *his* lot in the solitude of this dreary region, he was not more alone in the world than *I*, who had neither home nor family. How strange was it too, that it should have devolved upon *me* to pay him these last rites. No—no—this could not be ACCIDENT. The longer I dwelt upon this theme, the more strongly was I impressed by this one conviction; and now, looking back after the lapse of years, that feeling is but more confirmed by time.

Taking the shovel and the pick, I set forth to dig the grave, the poor dog following at my heels, as though knowing in what cause I was laboring. The earth was hard and stony, so that, at first, I made but little progress, but soon I reached a clayey soft soil, which again was succeeded by a dense, firm stratum of stones, impacted closely together, like a pavement made by hands; indeed it was difficult to conceive it otherwise, the stones being so nearly of the same size, and laid down with a regularity so striking and purposelike. I proceeded to loosen them with the baretta, but, to my surprise, no sooner had I displaced this layer, than another exactly similar displayed itself underneath. "If this be Nature's handiwork," thought I, "it is the strangest thing I ever saw." I labored hard to remove this second tier, and now came down upon a light gravelly soil, into which the baretta passed easily. Shall I own that it was with a sense of disappointment that I perceived this? It was not that my expectations had taken any distinct or palpable form, but their vagueness somehow had not excluded hope!

As I struck down the long iron baretta into the light earth, I sat down and fell into a musing fit, from which the dog aroused me by licking my hands, and looking up into my face, as though reproaching me for deserting

my task. I arose at once, and set to work in right earnest. The grave was now full five feet in depth, and needed only to be made a little longer. It was after about an hour's hard labor, and my task was all but completed, when the baretta struck a stone which it was requisite to remove; it was a large and heavy one, and much more firmly imbedded in the earth than I at first supposed, and it was only by splintering it with the iron "crow," that I was able to succeed. As I lifted the fragments and threw them away, my hands came in contact with a soft substance underneath, that, to the feel at least, resembled the skin of a beast with the wool or hair on. I cleared away the earth, and saw to my astonishment what I at once knew to be a piece of buffalo hide, smeared over with a peculiar oil the Indians use, to prevent rotting or decomposition. I drew forth my knife and ripped it open; a strong skin of undressed buck was now laid bare; again I applied my knife vigorously to this; and as the sharp steel ran freely along, a glittering heap of gold disclosed itself before me, and rolled in fragments to my feet!

I cannot attempt to describe the emotions of that moment, as with a heart bursting with delight, I ran my fingers through the heaps of shining metal, many of them larger than my closed fist. I pulled off my cap, and filled it: I opened my handkerchief, and in a few moments that also was crammed: I stuffed my pockets, but the treasure seemed inexhaustible. I arose, and hastened to the hut for the great canvass bag in which the poor miner used to keep his chestnuts; and oh! the terror that came over me now lest I should be seen; lest any other should discover me. With the speed that fear alone can supply, I soon filled the sack, not alone with gold, but also with several little leather bags which I discovered contained gems and precious stones, emeralds principally, with opals, sapphires and rubies, some of a size and color I had never seen equalled before. There were eight of these bags marked with some enigmatical letters, of which I did not know the meaning, nor, in good truth, did I puzzle myself to discover. The wealth, unbounded as it seemed, needed no explanation; there it lay glittering upon the grass beneath the morning sun, and there I sat amidst it, as Aladdin might have sat amidst the treasures of his mine.

As I opened the bags one after another, in eager impatience, I came upon one filled with papers, and these I quickly discovered were receipts for deposits of large sums placed at various times in the hands of Don Xafire Hijaros, banker, at Guajuaqualla, by Menelaus Crick! Yes, these were the hidden treasures for which the black boatswain of Anticosti had endured the tortures of the burning iron and the steel, the terrible agonies of the flesh pincers, and the slow, lingering pains of paralysis. These, then, were the visions that haunted his dotage in the very night I had seen him, as he struggled in some imaginary conflict, and patted the ground in some fancied act of concealment! A sudden chill ran through me as I thought by what horrible deeds of crime and blood all this treasure might—nay, must—have been amassed!—What terrible acts of murder and assassination! Many of the gems were richly set, and showed that they had been worn. Some of the emeralds had been extracted from ornaments, or taken from the hilts of daggers or swords. Violence and blood had stained them all! there could not be a doubt of it: and now there arose within me a strange conflict, in which the thirst for wealth warred with a feeling of superstition, that whispered, "No luck could go with gain so bought!" The perspiration rolled in great drops down my face; my heart swelled and throbbed with its emotions; the arteries of my temples beat with a force that seemed to smite the very brain, as I canvassed this vital question, "Dare I touch wealth so associated with deeds of infamy?"

If my wishes arranged themselves on one side, all my fears were marshalled on the other, and what foes can wage a more terrible conflict! The world, with its most attractive pleasures, its thousand fascinations all the delusions that gold can buy, and convert into realities, beckoned, here. Horrible fancies of an unknown vengeance, a Nemesis in crime unexpiated, menaced, there! May I never have to preside in a Court where the evidence is so strongly opposed; where the facts are so equally balanced. If, at one instant, I beheld myself the gorgeous million aire, launching forth into the wide ocean of unexplored enjoyment; at the next, I saw myself crawling upon the earth, maimed and crippled like the old negro slave; a curse upon me; the cries of widowed mothers ringing in my ears; the curses of ruined fathers tracking me wherever I went! I cannot tell what verdict my poor empaneled conscience might have brought in at last; but suddenly a new witness appeared in the Court, and gave a most decided turn to the case. This was no less than "the Church," whose testimony gently insinuated that if the matter were one of difficulty, it was not yet without a solution. "It is true, Master Con.," whispered she, "that these treasures have an odor of rapine, but let us see if the Church cannot purify them. A silver lamp to the Virgin can throw a lustre upon deeds that have not 'loved the light.' An embroidered petticoat can cover a great many small sins, and the incense that rises from a gold censor, offered by pious hands, will do much to correct the pungency of even the saltest tears."

Build a chapel, Con.; endow a nunnery; or, if you don't like shutting up young ladies, let it be a "monkery;" make an investment in hair-cloth shirts and cord girdles; buy shares in the grand purgatory scheme, and take out "next world scrip," in the shape of masses, jubilees, and novenas. You can keep a Bishop, without feeling the cost, and have a whole candle manufactory perpetually at the service of "our lady," without being obliged to curtail one of your own wax-lights. What a revulsion did this bright thought give to all my previous doubtings! not only satisfying my scruples here, but suggesting very comfortable associations for hereafter. By this proceeding, Con., thought I, you are "hedging against hereafter:" you may be a Sardanapalus while you live, and a saint after death: it's betting upon the "double event," with all the odds in your favor.

I must say, for the sake of my credit, that I resolved to do the "thing handsomely." I determined that a finer Virgin should not be seen than mine, and that if a "Saint Cregan" could be discovered in the catalogue, I'd adopt him as my patron, at any cost; neither would I forget the poor old miner in my pious offerings; he should have masses said for him for a full twelvemonth to come, and I'd offer a silver pick-axe to any of the calendar who would deign to accept it. In a word, there was nothing that money could do, (and what can it not?) that I would not engage to perform, so that the Church should consent to take me into partnership.

Never was a poor head exposed to such a conflict of discordant thought. Plans of pleasures and pilgrimages; gorgeous visions of enjoyment warring with fancies of sackcloth and scourges; sumptuous dinners, equipages, theatres, balls, and festivities, mingling with fastings, processions, and mortifications, made up a chaos, only a shade above downright insanity.

The day wore on, and it was late in the afternoon ere I bethought me of the poor Gambusino, beside whose open grave I still sat, lost in speculation. "Poor fellow!" said I, as I hoisted his coffin on my shoulder, "you have got a rich pall-bearer for one who died in such poverty: you little thought you would be borne to the grave by a millionaire!" As I said this—I shame to own it—there was a tinge of self-commendation in the notion, as though inferring—"See what a noble fellow I am! with gold and gems, such as an emperor might envy; and yet look at me, carrying an old miner's body to the grave, just as if we were equals!"

"It's very handsome of you, Con.,—that I must say!" whispered I to myself: but somehow, the poor dog did not appear to take the same exalted notion of my magnanimity, but was entirely engrossed by his sorrow; for he lay crouching upon the earth, uttering cries the most piteous and heart-rending, at each shovelful I threw into the grave.

"Cheer up, poor fellow!" said I patting him: "you shall have a gold collar, and a clasp of real emerald." How naturally does a rich man recur to wealth as a cure for every affliction! How difficult for him to believe that gold is not a sovereign remedy for all disorders!

As for the dog, poor brute! he took no more heed of my consolation, than he noticed my altered condition—of which, by his familiarity, he showed himself totally unconscious. How differently had he behaved, thought I, had he been a man! What sudden respect had he felt for me,—what reluctance to obtrude himself on me,—how honored by my notice,—how distinguished by my favor! It is plain the dog is a very inferior animal: his perceptions are not fine enough to distinguish between the man of wealth and the pauper!

These and very similar reflections engaged me while I completed my task; after which, I carried my precious burdens off, and deposited them within the hut. By this time I was very hungry, but had nothing to eat, save the fragments that remained from my breakfast—a singular meal for one, who, in a fitting place, could have dined sumptuously, and off vessels of gold and silver! I had the appetite of a poor man, however, and ate heartily; and then, taking my gourd of wine, sat down beside a little spring that issued from the rock, to think over my future.

Perhaps my whole life—not wanting in hours of pleasure and enjoyment—never presented anything so truly delightful as that evening.

The season of gratification which I had dreamed of, sighed, panted, and prayed for, was now to be mine. I was at last to be a "gentleman," so far, at least, as immense wealth, and a very decided taste for spending it, could make me. But were these, I flatteringly asked myself, all my qualifications? Was I not master of three or four languages? Had I not become an expert shot, an excellent rider, a graceful dancer, with some skill upon the guitar, and the mandolin? Could I not contend in most exercises, where strength and activity were required, with any? Had I not travelled, and seen something of the world and its ways? Ay, marry, and a little more of both than was usual for young gentlemen of fortune!

Of personal advantages it might not become me to speak; but the truth requires me to say, that nature had dealt very handsomely by me. And now I ask of the fair reader,—the unfair one I put out of court on the occasion—"are not these very pretty chances with which to woo fortune?" Less sanguine spirits would perhaps have sighed for more,

and asked for a hundred gifts, of whose use and value I knew nothing—such as birth, family influence, and the like. As for me, I was content with the "hand of trumps" Fate had dealt me: I owned frankly, that if I lost the game, it must be for lack of skill, and not of luck.

My plans were very simple. Once at Guajuaqualla, I should find out where Donna Maria de los Dolores lived, and then, providing myself with suitable equipage and servants, I should proceed to pay my addresses in all form, affecting to have resumed my real rank and station, from which, on our first acquaintance, a passing caprice had withdrawn me. I anticipated, of course, very shrewd inquiries as to my family and fortune: but I trusted to "native wit" to satisfy these, secretly resolving at the time, that I would avoid lying for the future; and apropos of this propensity, I had never indulged in it, save from that vagrant impulse, that tempts a child to scamper over the flower plat of a garden, instead of keeping to the gravel—the great charm being found in the secret that it "was wrong." And, oh, ye dear, good, excellent souls, whose instincts are always correct, who can pass knockers on doors and not wish to wring them off!—who see gas-lamps in lonely spots, and never think of breaking them; who neither "humbug" the stupid, nor mystify the vain; who "take life" seriously; forgive the semi-barbarism of our Celtic tastes, which leads us to regard "Fun" as the very honey of existence, and leads us to extract it from every flower in life's path!

When I "lied"—as only the great "Pinto" ever lied more atrociously—I was more amused by my own extravagancies, than were my listeners. I threw out my inventions among stupid folk, as a rich man flings his guinea among a group of beggars, to enjoy the squabbling and contending for such an unlooked-for prize.

And now I was going to abandon the habit, as one unsuited to the responsibilities of a rich man's station! Oh dear, what a sigh honest Jack Falstaff must have heaved when he swore "he would eschew sack and low company, and live cleanly."

I now addressed myself more practically to my work, and, seeing that it would be quite impossible for me to carry the great bulk of my treasure to Guajuaqualla, I replaced the canvas sack, with the gold, and some of the larger bags of the gems, in the ground, and merely took those that contained the paper securities, and some of the more valuable emeralds, along with me.

In parting with my wealth, even for a short absence, I confess my feelings were very poignant. A thousand fears beset me, and I turned to survey the spot beneath which it lay, wondering if there was any indication to mark the concealed riches below. All, however, looked safe and plausible; and I proceeded on my way, with a heart as easy, as I suppose rich men's hearts are permitted to be.

I believe the road along which I journeyed lay in the midst of a fertile and pleasing tract; I believe, I say, for I own I saw nothing of it. The river along which I walked seemed silver, molten silver, to me: the fruit-trees bore apples of pure gold; the stars which studded the morning sky seemed sapphires and diamonds; the dew-drops on the grass were opals all. If I sat down to rest myself, I instantly took one of my precious bags from my pocket, to gaze at the bright treasures it contained, and feast my eyes with brilliancy.

At last I found myself on the great high road, and as the sign-post told me, only "tres leguas"—three leagues—from Guajuaqualla. For a few copper coins I obtained a seat upon a peasant's "carro," and journeyed along more agreeably, secretly laughing to myself at the strange conveyance that carried "Cæsar and his fortunes."

The peasant was an old man, who lived by selling water-melons, gourds, and cucumbers in the city, and knew most of its well known inhabitants. It was therefore a good opportunity for me to learn something of those in whom I was interested. He told me that the banker, Don Xafire Hijaros, had died several years ago, but that his son Manuel carried on the business, and was reputed to be the richest man in Guajuaqualla. It was said that the great wealth of the house had been accumulated in ways, and by means, that would not bear too close scrutiny. Large sums had been, it was alleged, lodged in his hands by negroes and Indians, working at the mines, the owners of which were often made away with,—at least, few of those who made large deposits ever lived to claim them. The peasant told me several stories in illustration of this suspicion; but although they certainly did make an impression upon me, I attributed much to the exaggeration so common to every piece of local gossip, and I had seen enough in the world to know how frequently successful industry meets disparagement.

As for Don Esteban Olarez, the old man told me that he had once been extremely rich, but that certain speculations he had entered into, having proved unfortunate, he had lost the greater part of his fortune, and lived now in a state of comparative retirement about a league from Guajuaqualla. This piece of news had not the depressing effect upon me it might be supposed, since I augured that a rich son-in-law would be less scrupulously interrogated by the broken merchant, than by the millionaire. I even speculated on the manner I should adopt, to dazzle him by my splendor, and with what cold and cutting

irony I would address the Fra Miguel, and thank him for the considerate kindness with which he had repaid my services. Haughty and proud, with a dash of condescension, "That must be my tone," said I; and so I went on, like my prototype in the Eastern tale, ruminating upon my power and my merciful disposition, till I had warmed my blood to a very good tyrant pitch, from which state I was aroused by the guard at the gate of the town, asking if I had anything with me which should pay custom.

"A poor traveller with his knapsack," said I, "may surely pass freely."

"Vaya con Dios," said he carelessly, and I entered the city.

Although the little plain in which Guajuaqualla stands is more favorable as a site, than the narrow gorge where Chihuahua is situated—the city itself is inferior to the latter. Built irregularly, not only as chance or caprice directed, but sharing in all the vicissitudes of speculation which the mines afforded, great palaces stand by the side of mean hovels, and gorgeous churches are flanked by abodes of squalid poverty. Streets, properly speaking, there were none. Each choosing the spot for his house at will, and as the city was founded in troubled times, when lawless violence was unrestrained—the fortress-like character of the buildings was often conspicuous. Massive iron bars and stanchions protected the windows of the ground-floors,—heavy fastenings secured the doors, whose surface was a fretwork of iron. Loop-holes for musketry, usually guarded each side of the entrance, and a "grille," like that of a convent, showed that no stranger could be admitted, uninterrogated. Many of the houses were surrounded by regular outworks of moat and bastion, while here and there, an old rusty cannon, half hid among the weeds, would show more pretensious, though possibly not very efficient means of defence.

Of shrines, holy wells, and altars, there was no end. The superstitious character of the Gambusino life had been adroitly laid hold of by the priests, who rarely fail to turn each phase of existence to their own profit, and, in this spot, the priestly hierarchy appeared to have nothing so near at heart as the success of the "placers." Here were pictured virgins, looking blandly down at a group of very ill-favored half-breeds, at a washing; there was an old negro, presenting a massive lump of gold to St. Joseph, who, with a sly look, seemed to promise not to forget the donor. St. Francis himself, pick in hand, was seen laboring at the head of a sturdy gang of workmen, and angels of all sizes appeared to busy themselves in gold seeking, as though it were their natural pastime.

Upon several of the altars, pieces of solid gold and silver lay, in a security that said much for the religious zeal of the inhabitants, while lamps of pure silver hung in a profusion on every side—surrounded by votive offerings of the same metal—such as shovels, barretas, picks, and sieves. Nor did piety limit itself merely to incentives to "stand well with the saints;" some most terrible examples of the opposite line of conduct were conspicuously displayed. Pictures, representing dreadful catastrophes, by falling masses of rock,—irruptions of torrents—and down-pouring cataracts, showed what fates were ever in store for those who "forgot the church." And, as if to heighten the effect, whenever a cayman or a jaguar was "sloping off" with a miner in his mouth—a respectable saint was sure to be detected in the offing—wiping his eyes in compassion, but not stirring a finger to his assistance.

I will not say that these specimens of pictorial piety induced any strong religious feeling to my mind, but they certainly amused me highly, and although hungry from a long fast, I stopped full twenty times on my way to the Posada, to gaze and wonder at them.

At the "Mono," (the "Ape,") a beast, which, at first I mistook for a certain historical character, to whom popular prejudice always vouchsafes a tail, I put up, and having discussed a very sumptuous breakfast, sent for the landlord, a little dark-visaged Jew from Pernambucco.

"I hear," said I, arranging myself in an attitude of imposing elegance, "I hear, Señhor Maestro, that my people and equipages have not arrived yet, and I begin to feel a great anxiety for their safety. Can you learn from any of the muleros if they have seen two carriages, with four mules each, on the Chihuahua road?"

"I have just inquired," said the Jew, with a sly, almost impertinent leer, "and his Excellency's suite have not been seen."

"How provoking!" said I, impatiently; "this comes of indulging that capricious taste for adventure which always inclines me to a solitary ramble among mountains; and now, here I am, without clothes, baggage, horses, servants,—in fact, with nothing that a person of my condition is accustomed to have about him."

The Jew's face changed its expression during this speech, and from a look of droll malice, which it wore at first, assumed an air of almost open insolence, as he said,—

"Señhor Viajador, I am too old to be imposed upon by these fooleries. The traveller who enters an inn on his feet, with ragged clothes and tattered shoes, takes too high a flight when he raves of equipage and followers."

I bethought me of the lesson I once gave the mate of the transport ship at Quebec, and

I lay back indolently in my chair and stared coolly at the Jew. "Son of Abraham," said I, with a slow intonation, "take care what you say. I indulge in a vast variety of caprices, some of which the severe world calls follies; but there is one which I never permit myself, namely, to suffer the slightest liberty on the part of an inferior. I give you this piece of information for your guidance, since it is possible that business with the banker, Don Manuel Hijaros, may detain me a few days in this place, and I desire that the lesson be not lost upon you."

The Jew stood, while I delivered these words, a perfect ideal of doubt and embarrassment. The pretensious tone, contrasted with the ragged apparel—the air of insufferable pride, with all the semblance of poverty, and the calm composure of confidence, seemed to him singular features in one whose apparent destitution might have suggested humility.

"I see your embarrassment," said I, "and I forgive your error; and now to business. I have several visits to pay in this neighborhood; my people may not arrive for a day or two, and I cannot afford the delay of waiting for them. Can you tell if there be anything suitable in the way of equipage for a man of rank to be had here? Something simple, of course, as befitting the place,—a plain carriage, with four mules—if Andalusian, all the better; two lazadores, or outriders, will be sufficient, as I wish to avoid display; the liveries and equipment may be plain also."

"There is at this moment, Señhor, the open carriage of the late Gobernador of Guajuaqualla, to be sold; he had not used it, when he was called away by death: that and his six mules, —not Andalusian, it is true, but of the black breed of the Habannah, are now at your Excellency's disposal."

"And the price," said I, not seeming to notice the half-impertinent smile that curled his lip as he spoke.

"Three thousand crowns, Señhor; less than half their cost."

"A mere trifle," said I, carelessly, "if the carriage please me."

"Your Excellency can see it in the court beneath."

"I followed the Jew as he led the way into the open "cour," and, after passing across it, we entered a spacious building, where, amidst a whole hospital of ruined and dilapidated calèches, carres, and wagons, stood a most beautiful britseka, evidently imitated from some London or Parisian model. It was of a dark chocolate color, with rich linings of pale blue silk. The arms of the late Gobernador were to have been painted on the doors, but fortunately were not begun when he died, so that the "carroza" seemed in every respect a private one. The Jew next showed me the team of mules, magnificent animals of fifteen and a half hands in height, and in fine condition. The harness and housings were all equally splendid and suitable.

"If your Excellency does not deem them unworthy of you," said he, with a smile of most treacherous meaning, "they are certainly a great bargain. I have myself advanced fifteen hundred piastres upon them."

"I'll take them," said I, curtly; "and now for the servants."

The coachman and a few lacqueys are here still, your Excellency; but their liveries had not been ordered when the sad event occurred."

"Send the first tailor in the place to my apartment," said I; "and if there be a diamond merchant, or a gem valuer here, let him come also."

"I am myself a dealer in precious stones, your Excellency," replied the Jew, with a more submissive air than he had yet exhibited.

"Come with me, then," said I; "for I always carry some of my less valuable trinkets about with me, as the least cumbrous mode of taking money." Leaving the landlord in the sitting-room, I passed into my chamber, and speedily re-entered with a handsome emerald ring upon my finger, and a ruby brooch of great size in my breast.

The Jew's eyes were lit up with a lustre, only inferior to that of the gems, as he saw them, and, in a voice tremulous with eagerness, he said, "Will your Excellency dispose of these?"

"Yes," said I, carelessly; "there are others also, which I am determined to turn into cash. What value would you put upon this ring?"

"Five hundred crowns, Señhor, if it be really as pure as it seems."

"If that be your valuation, friend," rejoined I, "I would be a purchaser, not a seller, in this city. That gem cost me six thousand piastres! To be sure, something of the price must be laid to the charge of historical associations. It was the present of the Sultan Al Hadgid ak Meerun-al-Roon, to the Empress Matilda."

"Six thousand piastres!" echoed the Jew, whose astonishment stopped short at the sum, without any regard for the great names I had hurled at him.

"I believe I may have paid a trifle too much," said I, smiling; "the Prince of Syracuse thought it dear! But then, here is a much more valuable stone, which only cost as much;" and so saying, I took from my pocket an immense emerald, which had once formed the ornament of a dagger.

"Ah, Dios! that is fine," said the Jew, as he held it between him and the light; "and were it not for the flaw, would be a rare prize!"

"Were it not for the flaw, friend," said I,

"it would still be where it stood for upwards of eight hundred years—in the royal crown of Hungary—in the 'Schatz-Kammer' of Presburg. The Emperor Joseph had it mounted in his own poignard; from his hands it reached the Calton's of Auersberg, and then, at the value of six thousand piastres, by a wager, came into my own."

"At what price would you now dispose of it?" asked he, timidly.

"A friend might have it for ten thousand," said I, calmly: "to the world at large, the price would be twelve."

"Ah, your Excellency! such sums rest not in our humble city! You must go to Madrid or Grenada for wealth like that."

"So I suspect," said I, coolly, "I will content myself with depositing them with my banker for the present; to sell them here, would be a needless sacrifice of them."

"And yet, Señhor, I would willingly be the purchaser of that gem," said he, as he stood, fascinated by the lustre of the stone, from which he could not take his eyes. "If six thousand five hundred piastres——"

"I have said ten to a friend, my honest Israelite," interrupted I.

"I am but a poor man, your Excellency—a poor, struggling, hard-working man—content if he but gain the humblest profit by his labor: say, then, seven thousand piastres, and I will sell my mules to make up the amount."

"I will say twelve, and not a doubloon less, 'Señhor Judio,' but a friend may have it for ten."

"Ah! if your 'Alteza' would but say eight. Eight thousand piastres counted down upon the table, in honest silver," said he; and the tears stood in his eyes as he supplicated.

"Be it so," said I, "but upon one condition. Should you ever reveal this, or should you ever speak of the transaction in any way, there is no manner of evil and mischief I will not work you. If it cost me half my fortune, I will be your ruin; for I refused to part with that same stone to the Primate of Seville, and he would never forgive me if the story should reach his ears."

The Jew wished the patriarchs to witness his oath of secresy, and though each of us was well aware that the other was lying, somehow we seemed satisfied by the exchange of our false coinage. I suppose we acted on the same principle as the thieves, who could not keep their hands out of each other's pockets, although they knew well there was nothing there.

Whatever the Jew's suspicion of the means by which I had become possessed of such wealth, he prudently thought that he might reap more profit by falling in with my plans, than be needlessly scrutinizing my character; and, so far, he judged wisely.

The contract for the carriage I completed on the spot, and having engaged the servants, and ordered their liveries—plain suits of brown, with gold tags, aiguletttes—I gave directions for my own wearing apparel, in a style of costly magnificence that confirmed me in the title of "Alteza" given by all who came in contact with me. These occupations occupied the entire morning, and it was only late in the afternoon that I had spare time to recreate myself by a walk in the garden of the inn before dinner; a promenade which, I am free to own, was heightened in its enjoyment by the rich rustling sounds of my heavy silk robe-de-chambre, and the soft downy tread of my velvet slippers on the smooth turf. It was a delicious moment! the very birds seemed to sing a little pæan of rejoicing at my good luck; the flowers put forth their sweetest odors as I passed, and I felt myself in ecstasy with the whole creation, and in particular with that segment of it called Con. Cregan. And there be folk in this world would call this egotism and vanity; ay, and by worse names too! As if it was not the very purest philanthropy—as if my self-content did not spring from the calm assurance that the goods of Fortune were bestowed in the right direction, and that the goddess whom men call "fickle," was in reality a most discriminating deity!

There are no two things in creation less alike than a rich man and a poor one! Not only do all their thoughts, feelings, and affections run in opposite channels, but their judgments are different; and from the habit of presenting particular aspects to the world, they come at last to conform to the impressions conceived of them by the public. The eccentricities of wealth are exalted into fashions—the peculiarities of poverty are degraded to downright vices.

"Oh, glorious metal!" exclaimed I, as I walked along, "that smoothes the roughest road of life, that makes the toughest venison savory, and renders the rudest associates civil and compliant. What insolence and contumely had I not met with here, in this poor 'Posada,' had I only been what my humble dress and mean exterior denoted! And now, what is there that I cannot exact—what demands can I make, and hear that they are impossible?"

"His Excellency's dinner is served," said the host, as he advanced with many a low and obsequious salutation, to announce my dinner.

I suppose that the cookery of the "mono" was not of the very highest order, and that if presented before me now, it would meet but sorry acceptance from my more educated palate; but at the time I speak of, it seemed actually delicious. There appeared to arise faint odors of savory import, from dishes, whose garlic would now almost suffocate me, and I luxuriated in the flavor of wine, every

glass of which, would, at this day, have put my teeth on edge. If my enjoyment was great, however, I took care not to let it appear too palpable; on the contrary, I criticised and condemned with all the fastidiousness of a spoiled nature, and only condescended to taste anything on the perpetual assurance of the host, that "though very different from what his Excellency was used to, it was exactly to the taste of the late "Gobernador."

I felt all the swelling importance of wealth within me, as I beheld the cringing lacqueys and the obsequious host, who never dared to carry himself erect in my presence—the very meats seemed to send up an incense to my nostrils. The gentle wind that shook the orange blossoms, seemed made to bear its odors to my senses—all Nature appeared tributary to my enjoyment. And, only to think of it! all this adulation was for poor Con. Cregan, the convict's son, the houseless street-runner of Dublin—the cabin-boy of the yacht: the flunky at Quebec: the penniless wanderer in Texas: the wag of the "Noria," in Mexico: what a revulsion, and how sudden and unexpected!

It now became a matter of deep consideration within me how I should support this unlooked-for change of condition, without betraying too palpably what the French would call my "antecedents." As to my "relatives" —forgive the poor pun—they gave me little trouble. I had often remarked in life, that vulgar wealth never exhibits itself in a more absurd and odious light, than when indulging in pleasures of which the sole enjoyment is the amount of the cost. The upstart rich man may sit in a gallery of pictures, where Titian, Velasquez, and Vandyck have given him a company, whose very countenances seem to despise him, while he thinks of nothing save the price. If he listen to Malibran, the only sense awakened is the cost of her engagement, and hence that stolid apathy—the lustreless gaze—the unrelieved weariness he exhibits in society, where it is the metal of the "mind" is clinking, and not the metal of the "mint." To a certain extent I did not incur great danger on this head: Nature had done me some kind services; the chief of which was, she had made me an Irishman!

There may seem—alas! there is too great cause that there should seem—something paradoxical in this boast, now, when sorrow and suffering are so much our portion! but I speak only of the individuality which, above every other I have seen or heard of, invests a man with a spirit to enjoy whatever is agreeable in life. Now this same gift is a great safeguard against the vulgarity of purse pride, since the man who launches forth upon the open sea of pleasure is rarely occupied by thoughts of self.

As for me, I felt a kind of gluttony for every delight that gold can purchase. What palaces I would inhabit: what equipages I would drive: what magnificent fêtes I would give: what inimitable dinners, where beauty, wit, and genius alone should be gathered together: what music should I possess in "my private band:" what exotics in my conservatory, and how I should dispense these fascinations: what happiness would I diffuse in the circle in which I moved, and what a circle would that be! It was to this precise point my buoyant fancy had brought me, as the second flask of champagne, iced almost to a crystal, had warmed me into a glow of imaginative enthusiasm. I fancied myself in a gilded saloon, where, amid the glare of a thousand wax-lights, a brilliant company were assembled. I thought that at each opening of the folding door a servant announced some name, illustrious from position, or great in reputation, and that around *me*, as I stood, a group was gathered of all that was distinguished in the world of fashion or celebrity. "Your Royal Highness has made this the proudest day of my life," said I, rising, and bowing reverentially before a faded, old arm-chair. "May I offer your eminence a seat," continued I, to a red sofa-cushion I mistook for a cardinal. "Your Excellency is most heartily welcome," said I, to an empty decanter, and so did I convert every adjunct of the chamber into some distinguished personage, even to my fast-expiring lamp, which, with a glimmering flame, and a nauseous odor, was gradually dying away, and which I actually addressed as a great ambassador!

After this, I concluded that I must have imagined myself in the East; possibly taking a cup of sherbet with the Sultan, or a chibook with the Khan of Tammerkabund; for, when I became conscious once more, I found myself upon the hearth-rug, where I had been enjoying a delicious sleep of some hours.

"Would his Excellency desire to see his chamber?' asked the landlord, as with a branch of candles he stood in the door-way.

I waived my hand in sign of assent, and followed him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"GUAJUAQUALLA."

THERE are few things in this world gold cannot buy; but one among their number assuredly is—"a happy dream." Now, although I went to sleep in a great bed with damask hangings, and a gilt crown upon it, my pillow fringed with deep lace, my coverlet of satin edged with gold, I dreamed the whole night through of strifes, combats, and encounters. At one time my enemy would be an Indian;

at another, a half-breed; now, a negro; now, a jaguar, or a rattle-snake: but with whom, or whatever the struggle, it was always for money! Nothing else seemed to have any hold upon my thoughts. Wealth, and wealth alone, appeared the guiding principle of my being; and, as the penalty, I was now to learn the ceaseless anxieties, the torturing dreads, this passion begets.

With daylight, however, I awoke, and the bright sun streaming in, brought the glorious reality of my happy lot before me, and reminded me of the various duties my high state imposed. My first care was to ascertain the amount and security of my riches; and I resolved to proceed regularly, and in the most business-like manner in the matter. To this end I ordered my carriage, and proceeded to pay my visit to the banker, Don Xafire.

I had devised and demolished full fifty ingenious narratives of myself, when I drove into the court-yard where the banker resided, and found myself actually without one single satisfactory account of who I was, whence I came, and by what means I became possessed of the formidable papers I carried. "Let circumstances pilot the event," was my old maxim; and so saying, I entered.

The rattling tramp of my six mules, the cracking of whips, and the crash of the wheels, brought many a head to the windows of the old jail-like palace when my carriage drove up to the door, and the two outriders stood in "a salute" at each side while I descended. "Sua Eccelenza, il Condé de Cregano," resounded through the arched hall and passages, as an old servant in a tawdry suit of threadbare livery led the way to Don Xafire's private apartment.

After a brief wait in a large but meagerly-furnished chamber, an old man—or a middle-aged one, with a look of age—entered; and, with a profusion of ceremonial, in which he assured me that his house, his wife, his oxen, his mules, his asses, and in fact everything "that was his," stood at my disposal, asked to what fortunate event he owed the honor of my visit.

"I am the representative, Señhor Xafire," said I, "of the great house of Cregan and Company, of which doubtless you have heard; whose ships walk the waters of the icy seas, and lay at anchor amid the perfumes of the spice islands, and whose traffic unites two hemispheres."

"May they always be prosperous!" said the polite Spaniard, bowing.

"They have hitherto enjoyed that blessing," responded I, almost thankfully. "Even as the youngest member of the firm, I have nothing to complain of on the score of prosperity." I smiled, took forth a most gorgeous snuff-box, all glittering with brilliants, and presenting it to the Spaniard, laid it carelessly on the table. After a brief pause, to let the splendor settle down into his heart, I proceeded to inform him that in the course of commercial transactions, a vast number of bills, receipts for deposits, and other securities, had fallen into our hands, upon many of which we had advanced large sums, seeing that they bore the name of that most respectable house, the Bank of Don Xafire, of Guajauqualla. "These would," I added, "have been dispersed through the various channels of trade, had it not been the wish of my partners to open distinct relations with your house, and consequently they have retained the papers until a favorable opportunity presented itself of personally making the proposition. This happy opportunity has arisen by our recent purchase of the great gold mines of the 'Arguareche' for seventy millions of piastres, of which you may have read in the 'Farot de la Habannas.'"

He bowed a humble negative; and I went on to state that our mining operations requiring co-operation and assistance, we desired to open relations with the great house of Don Xafire, whose good fame was well established on the 'Change of Liverpool.

"You spoke of paper-securities and such like, Señhor; may I ask of what nature they are?"

"You shall see them, Don Xafire," said I, opening a very magnificent pocket-book, and presenting first a receipt, dated forty-eight years back, for the sum of twelve thousand piastres in silver, and four bags, weighing two hundred and eighty pounds of gold dust, from the hands of Menelaus Crick, of the mines of Hajoras, near Guajuaqualla." The Spaniard's dark cheek trembled, and a faint tinge of sickly yellow seemed to replace the dusky olive of his tint, as he said, "This is but waste-paper, Señhor, and I trust your excellent house has advanced nothing on its credit."

"On the contrary, Señhor Banquiero," responded I, "we have given the full sum, being much advised thereto by competent counsel."

The battle was now opened, and the combat begun.

It is needless I should weary the reader by recapitulating the tissue of inventions, in which, as in a garment, I wrapped myself. I saw quickly, that if *I* was a rogue, so was my antagonist, and that for every stratagem *I* possessed, *he* was equally ready with another. At last, pushed hard by his evasions, equivocations, and subterfuges, I was driven to utter a shadowy kind of menace, in which I artfully contrived to mix the name of the General Santa Anna,—a word, in those days, of more than talismanic power.

"And this reminds me," said I, "that one of my suite who lost his way, and was taken

prisoner in the Rocky Mountains, committed to my charge a letter, in which, I fancy, the General is interested." This was a random shot, but it struck the bull's-eye through the very centre. The Señhora Dias's letter was enclosed in an envelope, in which a few words only were written; but these, few as they were, were sufficient to create considerable emotion in Don Xafire, who retired into a window, to read and re-read them.

Another shot! thought I, and he's disabled! "It is needless, then, Don Xafire, to prolong an interview which promises so little. I will therefore take my leave; my next communication will reach you through the General Santa Anna."

"May I not crave a little time for consideration, Señhor?" said he, humbly; "these are weighty considerations; there may be other demands still heavier in store for us, of the same kind."

"You are right, Señhor; there are other, and still heavier, claims, as you very properly opine. Some of them, I have here with me; others are in the hands of our house; but all shall be forthcoming, I assure you."

"What may be the gross amount, Señhor," said the banker, trying, but very ineffectually, to look at his ease.

"Without pretending to minute accuracy, I should guess the sum, at something like seven hundred thousand piastres; this, exclusive of certain claims for compensation usual in cases of inquiry. You understand me, I believe." The last menace was shot in the very centre of his magazine, and so the little usurer felt it, as he fidgeted among his papers, and concealed his face from me.

"Come, Señhor Xafire," said I, with the air of a man who means to deal mercifully, and not to crush the victim in his power; "I will be moderate with you. These bills and receipts shall be all placed in your hands, on payment of the sums due, without any demand for interest whatever. We will not speak of the other claims at all. The transaction shall be strictly in honor between us, and nothing shall ever transpire to your disadvantage regarding it. Is this enough?"

The struggle in the banker's mind was a difficult one,—but after several hours passed in going over the papers, after much discussion, and some altercation,—I gained the day; and when I arose to take my leave, it was with my pocket-book stuffed full of bills, on Pernambuco, Mexico, Santa Cruz, and the Havannah, with letters of credit, bonds, and other securities; the whole amounting to four hundred thousand piastres,—the remaining sum of three hundred thousand, I had agreed to leave in Don Xafire's hands at reasonable interest. In fact, I was but too happy in the possession of so much, to think twice about what became of the remainder.

I presented my friend Xafire with my ruby brooch as a souvenir: not, indeed, that he needed anything to remind him of our acquaintance; and we parted with all the regrets of brothers about to separate.

"You will stay some days with us here, I hope," said he, as he conducted me to my carriage.

"I intend a short visit to some of the old "placers" in your neighborhood," replied I, "after which, I mean to return here;" and so with a last embrace, we parted.

My next care was to pay a visit to Don Estaban, for I was burning with anxiety to see Donna Maria once more, and to open my campaign as a rich suitor for her hand. The day chosen for this expedition seemed a fortunate one, for the road, which led through a succession of vineyards, was thronged with towns-people and peasants, in gay holiday dresses; all wending their way in the same direction with ourselves. I asked the reason, and heard that it was the *fete* of the Virgin de los Dolores, whose chapel was on the estate of Don Esteban. I bethought me of the time when I had planned a pilgrimage to that same shrine—little suspecting that I was to make it in my carriage, with six mules and two outriders!

In less than an hour's drive, we came in sight of Don Esteban's villa, built on the side of a richly-wooded mountain, and certainly not betraying any signs of the reduced fortune of which I had heard. A series of gardens all terraced in the mountain, lay in front, among which fountains were playing, and *jet d'eau* springing. A small lake spread its calm surface beneath, reflecting the whole scene as in a mirror, with its feathery palm-trees and blossoming mimosas, beneath whose shade hundreds of visitors were loitering or sitting, while the tinkling sounds of guitar and mandolin broke the stillness.

It was a strange and curious sight; for while pleasure seemed to hold unbounded sway on every side, the procession of priests in rich vestments, the smoke of censors, the red robes of acolytes, mingled with the throng, and the deep chanting of the liturgies were blended with the laughter of children, and the merry sounds of light-hearted joy. "I have come in the very nick of time," thought I, "to complete this scene of festivity;" and finding that my carriage could only advance slowly along the crowded avenue, I descended, and proceeded on foot, merely attended by two lacqueys to make way for me in front.

A lively controversy ran among the spectators at each side of me, of which I was evidently the subject,—some averring that I was there as a portion of the pageant, an integral feature in the procession; others, with equal discrimination, insisting that my pre-

sence was a polite attention on the part of Our Lady de "Los Dolores," who had sent an illustrious personage to grace the festival as her representative. On one point all were agreed,—that my appearance amongst them was a favor, which a whole life of devotion to me could not repay; and so rapidly was this impression propagated, that it sped up the long approach through various groups and knots of people, and actually reached the villa itself, long before my august person arrived at the outer court.

Never was dignity—at least such dignity as mine—entrusted to better hands than those of my "Caçadores." They swaggered along, pushing back the crowds on each side, as though it were a profanation to press too closely upon me. They flourished their great gold-headed canes, as if they would smash the skulls of those whose eager curiosity out-stepped the reverence due to me; and when at length we reached the gates of the court-yard, they announced my name with a grandeur and pomp of utterance, that, I own it frankly, actually appalled myself! I had not, however, much time given me for such weaknesses, as, directly in front of the villa, at a table spread beneath an awning of blue silk, sat a goodly company, whose splendor of dress, and profusion of jewelry, bespoke them the great guests of the occasion. The host—it was easy to detect him by the elevated seat he occupied—rose as I came forward, and with a humility I never can praise too highly, assured me that if any choice were permitted him in the matter, he would prefer dying on the spot, now that his worldly honors could never exceed the triumph of that day;—that all the happiness of the festivity was as gloom and darkness to his soul, compared to the brilliancy my presence diffused; and not only was everything he owned mine from that moment forth, but, he ardently hoped he might have a long line of grand-children, and great grand-children, to be my slaves in succeeding generations.

While the worthy man poured forth these "truths" in all the flourish of his purest Castilian, and while I listened to them with the condescending urbanity with which a sovereign may be presumed to hear the strains of some national melody in their praise, as pleasant, though somewhat stale, another individual was added to the group, whose cunning features evinced nothing either of the host's reverence or of my grandeur. This was Fra Miguel, the Friar, who, in a costume of extraordinary simplicity, stood staring fixedly at me.

"Il Conde de Cregano!" repeated Don Esteban. "I have surely heard the name before. Your highness is doubtless a grandee of Spain?"

"Of the first class!" said I, with a slight cough; for the confounded Friar never took his eyes off me.

"And we have met before, Señhor Conde," said he, with a most equivocal stress upon the last words. "How pleasant for me to thank the Conde for what I believed I owed to the mere wayfarer." These words he uttered in a whisper close to my own ear.

"Better that, than ungratefully desert a benefactor!" said I, in the same low tone; then, turning to Don Esteban, who stood amazed at our dramatic asides, I told him pretty much what I had already related to the banker at Guajuaqualla; only adding that during an excursion which it was my caprice to make alone and unaccompanied, I had been able to render a slight service to his fair daughter, Donna Maria de Los Dolores, and that I could not pass the neighborhood without inquiring after her health, and craving permission to kiss her hand.

"Is this the Señhor Cregan, of the 'Rio del Crocodielo?'" cried Don Esteban, in rapture.

"The same whom we left in safe keeping with our Brothers of Mercy at Bexar?" exclaimed the Friar, in affected amazement.

"The very same, Fra Miguel, whom you humanely consigned to the Lazaretto at Bexar,—an establishment which has as little relation to 'mercy,' as need be; the same who having resumed the rank and station that belong to him, can afford to forget your cold-hearted desertion."

"San Joachim of Ulloa knows if I did not pay for masses for your soul's repose!" exclaimed he.

"A very little care of me in this world," said I, "had been to the full as agreeable as all your solicitations for me in the next; and as for San Joachim," added I, "no witness can be received as evidence, who will not appear in court."

"It is a pleasure to see your Excellency in the perfect enjoyment of your faculties," said the Fra, with a deceitful smile; but I paid little attention to his sneer, and turned willingly to Don Esteban, whose grateful acknowledgments were beyond all bounds. He vowed that he owed his daughter's life to my heroism, and that he and she and all that were theirs, were mine.

"Very gratifying tidings these," thought I, "for a man who only asks for an 'instalment of his debt,' and will be satisfied with the lady."

"Maria shall tell you so herself," added Don Esteban, in a perfect paroxysm of grateful emotion. "Don Lopez y Cuesta y Goloso can never forget your noble conduct." Not caring much how retentive the memory of the aforefaid hidalgo might prove,—whom I at once set down as an uncle or a godfather—I hastened after the host, to where his

daughter sat at the table. I had but time to see that she was dressed in black, with a profusion of diamonds scattered not only through her hair, but over her dress, when she arose, and ere I could prevent it, fell at my feet, and covered my hands with kisses—calling me her "Salvador," in a voice of the wildest enthusiasm: an emotion which seemed most electrically to seize upon the whole company; for I was now laid hold of by every limb, and hugged, kissed, and embraced by a score of people; the large majority of whom, I grieve to say, were the very hardest specimens of what is called the softer sex.

One member of the company maintained a look of cold distrust towards me, the very opposite of all this cordiality. This was Don Lopez, who did not need this air of dislike, to appear to my eyes the ugliest mortal I had ever beheld. He was exceedingly short of stature, but of an immense breadth; and yet even with this, his head was far too big for his body—a huge spherical mass, parti-colored with habits of debauch, looking like a terrestrial globe, of which the mouth represented the equator. His attempts at embellishment had even made him more horrible; for he wore a great wig, with long curls flowing upon his shoulders; and his immense moustachios were curled into a series of circles, like a ram's horn. His nose had been divided across the middle, by what seemed the slash of a cutlass; the cicatrix remaining of an angry red color, amid the florid hue of the countenance.

The expression of these benign features did not disgrace their symmetry. It was a cross between a scowl and a sneer; the eyes and brow performed the former, the mouth assuming the latter function.

Blushing with shame, and trembling with emotion, Maria led me towards him, and in accents I can never forget, told how I had rescued her in the passage of the Crocodile River. The wretch scowled more darkly than before, as he listened, and when she ended, he muttered something between his bloated lips that sounded marvellously like "Picaro!"

"Your godfather scarcely seems so grateful as one might expect, Señhora," said I.

"Muerte de Dios!" he burst out; "I am her husband."

Whether it was the simple fact so palpably brought forward, the manner of its announcement, or the terrible curse that involuntarily fell from my lips I know not, but Donna Maria fell down in a swoon. Fainting, among foreigners, I have often found, is regarded as next door to actually dying; and so it was here. A scene of terror and dismay burst forth, that soon converted the festivity into an uproar of wild confusion. Every one screamed for aid, and dashed water in his neighbor's face. The few who retained any presence of mind filled out large bumpers of wine, and drank them off. Meanwhile Donna Maria was sufficiently recovered to be conducted into the house, whither she was followed by her "marido," Don Lopez, whose last look as he passed me was one of insulting defiance.

The cause of order having triumphed, as the newspapers say, I was led to one side by Don Esteban, who in a few words told me that Don Lopez was a special envoy from the Court of Madrid, come out to arrange some disputed question of a debt between the two countries; that he was a Grande d'España, a Golden Fleece, and I don't know what besides; his title of Donna Maria's husband being more than enough to swallow up every other consideration with me. The ceremony had been performed that very morning. It was the wedding breakfast I had thrown into such confusion and dismay.

Don Esteban, in his triumphal narrative of his daughter's great elevation in rank—of the proud place she would occupy in the proud court of the Escurial—her wealth, her splendor, and her dignity, could not repress the fatherly sorrow he felt at such a disproportioned union; nor could he say anything of his son-in-law but what concerned his immense fortune. "Had it been you, Señhor Conde," cried he, throwing himself into my arms; "you, young, handsome, and well born as you are, I had been happy."

"Is it too late, Don Esteban?" said I, passionately; "I have wealth that does not yield to Don Lopez; and Maria is not—at least she was not—indifferent regarding me."

"Oh, it is too late—far too late!" cried the father, wringing his hands.

"Let me speak to Maria herself. Let me also speak with this Don Lopez. I may be able to make him understand reason, however dull his comprehension."

"This cannot be, Señhor Caballero," said another voice; it was Fra Miguel, who, having heard all that passed, now joined the colloquy; "nothing short of a dispensation from the Holy See could annul the marriage, and Don Lopez is not likely to ask for one."

"I will not suffer it," cried I, in desperation; "I would rather carry her away by force than permit such a desecration."

"Hush, for the love of the Virgin, Señhor!" cried Don Esteban; "Don Lopez is Captain of the Alguazils of the Guard, and a Grand Inquisitor."

"What signifies that in Mexico?" said I, boldly.

"More than you think for, Señhor," whispered Fra Miguel; "we have not ceased to be good Catholics, although we are no longer subjects of old Spain." There was an air of cool menace in the way these words were

spoken, that made me feel very ill at ease. I soon rallied, however, and drawing the friar to one side, said, "How many crowns will buy a candelabrum worthy of your chapel?"

He looked at me fixedly for a few s conds, and his shrewd features assumed a character of almost comic cunning. The Virgin de los Dolorès is too simple for such luxuries, Señhor Condé," said he, with a sly drollery.

"Would she not condescend to wear a few gems in her petticoat?" asked I, with the easy assurance of one not to be balked.

"She has no pleasure in such vanities," said the Fra, with a hypocritical casting down of his eyes.

"Would she not accept an embroidered handkerchief," said I, "to dry her tears? I have known one of this pattern to possess the most extraordinary powers of consolation;" and as I spoke I drew forth a bank-note of some amount, and gently drew it across his knuckles.

A slight tremor shook his frame, and a short convulsive motion was perceptible in the hand I had "galvanized;" but in an instant, with his habitual calm smile and mellow voice, he said, "Your piety will bring a blessing upon you, Señhor, but our poor shrine is unused to such princely donations."

"Confound the old hypocrite," muttered I to myself; "what is he at? Fra Miguel," said I, assuming the business-like manner of a man who could not afford to lose time; "the Virgin may be, and doubtless is, all that you say of her; but there must needs be many excellent and devout men here — yourself doubtless amongst the number—who see numberless objects of charity, for whom their hearts bleed in vain. Take this, and remember that he who gave it only asks as a return your prayers and good wishes."

The Friar deposited the present in some inscrutable fold of his loose garment, and then drawing himself proudly up, said, "Well, now, what is it?"

"Am I too late?" asked I, with the same purpose-like tone.

"Of course you are; the ceremony is finished; the contracts are signed and witnessed. In an hour they will be away on their road to the Havannah."

"You have no consolation to offer me,—no hope?"

"None of an earthly character," said he, with a half-closed eye.

"Confound your hypocrisy!" cried I, in a rage.

"Don't be profane," said he, calmly. "What I have said is true. Heaven will some day take Don Lopez; he is too good for this world, and then, who knows what may happen?"

This was but sorry comfort, waiting for the bride to become a widow; but alas, I had no better besides, it had cost me a heavy sum to obtain, and accordingly I prized it the more highly.

If *my* anxieties were acute, apparently Don Lopez's mind was not in a state of perfect serenity. He stormed and raved at everybody and everything. He saw, or what was pretty much the same thing, he fancied he saw, a plot in the whole business; and swore he would bring the vengeance of the Holy Office upon everybody concerned in it. In this blessed frame of mind the departure of the newly-wedded pair took place in spite of all my entreaties; Don Lopez drove away with his young bride,—the last I beheld of her was a white hand waving a handkerchief from the window of the carriage. I looked, and—she was gone!

If some were kind-hearted enough to pity me, the large majority of the company felt very differently, and bore anything but friendly feelings toward one who had marred the festivities, and cut short—heaven could only tell—by what number of days, the eating, drinking, dancing, singing, and merriment.

The old ladies were peculiarly severe in their comments, averring that no well-bred man would have thought of interfering with a marriage. It was quite enough to talk of his passion when the others were six or eight months married!

Of the younger ladies, a few condoled with me, praised my heroism and constancy, and threw out sly hints that when I tried my luck next, fortune might possibly be more generous to me. Don Esteban himself appeared to sympathise sincerely with my sorrow, and evenced the warmest sense of gratitude for the past. Even the Fra tried a little good nature, but it sat ill upon him, and it was easy to see that he entertained a great mistrust of me.

From the brief experience of what I suffered in these few days, I am decidedly of opinion that rich men are far more impatient under reverses and disappointments than poor ones! It was a marvellous change for one like me, whose earlier years, it is unnecessary to remind the reader, were not passed in the lap of that comfortable wet nurse called "affluence," and yet with all this brilliant present, and still more fascinating future, at the very first instance of an opposition to my will, I grew sad, dispirited, and morose. I should have been very angry with myself for my ingratitude, but that I set it down to the score of love; and so I went about the house, visiting each room where Donna Maria used to sit, reading her books, gazing at her picture, and feeding my mind with a hundred fancies; which the next moment of thought told me were now impossible.

Don Esteban, whose grief for the loss of his daughter was in a manner divided with

mine, would not suffer me to leave him, and although the place itself served to keep open the wound of my regret, and the Fra's presence was anything but conciliatory, I passed several days at the villa.

It would have been the greatest relief to me could I have persuaded myself to be candid with Don Esteban, and told him frankly the true story of my life. I felt that all the consolations which he offered me were of no avail, simply because I had misled him! The ingenious tissue of fiction in which I enveloped myself, was a web, so thin, that it tore whenever I stirred, and my whole time was spent, as it were, in darning, patching, and piecing the frail garment with which I covered my nakedness.

A dozen times every day I jumped up, determined to reveal my humble history; but as regularly did a sentiment of false shame hold me back, and a dread of old Fra Miguel's malicious leer, should he hear the story. Another,—and a strange feeling, too,—influenced me. My imaginary rank, birth, and station, had, from the mere force of repetition, grown to be a portion of myself. I had played the part with such applause before the world, that I could not find in my heart to retire behind the scenes, and resume the humble dress of my real condition.

By way of distracting my gloomy thoughts, I made little excursions in the surrounding country; in one of which I contrived to revisit the "placer," and carry away all the treasure which I had left behind me. This was much more considerable than I had at first believed; the gems being of a size and beauty far beyond any I had ever seen before; while the gold, in actual coined money, amounted to a large sum.

Affecting to have changed my original intention of investing a great capital in the mines of Mexico, and resolved instead to return to Europe, I consulted Don Esteban as to the safest hands in which to deposit my money. He named a certain wealthy firm at the Havannah, and gave me a letter of introduction to them, requesting for me all the attention in their power to bestow; and so we parted.

It was with sincere sorrow I shook his hand for the last time; his cordiality was free-hearted and affectionate; and I carry with me, to this hour, the memory of his wise counsels and honest precepts, as treasures, not the least costly, I brought away with me.

I arrived safely at the Havannah, travelling in princely state, with two carriages and a great baggage-wagon, guarded by four mounted "carabineros," who had taken a solemn oath at the shrine of a certain Saint Magalano to eat any bandits who should molest us,—a feat of digestion which I was not sorry their devotion was spared.

The bankers to whom Don Esteban's letters introduced me, were most profuse in their offers of attention, and treated me with all the civilities reserved for the most favored client. I only accepted, however, one invitation to dinner, to meet the great official dignitaries of the place, and the use of their box each evening at the opera, affecting to make a delicacy of health the reason of not frequenting society; a pretext I had often remarked in use among people of wealth and distinction, among whose privileges there is that of being sick without suffering.

There was a French packet-ship to sail for Malaga, in about ten days after my arrival, and as I knew that Don Lopez intended to leave that port for Europe, I quietly waited in the Havannah, determined to be his fellow-traveller. In preparing for this voyage, every thought of my mind was occupied, resolved to out-do the old Spaniard in luxury and magnificence. I ordered the most costly clothes, I engaged the most accomplished servants, I bespoke everything which could make the tediousness of the sea less irksome, even to the services of a distinguished performer on the guitar, who was about to visit Europe, and engaged to begin his journey under such distinguished patronage as that of the Conde de Cregano.

What wonderful speculations did I revel in as I pictured to myself Don Lopez's ineffectual rage and his fair wife's satisfaction, when I should first make my appearance on deck,—an appearance which I artfully devised should not take place until we were some days at sea! What agonies of jealousy should I not inflict upon the old Castilian! what delicate flatteries should I not offer up to the donna! I had laid in a store of moss-rose plants, to present her with a fresh bouquet every morning,—and then I would serenade her each night beneath the very window of her cabin So perfectly had I arranged all these details to my own satisfaction, that the voyage began to appear a mere pleasure excursion, every portion of whose enjoyment originated with me, and all whose blanks and disappointments owed their paternity to Don Lopez; so that, following up these self-created convictions in my usual sanguine manner, I firmly persuaded myself that the worthy husband would either go mad, or jump overboard before we landed at Malaga. Let not the reader fall into the error of supposing that hatred to Don Lopez was uppermost in my thoughts. Far from it—I wished him in heaven every hour of the twenty-four, and would willingly have devoted one-half of my fortune to make a saint of him in the next world, rather than make a martyr in this.

I was walking one evening in my banker's garden, chatting pleasantly on indifferent topics, when, on ascending a little eminence,

we came in view of the sea. It was a calm and lovely evening, a very light land breeze was just rippling the waters of the bay—fringing the blue with white, when we saw the graceful spars of a small sloop of war emerge from beneath the shadow of the tall cliffs and stand out to sea.

"The 'Moschetta,'" said he, "has got a fair wind, and will be out of sight of land by day-break."

"Whither is she bound?" asked I, carelessly.

"For Cadiz," said he; "she came into port only this morning, and is already off again."

"With despatches, perhaps," I remarked, with the same tone of indifference.

"No, Señhor; she came to convey Don Lopez y Geloso, the Spanish ambassador, back to Madrid."

"And is he on board of her now?" screamed I, in a perfect paroxysm of terror. "Is she, too?"

"He embarked about an hour ago, with his bride and suite," said the astonished banker, who evidently was not quite sure of his guest's sanity.

Overwhelmed by these tidings, which gave at once the death-blow to all my plans, I could not speak, but sat down upon a seat, my gaze fixed upon the vessel which carried all my dearest hopes.

"You probably desired to see his Excellency before he sailed?" said the banker, timidly, after waiting a long time in the expectation that I would speak.

"Most anxiously did I desire it," said I, shrouding my sorrow under an affectation of important state solicitude.

"What a misfortune," exclaimed he, "that you should have missed him! in all likelihood, had you seen him, he would have agreed to our terms."

"You are right," said I, shaking my head sententiously, and neither guessing nor caring what he alluded to.

"So that he would have accepted the guarantee," exclaimed the banker, with increased excitement.

"He would have accepted the guarantee," echoed I, without the remotest idea of what the words could mean.

"Oh, Madre de Dios; what an unhappy mischance is this! Is it yet too late? Alas! the breeze is freshening,—the sloop is already sinking beyond the horizon; to overtake her would be impossible; and you say that the guarantee would have been accepted?"

"You may rely upon it," said I, the more confidently, as I saw that the ship was far beyond the chance of pursuit.

"What a benefactor to this country you might have been, Señhor, had you done us this service!" cried the banker with enthusiasm.

"Well, it is too late to think of it now," said I, rather captiously; for I began to be worried with the mystification.

"Of course, for the present it is too late; but when you arrive in Europe, Señhor Conde—when you are once more in the land where your natural influence holds sway, may we entertain the hope, that you will regard our case with the same favorable eyes?"

"Yes, yes," said I, with impatience, "If I see no reason to change my opinions."

"Upon the subject of the original loan, there can be no doubt, Señhor Conde."

"Perhaps not," said I: "but these are questions I must decline entering upon. You will yourself perceive that any discussion of them would be inconvenient and indiscreet."

The diplomatic reserve of this answer checked the warmth of his importunity, and he bashfully withdrew, leaving me to the undisturbed consideration of my own thoughts.

I sat till it was already near midnight gazing on the sea, my eyes still turned to the track by which the vessel had disappeared, and at last rose to retire, when, to my amazement, I perceived my friend the banker, accompanied by another person, approaching towards me.

"Señhor Conde," said he, in a mysterious whisper: "this is his Excellency the Governor;" and with these words, uttered in all the reverence of awe, he retired, leaving me face to face with a tall, dignified-looking personage, whose figure was concealed in the folds of a great cloak.

In all the formal politeness of his rank and country, the Governor begged I would be seated, and took his place beside me. He explained, how the banker, one of the richest and most respected men in the Havannah, had informed him of my gracious intentions respecting them, and the sad mishap by which my meditation was foiled. He entered at length into the question of the debt, and all its financial difficulties; which, even had they been far less intricate and complicated, would have puzzled a head which never had the bump arithmetical. How he himself saw his way through the labyrinth, I know not, but had the sum been a moderate one, I vow I would rather have paid it myself than investigate it any further; such an inextricable mass of complications, doubles, and difficulties, did it involve.

"Thus, you perceive," said he, at the close of a formidable sum of figures, "that these eighteen millions made no part of the old loan, but were in fact, the first deposit of what is called 'the Cuba debt;' not that it ever should have had that name, which more properly belonged to the original Poyais three and a half—you understand me?"

"Perfectly—proceed."

"That being the case, our liability is re-

duced to the sum of twenty-seven millions on the old four and a quarters."

"Clearly so."

"Now we approach the difficult part of the matter," said he, "and I must entreat your most marked attention; for here lies the point which has hitherto proved the stumbling-block in the way of every negotiation."

I promised the strictest attention, and I kept my word till I found myself in a maze of figures, where compound interest and decimal fractions danced a reel together, whose evolutions would have driven Mr. Babbage distracted; while the Governor, now grown "warm in the harness," kept exclaiming at every instant: "Do you see how the 'Ladrones' want to cheat us here? Do you perceive what the Picaros intend by that?"

If I could not not follow his arithmetic, I could at least sympathise in his enthusiasm; and I praised the honor of the Mexicans, while I denounced "the cause of roguery" over the face of the globe, to his heart's content.

"You are satisfied about the original debt? Señhor Conde,—at least," said he, after a "four mile heat" of explanation.

"Most thoroughly," said I, bowing.

"You'd not wish for any thing further on that head?"

"Not a syllable."

"And as to the Cuba instalment—you see the way in which the first scrip became entangled in the Chihuahua 'fives'—don't you?"

"Plain as my hand before me."

"Then, of course, you acknowledge our right to the reserve fund?"

"I don't see how it can be disputed," said I.

"And yet that is precisely what the Madrid Government contest!"

"What injustice!" exclaimed I.

"Evident as it is to your enlightened understanding—Señhor Conde, you are, nevertheless, the first man I have ever found to take the right view of this transaction. It is a real pleasure to discuss a state question with a great man."

Hereupon we both burst forth into an animated duet of compliments, in which, I am bound to confess, the Governor was the victor.

"And now, Señhor Conde," said he, after a long volley of panegyric, "may we reckon upon your support in this affair?"

"You must understand, first of all, Excellenza," replied I, "that I am not in any way an official personage. I am,"—here I smiled with a most fascinating air of mock humility—"I am, so to speak, a humble—a very humble individual, of unpretending rank and small fortune."

"Ah! Señhor Conde" sighed the Governor, for he had heard of my ingots from the banker.

"Being as I say," resumed I, "my influence is naturally small. If I am listened to in a matter of political importance, I owe the courtesy, rather to the memory of my family's services, than to any insignificant merits I may possess. The cause of justice is, however, never weak—no matter how humble the means of him who asserts it. Such as I am, rely upon me."

We embraced here, and the Governor shed a few official tears at the thought of so soon separating from one he regarded as more than his brother.

"We feel, Señhor Conde," said he," how inadequate any recognition of ours must be for services such as yours. We are a young country and a Republic; honors we have none to bestow—wealth is already your own—we have nothing to offer therefore, but our gratitude."

"Be it so!" thought I, "the burthen will not increase my luggage."

"This box will remind you, however, of an interview, and recall one who deems this the happiest, as it is the proudest hour of his life;" here he presented me with a splendid gold snuff-box, containing a miniature of the President surrounded by enormous diamonds.

Resolving not to be outdone in generosity, and at least, not to be guilty of dishonesty before my own conscience, I insisted upon the Governor's acceptance of my watch—a very costly repeater, studded with precious stones.

"The arms of my family—the Cregans are Irish—will bring me to your recollection," said I, pointing to a very magnificent heraldic display on the time-piece, wherein figured the ancient crown of Ireland, over a shield, in one compartment of which was an "eye winking," the motto being the Gaelic word, "Nabocklish," signifying "May be not," ironically.

I will not dwell upon the other particulars of an interview which lasted till nigh morning. It will be sufficient to mention, that I was presented with letters of introduction, and recommendation, to the Mexican Ministers at Paris and Madrid, instructing them to show me every attention, and desiring them to extend to me their entire confidence, particularly to furnish me with introductions to any official personages with whom I desired to be acquainted. This was all that I wanted—for I was immensely rich, and only needed permission to pass the door of the "great world," to mingle in that society for which my heart yearned and longed unceasingly.

Some of my readers will smile at the simplicity which believed these passports necessary, and was ignorant that wealth alone is wanting to attain any position, to frequent any society, to be the intimate of any set in Europe, and that the rich man is other than

he was in classic days,—"Honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum."

I have lived to be wiser, and to see vulgarity, coarseness, meanness, knavery, nay even convicted guilt, the favored guests of royal saloons. The moral indictments against crime have to the full as many flaws as the legal ones; and we see, in every society, men, and women too, as notoriously criminal, as though they wore the red-and-yellow livery of the galleys. Physicians tell us that every drug whose sanitary properties is acknowledged in medicine, contains some ingredients of a noxious or poisonous nature. May not something similar exist in the moral world; and even in the very healthiest mixtures, may not some "better principle" be found to lurk?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THE VOYAGE OF THE 'ACADIE.'"

I was not sorry to leave the Havannah on the following day. I did not desire another interview with my "friend" the Governor, but rather felt impatient to escape a repetition of his arithmetic, and the story of the "original debt."

Desirous of supporting my character as a great personage, and, at the same time, secure for myself the pleasure of being unmolested during the voyage, I obtained the sole right to the entire cabin accommodation of the "Acadie" for myself and suite,—my equipages, baggage, and some eight or ten Mexican horses occupying the deck.

A salute of honor was fired, as I ascended the ladder, and replied to by the forts—a recognition of my dignity at which I took occasion to seem offended, assuring the captain that I was travelling in the strictest incognito; leaving it to his powers of calculation to compute what amount of retinue and followers I should have, when journeying in the full blaze of acknowledged identity.

I sat upon the poop deck as they weighed the anchor, contrasting in my mind my present position, with that of my first marine experiences on board the "Fire-fly." I am richer, thought I. Am I better? Have I become more generous, more truthful, more considerate, more forgiving?

Has my knowledge of the world developed more of good in me, or of evil? Have my own successes ministered, rather to my self-esteem than to my gratefulness; and have I learned to think meanly of all who have been beaten in the race of fortune? Alas! there was not a count of this indictment to which I dared plead "not guilty." I had seen knavery thrive too often, not to feel a kind of respect for its ability; I saw honesty too often worsted, not to feel something like contempt for its meekness. It was difficult to feel a reverence for poverty, whose straits were frequently ridiculous; and it was hard to censure wealth, which dispensed its abundance in splendid hospitalities. Oh, the cunning sophistries by which we cover up our real feelings in this life, smothering every healthy impulse, and every generous aspiration, under the guise of some "conventionality."

My conscience was less lenient than I expected. I cut but a sorry figure "in the dock," and was obliged to throw myself upon the mercy of the court. I will be more considerate in future, said I to myself; I will be less exacting with my servants, and more forgiving to their delinquencies; I will try and remember that there is an acid property in poverty that sours even the sweetest "milk of human kindness;" I will be trustful, too—a "gentleman" ought not to be suspicious; it is eminently becoming in a Bow-street officer, but suits not the atmosphere of good society. These excellent resolutions, were, to a certain extent, "apropos;" for just as "the foresail began to draw," a boat came alongside and hailed the ship. I did not deign any attention to a circumstance so trivial to "one of my condition," and never noticed the conversation, which in very animated tones was kept up between the captain and the stranger, until the former, approaching me with the most profound humility, and asking forgiveness for the great liberty he was about to take, said that a gentleman, whom urgent business recalled to Europe, humbly entreated permission to take his passage on board the "Acadie."

"Are you not aware it is impossible, my good friend?" said I, listlessly; "the accommodation is lamentably restricted as it is; my secretary's cabin is like a dog-kennel, and my second cook has actually to lie round a corner, like a snake."

The captain reddened, and bit his lip in silence.

"As for myself," said I heroically, "I never complain. Let me have any little cabin for my bed, a small bath-room, a place to lounge in during the day, with a few easy sofas, and a snug crib for a dinner-room, and I can always rough it. It was part of my father's system never to make Sybarites of his boys." This I asserted with all the sturdy vehemence of truth.

"We will do every thing to make your Excellency comfortable," said the Captain, who clearly could not see the reasons for my self-praise; and as to the Consul—what shall we say to him?"

"Consul, did you say?" said I.

"Yes, Señhor Conde, he is the French Consul for the Republic of 'Campecho.'" That

this was a state I had never heard of before, was quite true; yet it was clearly one which the French Government were better informed upon, and deigned to recognise by an official agent.

"Hold on there a bit," shouted out the Captain to the boat's crew. "What shall I say, Señhor Conde? The Chevalier de la Boutonerie is very anxious on the subject."

"Let this man have his passage," said I, indolently, and lighted a cigar, as if to turn my thoughts in another direction, not even noticing the new arrival, who was hoisted up the side with his portmanteau, in a very undignified fashion, for an official character. He, soon, however, baffled this indifference on my part, by advancing towards me, and in a manner—where considerable ease and tact were evident—thanked me for my polite consideration regarding him, and expressed a hope that he might not in any way inconvenience me during the voyage.

Now the Chevalier was not in himself a very prepossessing personage, while his dress was of the very shabbiest, being a worn-out suit of black, covered by a coarse brown Mexican mantle; and yet his fluency — his quiet assurance—his seeming self-satisfaction, gained an ascendancy over me at once. I saw that he was a master, in a walk in which I myself had so long been a student, and that he was a consummate adept in the "art of impudence."

And how mistaken is the world at large, in the meaning of that art! How prone to call the unblushing effrontery of every underbred man, impudence. The rudeness that dares any speech, or adventures upon any familiarity. The soulless, heartless, selfish intrusiveness that scruples not to invade any society. These are not impudence, or they are such specimens of the quality, as men only possess, in common with inferior animals. I speak of that educated, cultivated "impudence," which never abashed by an inferiority—felt acutely —is resolved to overbear worldly prejudices, by the exercise of gifts that assert a mastery over others. A power of rising, by the expansive force of self-esteem, into something almost estimable—ordinary mortals tell lies at intervals—"*per saltum*," as the Doctors say; but these peoples' whole life is a lie. "The Chevalier was a fine specimen of the class, and seemed as indifferent to a hundred little adverse circumstances, as though everything around him went well and pleasantly.

There was a suave dignity in the way he moved a very dubious hand over his unshaven chin—in the graceful negligence he exhibited when disposing the folds of his threadbare cloak—in the jaunty lightness with which, after saluting, he replaced his miserable hat on the favored side of his head, that conveyed the whole story of the man.

What a model for my imitation had he been, thought I, if I had seen him in the outset of life—what a study had he presented; and yet there he was, evidently in needy circumstances, pressed on by even urgent want, —and I, Con Cregan, the outcast—the poor friendless street-ruined—had become a "millionaire."

I don't know how it was, but certainly I felt marvellously ill-at-ease with my new friend. A real aristocrat, with all the airs of assumption and haughtiness, would have been a blessing, compared with the submissive softness of the "Chevalier." Through all his flattery, there seemed a sly consciousness that his honeyed words were a snare; and his smile, a delusion; and I never could divest myself of the feeling that he saw into the very secret of my heart, and knew me thoroughly.

I must become his dupe, thought I, or it is all over with me. The fellow will detect me for a "Parvenu" long before we reach Malaga!

No man born and bred to affluence could have acquired the keen insight into life that I possessed. I must mask this knowledge then, if I would still be thought a "born gentleman." This was a wise resolve; at least its effects were immediately such as I hoped for. The Chevalier's little sly sarcasms,—his half-insinuated "equivoques," were changed for a tone of wonder and admiration at all I said. How one so young could have seen, and learned, so much!—what natural gifts I must possess! — how remarkably just my views were!—how striking the force of my observations!—and all this, while I was discoursing what certainly does not usually pass for "consummate wisdom." I soon saw that the Chevalier set me down for a fool; and from that moment we changed places,—*he* became the dupe versus *me*. To be sure the contrivance cost me something, as we usually spent the evenings at picquet or ecarté, and the Consul was the luckiest of men: to use his own phrase, applied to one he once spoke of,— "savait corriger la fortune."

Although he spoke freely of the fashionable world of Paris and London, with all whose celebrities he affected a near intimacy, he rarely touched upon his New World experiences, and blinked all allusion whatever to the Republic of "Campecho." His own history was comprised in the brief fact, that he was the cadet of a great family of Provence. —All your French rogues I remark come from the South of France.—That he had once held a high diplomatic rank, from which, in consequence of the fall of a ministry, he was degraded, and after many vicissitudes of fortune, he had become Consul-General at Campecho. "My friends," continued he, "are now looking up again in the world, so that I entertain

hopes of something better than perpetual banishment."

Of English people, their habits, modes of life, and thought, the Chevalier spoke to me, with a freedom he never would have used, if he had not believed me to be a Spaniard, and only connected with Ireland through the remote chain of ancestry. This deceit of mine was one he never penetrated, and I often thought over the fact with satisfaction. To encourage his frankness on the subject of my country, I affected to know nothing, or next to nothing, of England, and gradually he grew to be more communicative, and at last spoke with an unguarded freedom, which soon opened to me a clue of his real history.

It was one day as we walked the deck together, that, after discussing the tastes and pursuits of the wealthy English, he began to talk of their passion for sport, and especially horse-racing. The character of this national pastime, he appeared to understand perfectly; not as a mere foreigner, who had witnessed a Derby, or a Doncaster, but as one conversant with the traditions of the Turf, or the private life of the jockey and the trainer.

I saw that he colored all his descriptions with a tint meant to excite an interest within me for these sports. He drew a picture of an "Ascot meeting," wherein were assembled all the ingredients that could excite the curiosity, and gratify the ambition of a wealthy, high-spirited youth; and he dilated with enthusiasm, upon his own first impressions of these scenes, mingled with half-regrets of how many of his once friends had quitted the "Turf" since he last saw it!

He spoke familiarly of those whose names I had often read in newspapers as the great leaders of the "sporting world," and affected to have known them all on terms of intimacy and friendship. Even had the theme been less attractive to me, I would have encouraged it for other reasons,—a strange glimmering suspicion ever haunting my mind, that I had heard of the worthy Chevalier before, and under another title; and so completely had this idea gained possession of me, that I could think of nothing else.

At length, after we had been some weeks at sea, the welcome cry of "Land!" was given from the mast-head; but as the weather was hazy and thick, we were compelled to shorten sail, and made comparatively little way through the water, so that, at nightfall, we saw that another day must elapse ere we touched mother earth again.

The Chevalier and the Captain both dined with me; the latter, however, soon repaired to the deck, leaving us in "*tete-a-tete.*" It was in all likelihood the last evening we should ever pass together, and I felt a most eager longing to ascertain the truth of my vague suspicions. Chance gave me the opportunity. We had been playing cards, and luck—contrary to custom, and in part owing to my always shuffling the cards *after* my adversary—had deserted *him* and taken *my* side. At first this seemed to amuse him, and he merely complimented me upon my fortune, and smiled blandly at my success. After a while, however, his continued losses began to irritate him, and I could see that his habitual command of temper was yielding to a peevish, captious spirit he had never before exhibited.

"Shall we double our stake?" said he, after a long run of ill-luck.

"If *you* prefer it, of course," said I. And we played on, but ever with the same result.

"Come," cried he, at last, "I'll wager fifty Napoleons on this game." The bet was made, and he lost it! With the like fortune, he played on and on, till at last, as day was dawning, he had not only lost all that he had won from me during the voyage, but a considerable sum besides, and for which he gave me his check upon a well-known banker at Paris.

"Shall I tell you your fortune, Monsieur le Comte?" said he, in a tone of bitterness that almost startled me.

"With all my heart," said I, laughing; "are you skilful as a necromancer?"

"I can at least decipher what the cards indicate," said he. "There is no great skill in reading, where the print is legible." With these words he shuffled the cards, dividing them into two or three packets, the first card of each he turned on the face. "Let me premise, Count," said he, "before I begin, that you will not take anything in bad part which I may reveal to you; otherwise I'll be silent. You are free to believe, or not to believe, what I tell you,—but you cannot reasonably be angry if unpleasant discoveries await you."

"Go on fearlessly," said I; "I'll not promise implicit faith in everything, but I'll pledge myself to keep my temper."

He began at once, drawing forth every third card of each heap, and disposing them in a circle, side by side. When they were so arranged, he bent over, as if to study them, concealing his eyes from me by his hand,—but at the same time, as I could perceive, keenly watching my face between his fingers. "There is some great mistake here," said he at length, in a voice of irritation. "I have drawn the cards wrong, somehow; it must be so, since the interpretation is clear as print. What an absurd blunder, too!" and he seemed as if about to dash the cards up in a heap, from a sense of angry disappointment.

"Nay, nay," cried I, interposing. "Let us hear what they say, even though we may dispute the testimony."

"If it were less ridiculous it might be offensive," said he, smiling; "but being as it is, it is really good laughing-matter."

"I am quite impatient,—pray read on."

"Of course it is too absurd for anything but ridicule," said he, smiling, but as I thought, with a most malicious expression. "You perceive here, this four of clubs, which, as the first card we turn, assumes to indicate your commencement in life. Now, only fancy, Monsieur le Comte, what this most insolent little demon would insinuate? Really I cannot continue. Well, well—be it so. This card would say, that you were not only born without rank or title, but actually in a condition of the very meanest, and most humble poverty. Isn't that excellent?" said he, bursting out into a fit of immoderate laughter, in which the spiteful glance of his keen eyes seemed to pierce through and through me.

As for me, I laughed too; but what a laugh it was! Never was a burst of natural sorrow so poignant in suffering as that forced laugh, when covered with shame, I sat there, beneath the sarcastic insolence of the wretch, who seemed to gloat over the tortures he was inflicting.

"I can scarcely expect that this opening will inspire you with much confidence in the oracle," said he; "the first step a falsehood, promises ill for the remainder of the journey."

"If not very veracious," said I, "it is at least very amusing. Pray continue."

"What would the old Counts of your ancestry have said to such a profanation?" cried the Chevalier. "By St. Denis, I would not have been the man to asperse their blood thus, in their old halls at Grenada!"

"*We* live in a less haughty age," said I, affecting a smile of indifference, and motioning him to proceed.

"What follows is the very commonest of that nonsense which is revealed in all lowly fortunes. You are, as usual, the victim of cold and hunger, suffering from destitution and want. Then, there are indications of a bold spirit, ambitious and energetic, bursting out through all the gloom of your dark condition, and a small whispered word in your ear, tells you to hope!" While the Chevalier rattled out this "rodomontade" at a much greater length than I have time or patience to repeat, his eyes never quitted me, but seemed to sparkle, with a fiend-like intelligence of what was passing within me. As he concluded, he mixed up the cards together, merely muttering, half-aloud, "Adventures and escapes by land and sea." "Abundance of hard luck, to be all compensated for one day, when wealth in all its richest profusion is showered upon you." Then dashing the cards from him in affected anger, he said, "It is enough to make men despise themselves, the way in which they yield credence to such rank tomfoolery! but I assure you, Count, however contemptible the oracle has shown herself today, I have on more than one occasion been present at the most startling revelations—not alone as regarded the past, but the future also."

"I can easily believe it, Chevalier," replied I, with a great effort to seem philosophically calm. "One must not reject everything that has not the stamp of reason upon it; and even what I have listened to to-day—absurd as it is, has not shaken my faith in the divination of the cards. Perhaps this fancy of mine is the remnant of a childish superstition, which I owe in great part to my old nurse. She was a Moor by birth, and imbued with all the traditions and superstitions of her own romantic land."

There was a most sneering expression on the Chevalier's face as I uttered these words. I paid no attention to it, however, but went on: "From the venerable dame I myself attained to some knowledge of 'destiny reading,' of which I remember once or twice in life to have afforded very singular proofs. *My* skill, however, usually preferred unraveling the 'future' to the 'present.'"

"Speculation is always easier than recital," said the Chevalier, drily.

"Very true," said I; "and in reading the past I have ever found how want of sufficient skill has prevented my giving to the great fact of a story the due and necessary connection; so that, indeed, I appear as if distinct events alone were revealed to me, without clue to what preceded or followed them. I see destiny as a traveller sees a landscape by fitful flashes of lightning at night—great tracts of country suddenly displayed in all the blaze of noon-day, but lost to sight the next moment forever! Such humble powers as these, are, I am well aware, unworthy to bear competition with your more cultivated gifts; but if, with all their imperfections, you are disposed to accept their exercise, they are sincerely at your service."

The Chevalier, I suspect, acceded to this proposal in the belief that it was an effort on my part to turn the topic from myself to *him*, for he neither seemed to believe in my skill, nor felt any interest in its exercise.

Affecting to follow implicitly the old Moorish woman's precepts, I prepared myself for my task by putting on a great mantle with a hood, which, when drawn forward, effectually concealed the wearer's face. This was a precaution I took the better to study his face, while my own remained hid from view.

"You are certainly far more imposing as a prophet than I can pretend to be," said he, laughing, as he lighted a cigar, and lay back indolently to await my revelations. I made a great display of knowledge in shuffling and arranging the cards, the better to think over what I was about; and at last, disposing some dozen in certain mystic positions before me, I began

"You startled *me*, Chevalier, by a discovery which only wanted truth to make it very remarkable. Let me now repay *you* by another which I shrewdly suspect to be in the same condition. There are four cards now before me, whose meaning is most positive, and which distinctly assert that you, Chevalier de la Boutonerie, are no Chevalier at all!"

"This is capital!" said he, filling out a glass of wine, and drinking it off with the most consummate coolness.

"And here," said I, not heeding his affected ease: "here is another still stranger revelation, which says that you are not a Frenchman, but a native of a land which latterly has taken upon it to supply the rest of the world with adventurers—in plain words, a Pole."

"It is true that my father, who held a command in the Imperial army, lived some years in that country," said he hastily; "but I have yet to learn that he forfeited his nationality by so doing."

"I only know what the cards tell me," said I, spreading out a mass of them before me, and pretending to study them attentively; "and here is a complication which would need a cleverer expositor than I am. Of all the tangled webs ever I assayed to unravel, this is the knottiest. Why really, Chevalier, yours must have been a life of more than ordinary vicissitude, or else my prophetic skill has suffered sadly from disuse."

"Judging from what you have just told me, I rather lean to the latter explanation," said he, swallowing down two glasses of wine with great rapidity.

"I suspect such to be the case, indeed," said I, "for otherwise I could scarcely have such difficulty in reading these mystic signs once so familiar to me, and from which I can now only pick up a stray phrase here and there. Thus I see what implies a high diplomatic employment, and yet, immediately after, I perceive that this is either a mistake of mine, or the thing itself a cheat and a deception."

"It surely does not require divination to tell a diplomatic agent that he has served on a foreign mission," said the Chevalier, with a sneer.

"Perhaps not, but I see here vestiges of strange occurrences in which this fact is concerned. A fleeting picture passes now before my eyes: I see a race course, with its crowds of people, and its throng of carriages, and horses are led out to be saddled, and all is expectation and eagerness, and—what! This is most singular! the vision has passed away, and I am looking at two figues who stand side by side in a richly-furnished room, a man and a woman. *She* is weeping, and *he* consoling her. Stay! He lifts his head—the man is yourself, Chevalier!"

"Indeed!" said he; but this time the word was uttered in a faint voice, while a pallor, that was almost lividness, colored his dark features.

"She murmurs a name; I almost caught it," exclaimed I, as if carried away by the rapt excitement of prophecy. "Yes! I hear it now, perfectly—the name is Alexis!"

A fearful oath burst from the Chevalier, and with a bound he sprung to his feet, and dashed his closed fists against his brow.—"Away with your jugglery—have done with your miserable cheat, sir—than can only terrify women and children. Speak out like a man; who are you, and what are you?"

"What means this outrage, sir? How have you forgotten yourself so far as to use this language to *me?*" said I, throwing back the mantle, and standing full before him.

"Let us have no more acting, sir, whether it be as a prophet or bully," said he sternly. "You affect to know *me*, who I am, and whence I have come. Make the game equal between us, or it may be worse for you."

"You threaten me, then," said I calmly.

"I do," was the answer.

"It is therefore open war between us?"

"I never said so," replied he, with a most cutting irony of manner; "but whatever secret malice can do—and you shall soon know what it means—I pledge myself you will not find yourself forgotten."

"Agreed then: now leave me, sir."

"I am your guest, sir," said he, with a most hypocritical air of deference and courtesy.—"It is surely scant politeness to drive me hence when I am not in a position to find another shelter; we are upon the high seas; I cannot walk forth and take my leave. Believe me, sir, the character you would fain perform before the world would not act so."

Notwithstanding the insult conveyed in the last words, I determined that I would respect "him who had eaten my salt," and with a gesture of assent, for I could not speak, I moved away.

No sooner was I alone, than I repented me of the rash folly into which, for the indulgence of a mere petty vengeance, I had been betrayed. I saw that by this absurd piece of malice, I had made an enemy of a man whose whole career vouched for the danger of his malevolence.

How could he injure me? What species of attack could he make upon me? Whether was it more likely that he would avoid me as one dangerous to himself, or pursue me wherever I went by his vengeance? These were hard questions to solve, and they filled my mind so completely that I neither heeded the bustle which heralded the arrival on board of the pilot, or the still busier movement which told that we were approaching the harbor. At last I went on deck and approached the bulwark, over which a number of the crew

were leaning, watching the course of a boat that, with all her canvass spread, was making for land. "The Pilot-boat," said the captain, in reply to my glance of inquiry: "she is lying straight in, as the Consul is anxious to land at once."

"Is he on board of her?" said I, with an anxiety I could not conceal.

"Yes, Señhor Conde, and your Excellency's secretary too."

Was it my fear suggested the notion, or was it the simple fact, but I thought that the words, "Count" and "Excellency" were articulated with something like a sneer? I had no opportunity to put the matter to the test, for the captain had already quitted the spot, and was busy with the multifarious cares the near approach to land enforces. My next thought was, Why had my secretary gone ashore without my orders? Was this a piece of zeal on his part to make preparations for our disembarking, or might it be something worse? and if so,—what? Every moment increased the trouble of my thoughts. Certainly misfortunes do cast their shadows before them—for I felt that strange, but overwhelming sense of depression that never is causeless. I ran over every species of casualty that I could imagine, but except highway robbery—actual "brigandage," I could not fancy any real positive danger to be anticipated from the Chevalier.

How different was my mood from what I expected it would have been on nearing shore. Where were all my visions of pomp and splendor? Where the proud circumstances of my more than princely state? Alas! I would have given a full fourth of my wealth to be landed unostentatiously, and quietly, and to have my mind relieved from all dread of the cursed Chevalier!

That I did not overrate the peril before me, events soon proved.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE "CARCEL MORENA" AT MALAGA.

As we sailed proudly into the harbor of Malaga, my attention, at first directed to the striking features of the shore, where lay a city actually embowered amid orange groves —was soon drawn off by the appearance of a boat, rowed by twelve men, which approached the ship. The national flag of Spain floated from a standard in her stern, and I could mark the glitter of arms, and uniform, on board of her.

"The officers of health, I suppose?" said I carelessly to the captain.

"No, Señhor, these are soldiers of the garrison.

"Ah! I understand," said I, "they are on the alert as to whom they let land in these troublous times." For it was the period of the great Carlist struggle.

"Possibly," was his dry remark; and he moved away.

A hoarse challenge from the boat, was answered by something from the ship; and the "accommodation-ladder" was immediately lowered, and an officer ascended to the deck, followed by two of his men, with their side-arms.

Some of the ordinary greetings being exchanged between the captain and the officer, the latter said, "My business here is with the person styling himself the Conde de Cregano. Where is he?"

"That is my name, Señhor," said I, with a studious admixture of civility and condescension.

"Please to walk this way, sir," said the officer, leading towards the poop cabin, and preceding me with a degree of assurance that boded ill for his impression of my dignity.

As we entered the cabin, I could hear the two soldiers taking up their places as sentries at the door.

"I wish to see your passport, Señhor," said he, as he seated himself at the table.

"My passport shall be produced at the fitting time," said I, "when I arrive on shore.—Here, I have no need of any."

"You are wrong, sir. Once within that circle of buoys, at the mouth of the port, you are within the limits of the shore authorities; but were it even otherwise, these are not times for scruples, and I, for one, would not hesitate to arrest you on the information I have received."

"Information you have received, sir!" exclaimed I, in terror and amazement.

"Yes, sir, I may as well tell you that Malaga is not in the possession of your friends —you will not find a Carlist garrison ready to give you a salute of honor at your landing. Far less formal, but not less peremptory attentions await you: but produce your papers—for I have no time to lose."

I saw at a glance that my position was most perilous, and as rapidly resolved to make an effort for safety. "Señhor Capitana," said I, placing an open pocket-book stuffed with bank-notes before him, "please to accept my passport, and to keep it in your own safe possession. I shall put to sea again, and order the captain to land me at some port in Italy."

"It is too late," said he, with a sigh, as he pushed the pocket-book away; "the informations against you are already transmitted to Madrid."

"Great heavens! and for whom do they take me?" cried I.

"I cannot tell,—I never heard. I only

know that I have the order for your arrest, as the person assuming to be 'the Conde Cregano.'

"What crime is laid to my charge?—have I defrauded any one? What is alleged against me?"

"Show me your passport," said he again.

"There it is," said I, producing the document which by Don Esteban's intervention I had obtained from the authorities of Guajuaqualla, and wherein I was called a native of Grenada, and a noble of Spain.

"And all this is true as set forth," said the officer.

"It is a principle of law in my native land, that no prisoner is called upon to criminate himself," said I.

"In that case you are no Spaniard," said the officer, shrewdly, "nor, indeed, does your accent so bespeak you. You are now under arrest." He opened the door as he said this, and pointing me out to the two sentries, whispered something too low for me to overhear. This done, he left the cabin and went upon deck.

I looked up from the chair where I sat into the faces of my two guardians, and a more ill-favored pair of gentlemen I never beheld. Ill-fed, but dissipated-looking rascals, they seemed more like highwaymen than soldiers. Still, even a chance was not to be thrown away, and so I whispered in a soft voice,—"My worthy friends, in that writing-case yonder there are bank-notes to a very large amount. In a few moments they will be taken away from me, never to be restored. I may as well have the satisfaction of knowing that two brave, but poor men, are benefitted by them. Bring me the desk, and I'll give them to you."

They looked at each other and they looked at me; they then looked towards the door and the skylight—and, although without speaking, it was plain enough to see what was passing in their minds.

"Remember," said I, "I ask nothing in return from you; I shall not attempt to escape; nor were I to do so, could you aid me in any way. I merely wish to assist two worthy fellows, who certainly do not look like the 'spoiled children of fortune.'"

They hesitated, and seemed afraid: at last they whispered for a few seconds together; and then one of them went over, and, taking up the desk, laid it down before me. "You can make a fair division at another time," said I; "it is better not to waste precious moments now, but at once conceal the money about your persons. Here are some eight or ten thousand piastres,—and here, fully as much for you. These are Mexican notes for a large sum, and these are bills on Amsterdam and Hamburgh for great amounts. That's right, my lads, make short work of it—in your boots, in your shakos—anywhere for the present, only be quiet!"

Truly they merited all my encomiums: to "stow away" plunder I'd back them against any pair who ever stopped a diligence on the high-road; nor was it without some little difficulty I could persuade them to leave any money in the desk, as a precaution to prevent the suspicion of what had actually occurred. As I aided them in the work of concealment, I artfully contrived to possess myself of one paper—the Havannah banker's receipt for the large deposits I had left in his hands, and this I managed to slip within the lining of my travelling-cap. It was a last anchor of hope, if ever I were to weather the storm around me!

Our work had scarcely been completed, and the desk replaced in its former situation, when the officer returned. He briefly informed me that seals had been placed on all my effects, that my household was placed under arrest similar to my own, and that when I had pointed out the various articles of my property in the cabin, there was nothing more for me to do, but to accompany him on shore.

As I was not suffered to take any portion of my baggage with me, even of my clothes, I was soon in the boat and pulling rapidly for the land. The quays and the jetty were crowded with people whose curiosity I at once perceived had no other object than myself, and although some did not scruple to exhibit towards me signs of dislike and dissatisfaction, I could remark that others regarded me with a compassionate, and even a kindly look. All were, however, scrupulously silent and respectful, and touched their hats in salutation as I ascended the stairs of the landing-place.

This feeling, to my considerable astonishment, I perceived extended even to the soldiery, one or two of whom saluted as I passed. In any case, thought I, it is for no insignificant offender I am taken; and even that is some comfort, provided my crime be not high treason.

I was conducted straight to the "Carcel Morena," a large sombre-looking building, which was at once fortress, prison, and residence of the Governor, exhibiting a curious mixture of these incongruous functions in all its details.

The apartment into which I was ushered was a large saloon, dimly lighted by narrow windows piercing the thick walls. The furniture had once been handsome, but from time and neglect had become worn and disfigured. A small table, spread with a very tolerable breakfast, stood in one of the windows, at which I was invited to seat myself, and then I was left alone to my own lucubrations. Hunger prevailed over grief, I ate heartily; and having concluded my meal, amused myself by studying the Trojan war,

which was displayed upon the wall in a very ancient tapestry.

I had traced the fortunes of Greeks and Trojans on the walls till I was well-nigh wearied. I had even gazed upon the little patches of brown grass beneath the windows, till my eyes grew dim with watching, but no one came to look after me, and, in the unbroken silence around, I half feared that I should be utterly forgotten, and left, like the old tapestry, to die of moths and years; but at last, as day was declining, I heard something like the clank of arms and the tramp of soldiery, and soon the sounds were more distinctly marked, approaching my door. Suddenly the two leaves of the folding door were thrown wide, and an elderly man, in a general's uniform, followed by two other officers, entered.

Without taking any notice of the salute I made him, he walked towards the fire-place, and, standing with his back to it, said to one of his aid-de-camps, "Read the 'proces verbal,' José."

José bowed, and taking from his sabretasche a very lengthy roll of paper, began to read aloud, but with such rapidity and such indistinctness withal, that I could only, and with the greatest difficulty, catch a stray word here and there. The titles of her Majesty the Queen appeared to occupy full ten minutes, and an equal time to be passed in setting forth the authority under whose jurisdiction I then stood. These over, there came something about an individual who, born a Mexican, or a native of Texas, had assumed the style, title, and dignity of a Count of Spain; such rank being taken for the purposes of deception, and the better to effect certain treasonable designs, to be set forth hereafter. After this there came a flourish about the duties of loyalty and fidelity to the sovereign, whose private virtues came in by parenthesis, together with a very energetic denunciation on all base and wicked men, who sought to carry dissension into the bosom of their country, and convulse with passions of a civil war, a nation proverbially tranquil and peace-loving.

Nothing could be less interesting than the style of this paper, except the manner of him who recited it. State truisms, in inflated language, and wearisome platitudes about nothing, received an additional grace, from a snuffling nasal intonation, and a short cough.

I listened at first with the anxiety of a man whose fortunes hung on the issue, then, as the vague rambling character of the document diminished this interest, I heard with more indifference; and lastly completely wearied by the monotony of the voice, and the tiresome iterations of the style, I could not prevent my thoughts from wandering far from the affair in hand.

What fearful crimes were alleged against me —what dire offences I was charged with—I was not to hear, since lost in the pleasant land of day-dreams, I fancied myself strolling in the shade of a forest, with Donna Maria beside me, while I poured out a most impassioned narrative of my love and fidelity. Nor was it till the reading was concluded, and a loud hem! from the General, resounded through the chamber, that I remembered where I was.

"Prisoner!" said he, in a stern authoritative tone, "you have now heard the nature of the charge against you, and the reasons of your arrest; you will answer certain questions, the replies to which, if not in accordance with truth, constitute the crime of 'Traicion,' the penalty being death. What is your name?"

"Con Cregan."

"Native of what country?"

"Ireland."

"What rank and position do you hold in society?"

"A variable one—as luck favors me."

"What trade or profession do you follow?"

"Whatever seems most convenient at the moment."

"Have you served?"

"I have."

"In the land or sea service?"

"In both."

"With what grade?"

"Nothing very distinguished."

"Have you ever held the command of an expedition?"

"I have."

"With what object, and where?"

"In the Prairies of South America, to shoot red deer."

"Remember, sir," said the General, "this is no occasion for untimely jest; these sallies may cost you more dearly than you think for."

"If I am to speak the truth," said I boldly, "I must answer as I have done. If you want fiction, I'm ready for you at a moment's notice."

"Make a note of that, José!—'says that he is perfectly indifferent whether he tells truth or falsehood.'"

"And add, by way of parenthesis," said I: "that the General is precisely of my own way of thinking."

"Write down, 'insults the commission,'" said the General, boiling with rage.

The paragraph seemed a full one, for the interrogating was not resumed for some minutes.

"Now, sir," resumed the General; "state your object in coming to this country?"

"To get out of it as fast as I could."

"For whose use were the arms provided; the horses, and horse equipage with which you embarked?"

"My own."

"Name the agent or agents of Don Carlos with whom you have held correspondence?"

"None. I never knew any."

"By whose hands were the large sums of money in your possession, entrusted to you?"

"I found them."

"How, and where?"

"In a hole."

The General's face grew purple; and more than once I could see the struggle it cost him to repress his bursting indignation. And, in the mutterings he let fall to his secretary, it was easy to mark that his comments on the evidence were not too favorable.

"Were you acquainted with Brigadier Hermose Gonzillos?"

"No."

"Nor with his brother, the Canon Gonzillos?"

"No."

"When did you first meet Señhor Ruy Peres Y' Hacho?"

"Never saw him in my life."

"Nor held intercourse with him?"

"Never."

"Were not much in his company, nor entrusted to him in the secret details of the expedition?"

"I know nothing of what you're talking about."

"Produce Ruy Peres," said the General; and the door opened, and the Chevalier, dressed in a military uniform, and with several decorations of foreign orders, entered.

"Do you know this gentleman!" said the General, drily.

"I know him as a Pole, whose name is Alexis Radchofody; at least, under such a name he once lived in London, and is well known to the police there."

"Go on," said the General to the secretary. "On being confronted with the Señhor Ruy Peres, the prisoner became suddenly abashed, and at once confessed that he had known him intimately several years before at London."

"Is that man a witness against me?" asked I, eagerly.

"Attend to me, sir," said the General, while he made a sign to the Chevalier to retire; "neither subterfuge nor insolence will avail you here. You are perfectly well known to us; your early history,—your late intrigues,—your present intentions."

"With such intimate knowledge of all about me, General," said I, coolly, "havn't we been wasting a great deal of valuable time in this interrogatory?"

"And, notwithstanding repeated admonitions, persisted in using the most indecorous language to the commission." These words the General dictated in a loud voice, and they were immediately taken down by his secretary.

"Señhor Concregan," said he, addressing me, "you stand now committed by virtue of a royal warrant, a copy of which, and of the charges laid against you, will be duly transmitted to you. Whenever the authorities have decided whether your offence shall be submitted to a civil or military tribunal, you will be brought up for trial."

"I am an English subject, sir," said I; "I belong to a nation that never permits its meanest member to be trampled on by foreign tyranny, far less will it suffer his liberty or life to be sacrificed to a false and infamous calumny. I claim the protection of my ambassador, or at least such a representative of my country as your petty locality may possess. I desire——" What I was about to demand as my birthright was not destined to be made public on this occasion, since at a signal from the General the door opened, and two soldiers advancing, adjusted handcuffs on my wrists, and led me away even before I had recovered from the surprise the whole proceeding occasioned me.

Whether it was that I enjoyed the prerogative of a state prisoner, or that the authorities were not quite clear that they were justified in what they were doing, I cannot say, but my prison discipline was of the very mildest order. I had a most comfortable room, with a window looking seaward over the beautiful bay of Malaga, taking a wide range along shore, where gardens, and villas, and orange-groves extended for miles. The furniture was neat, and with some pretensions to luxury; and the fare, I am bound to own, was excellent. Books, and even newspapers, were freely supplied to me, and save that at certain intervals, the clank of a musket and the shuffling of feet in the corridor without, told that the sentry of my guard was being relieved, I could have fancied myself in some homely inn, without a restriction upon my liberty. My handcuffs had been removed the moment I had entered my chamber, and now the iron stanchions of my window were the only reminders of a gaol around me.

CHAPTER XXX.

"AN ESCAPE."

The first revulsion of feeling over—the terrible shock of that fall from the pinnacle of wealth and greatness to the lowly condition of a prisoner, unfriended and destitute,—I actually began to enjoy my life, and feel something wonderfully like happiness. I do not pretend to say that my disappointment was not most acute and painful, or that I suffered little from the contemplation of my ruined hopes. No! far from it; but my

grief, like the course of a mountain torrent, soon ran off, and left the stream of my life clear and untroubled as ever. It is true, thought I, this is a terrible contrast to what I was a week ago; but still, is it not a long way in advance of what my original condition promised? I am a prisoner in a Spanish fortress—is not even that better than a peasant in an Irish hovel? The very cares with which I am surrounded bespeak a certain consequence pertaining to me; I am one whom ministers of state think and speak about—whose name is often on their lips—whose memory haunts them in their half-waking moments. Is not this something? Is it not a great deal to one whose whole ideal was to avoid the bye-paths of life, and take his course in its very widest and busiest thoroughfares?

The occupations in which I passed my days, greatly contributed to sustain this pleasant illusion. I was eternally writing lettters, memorials, statements of facts, and what not, of interminable narratives, to all our ministers and consuls, invoking their aid, and protesting in the name of the British nation against the unwarrantable tyranny of my imprisonment. It is quite true that these lengthy documents of mine seemed to meet but sorry acceptance. For a length of time no acknowledgment of their reception ever reached me, but at last the following dry epistle informed me that my memorials had reached their destination:—

"Sir,—I am directed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to acknowledge the receipt of your memorials, dated the 9th, 12th, 18th, 23rd, and 25th of last month, together with various letters bearing on the same subjects since that time, and to state in reply, that the matter of your complaint is at present under investigation with the authorities of the Spanish Government.

"His lordship the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs desires me to add his regrets, that, even in the event of your liberation, he can hold out no prospect whatever that any compensation will be made to you for the loss of property you allege to have suffered, and which, of course was incurred as one of the many risks natural to the course of such an expedition as you were engaged in.

"I have the honor to be, sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"Joseph Backslip.

"F. O., London, Oct. 18—.

'To Cornelius Cregan, Esq."

This was a sad damper! To think that I was to lose the immense amount of property with which I had embarked. The gems and jewels, the rare objects of art, the equipages, the beautiful horses of purest Mexican blood! not to speak of that far greater loss—the large sum in actual money! but, then, what a consolation to remember, that a Secretary of State was mingling his sorrows with my own on the subject; that he actually gave an official character to his grief, by desiring the under Secretary to convey "his regrets" in a despatch! his regrets—to me, Con. Cregan! What inestimable words! That ever I should live to know that the Right Honorable Lord Puzzleton, the adored cherub of fashion—the admired of *coteries*—the worshipped of "the Commons"—the favored guest of Windsor, should, under the big seal of his office, assure me of his heartfelt sympathy!

I closed my eyes as I read the paragraph, and imagined that we were weeping together like the "Babes in the Wood." "How they wrong this man," thought I, "in England—what calumnies they circulate about his levity, his heartlessness, and so forth: and see! look at him here, mingling in the private sorrows of an individual, and taking part in all the private woes of Con. Cregan." By this beautiful artifice, I contrived to raise the aforesaid Con. to a very considerable elevation in his own esteem; and thus, worthy reader, by pleasant fancies and ingenious illusions—wares that every man can fashion at will—did I contrive to make my prison at Malaga a most endurable resting-place; and even now, to make its retrospect full of sweet memories!

Nor were my imaginings limited to such visions as these; for I loved to compare my condition with that of other exalted prisoners, and fancy how my conduct would read by side of theirs. If I were less piously resigned—less submissive than Silvio Pellico—assuredly I showed more dignity in my fall than the Exile of St. Helena. I bore all the little vexations of my lot with a haughty reserve that entirely subdued every sign of a querulous nature, and seemed to say, "My time will come yet!"

At last it appeared, either as if my memorials were never opened, or if opened, never read. No answer came whatever! and even the Malaga newspapers, which in the dearth of shipping intelligence, would often insert some little notice of me, stating how "The 'Conde' walked yesterday, for an hour upon the leads"—"the 'Conde' partook with an appetite, of a partridge, and conversed freely with the officer on duty," and so on—now they never by any chance alluded to me; and I seemed, for all the interest the world manifested about me, to have suffered a species of moral decease. It was the unhealthy season of the year, and the Consul had absented himself, leaving his functions to his "Vice," who having also a "constitution," had departed likewise, bequeathing the traditions and cares of office to his Dutch colleague, who neither spoke nor read any other tongue, than that muddy language begotten of dykes and fogs,—wearied possibly by the daily arri-

val of half a quire of my remonstrances, or curious to see the machine by which these broad sheets were struck off with such unfailing celerity, this official arrived one day at the prison with an order from the Governor permitting him to see the "Conde."

I was as usual writing away, when the turnkey announced his Excellency, (every official is Excellency, if too low for Highness,) Mynheer van Hoagendrius, and a very short and immensely fat personage, dressed in a kind of black-and-white plaid jacket and trousers, entered. He looked like a huge chess-board set on legs. A grunt, a snort, a thick sound like a struggle between choking and gurgling ensued, which I concluded to be something in Dutch, and he seated himself opposite me.

I made my compliments to him, polyglot-wise, in French, English, Spanish, and at last German,—the last evidently striking a spark out of the embers of his cold intelligence, for he fixed his gnat-eyes upon me, and seemed as though he would soon wake up. Animated by this hope, I proceeded in my very best "Deutsch" to expound my sorrows to him. Fortunately for me, my German had been acquired in the low companionship of "skippers" and sailors, and consequently bore a nearer resemblance to its half-brother of Holland than the more cultivated tongues of professors and philosophers.

I cannot, to this hour, say whether it arose from any interest in the narrative, or whether proceeding from the laudable desire to come at the truth in a question of much difficulty; but the mynheer now came to me each morning, and usually stayed two hours, during which I talked and he smoked incessantly. Often, when he left me, have I asked myself "what progress I had made in his good opinion? how far had I made him master of my case?" But the question remained without an answer; for if occasionally a stray flash of intelligence would light up his dull features, on following the direction of his eyes I could perceive that the animation arose from the sight of some fishing-boat returning loaded with turbot, or that the savory odor of salt cod had saluted him from the shore. I felt at length as though I were sailing without a log-line. Nothing to mark my progress or say in what latitude I cruised.

My Dutch friend had now been visiting me for above six weeks; during which, if he had not supplied himself with every detail of my calamity, he had at least smoked all the choice tobacco which, as a favor from the Governor, I was permitted to land for my own use; and as yet he had given no signs of life other than the act of fumigation aforesaid. I was half angry, half amused, at the little act of dexterity with which he emptied the last remnant of my pure Havannah into his pipe, and heard, with a kind of malicious satisfaction, the little sigh with which he pushed the empty canister away from him.

He seemed lost for some time in the slough of his Dutch reflections, but at length he fixed his eyes upon me, and in a low suffocating tone said, "Hast a file?"

"No," said I.

"There, then," said he, giving me a small parcel tightly tied up in paper. "Farewell;" and he moved towards the door, before I could recover from my surprise, to thank him. As he reached it, he turned about, and in a very significant voice said, "Der bood est hardt"—a species of Plat-Deutsch I might not have understood if unaccompanied by a gesture, which implied that the ground was hard beneath my window, as a caution to me in the event of a leap.

No sooner was I alone than I opened my precious packet, which, besides two files, contained a small phial of aqua-fortis and another of oil,—the latter a useful adjunct to prevent the grating noise being heard. Having concealed the implements in a rat hole, I proceeded to examine the iron bars of the window, which, although seemingly of great size and strength, were in reality coated with a rust of more than half their actual thickness. This was a most inspiriting discovery, and at once animated me with glowing hopes of success.

As I could only work during the night, I affected illness as a reason for keeping my bed during the day, when I slept profoundly and refreshingly.

The non-success of all my efforts to interest diplomacy in my cause, was just beginning to impress me with a sense of gloom and despondency, when this new incident occurred to rally my drooping courage. Life had now an object, and that, if not always enough for happiness, is sufficient at least to rouse those energies, which, when stagnant, produce despair. How I longed for night to come, that I might resume my labor! With what a resolute industry I worked on during the dark hours, only ceasing when the change of the sentries brought the guard close beneath my window, and even grudging the few seconds thus wasted. With what delight I used to measure the fissure which, at first only deep enough for my nail, was now sufficient to cover the file! This I used to conceal each morning with bread colored by the rusty powder that fell from the filing, so that, to all seeming, everything was in its usual order.

This was almost the only period of my life in which I remembered my father: from some similarity in our condition perhaps, he was now seldom out of my thoughts. I used to wonder if he were still alive, and how situated; whether he was yet a convict, going

forth in chains to daily toil, or a "ticket-of-leave" man, working at some settlement in the "Bush." Did he ever think of me? Did he ever dream of his native land, or wish to return to it, and what prospect of escape did fortune hold out to him? That, after all, was the great link which bound him to my thoughts! was there any silent and sympathising Dutchman to take pity on his captivity?

At the close of the fifth week, I had the inestimable pleasure of "reporting the breach practicable," or, in less sounding phrase, of assuring myself that the middle bar of the window was removable at will, and thus a free egress was permitted me to an extensive terrace, which, with a low parapet, overlooked the bay for miles. This was about five-and twenty feet from the ground, and was guarded beneath by a sentry,—one of a chain of sentinels whose "watch" extended around the entire fortress. The descent and the guard were then the only difficulties which now remained to be overcome,—so far, at least, as mere liberation from the prison walls extended. I am sure I invented at least fifty choice stratagems, which after-thought always showed were perfectly worthless. I bethought me of bribing the sentry with the few gold pieces which I still possessed; but what security had I that he might not resist the seduction, or betray me even after receiving the money?

The fall, too, was considerable; nor was there anything to which I could attach my bedclothes to lower myself to the ground. It must be "a drop," and what a situation should I be in were I to break a bone, or even sprain my ankle in the effort? Alas! I now perceived that although the most laborious portion of my work was accomplished, the most difficult remained to be done.

The obstacles to mere escape were sufficiently great to prevent me even thinking of the course to be pursued after I reached the ground in safety, for I was without friend, shelter, passport, or any means of disguise or concealment whatever.

I pondered long and carefully over the question, and already had two dreary weeks passed over since I had cut through the bar, and yet, so far as I could see, no nearer to liberation than when the solid iron enclosed me. My mind began to sink under the fatigue of unceasing contrivance, and a dreamy, dreary sense of hopelessness seemed gaining on me. It had been a dark, cloudy day, with gusts of wind, followed by intervals of calm. The air was moist and heavy, and charged with the depressing influences which the "mestrale," that sickliest of all winds, ever brings. Masses of leaden-colored clouds floated low over the sea, which was broken into a short angry "jobbe," as if after a storm.

All betokened the approach of a gale of wind, and, as night set in, the signs of bad weather thickened. Scarcely had the sun set, when it became dark as pitch; the wind, which had lulled for a brief space previous, now sprung up, and the sea fretted and chafed against the rocks with that peculiar sharp chirping sound that presages "wind." The clank of chain cables—the plashing noise of falling anchors—the loud shouts of the sailors as they prepared to meet the gathering storm, even now heard—while, in the changing position of the different lights in the bay, I could discern the movements of the various vessels as they sought shelter or made ready for sea, in expectation of the "gale." The impenetrable darkness, the roaring wind, the flashing of the lights, the cries of the seamen, the hurrying of feet along the quays, and the sounds of different boats' crews departing in haste—all gave a charm to a scene of which the obscurity increased the interest. A large French steamer was to have sailed that night for Marseilles, but I overheard a voice from the street foretelling that the "Garonne" might leave without her passengers, "as no one would go on board of her on such a night." A red lantern at the peak indicated the vessel, and I could see that she had changed her position and "taken up a berth" farther out in the bay.

I cannot tell by what instinct I selected her as a peculiar object of my interest—but so it was. I watched her unceasingly, and rarely took my eyes from the quarter where she lay, and when the heaving motion of the "red light" showed that she was tossing in a heavy sea, I listened too with eagerness, to catch anything from those that passed beneath that might concern this vessel, which now engrossed all my sympathy. "Were I once but on board of her," thought I, "the wildest hurricane that ever blew, would be sweeter to me than all the balmy airs that ever bore the odor of orange-blossom through my barred window!" I would have braved the stormiest seas, the maddest gale, shipwreck itself, rather than longer remain the helpless, hopeless thing, a life of imprisonment was making of me. "Would that the alternative were given me," said I to myself; "the free choice to change these four walls for the deck over which the waves are dancing in foamy sheets, with what a thankful heart would I take the offer!'

The last visit of the turnkey, who came to see all safe, broke in for a moment upon these musings; and now the double-locked door, and his retiring footsteps, told me that no further molestation was to be feared—and that I was, at least till daybreak, the undisturbed master of my own reveries, I opened the window, pushed back the iron stancheon, and walked out upon the terrace. It was a night

of storm and wild hurricane. The rain swept by in great plashes, increasing the darkness, and mingling its hissing noise with the breaking crash of the sea, as it beat furiously against the rocks. The dancing, bobbing motion of the lights on board the different craft, showed what "a sea" was raging in the bay: while, even in the city itself, the clatter of falling tiles and chimneys, told the violence of the gale. I stood upon the terrace—and as the rain penetrated my frail garment, and the wind wafted my wet hair across my cheeks, I felt a sense of ecstacy that nothing in all my previous life had ever equalled. It was the sensation of freedom; it was the burst of delight with which the captive welcomes the long-lost liberty. "Better this," thought I, "than the snuggest chamber that ever called itself a prison."

It was past the hour when any further visit from the turnkey might be expected. Already the outer door of my chamber had been locked and barred with all that scrupulous attention to noise and clank that are supposed only essential in a melo-drama. The sentry had just been relieved on the esplanade beneath the terrace, so that I might consider myself free from all fear of interruption in any quarter. I sat down upon the parapet, and peered into the dark depth below me, where the hazy glimmer of the sentry's lamp served to mark the height. At first it seemed a terrific drop; but after a while I began to satisfy myself that the darkness contributed to this effect; and as my sight grew more accustomed to the gloom, I was able to trace different objects; among others, the conical roof of the sentry-box, at a distance of scarcely more than fifteen feet beneath me.

Thus far I could reach by making a rope of my bed-clothes, and attach one end to a portion of the battlement of the parapet; but how should I venture on a descent in such a place? how risk the almost certainty of recapture by the sentry himself? This was a formidable difficulty, and demanded much consideration; and yet were I to select any other spot, I might chance to be disabled by the fall, and then all my efforts were fruitless, since a broken bone, or even a sprained ancle, would be certain ruin.

Never was a knotty point more canvased, nor the clue to a difficulty more zealously searched for! As generally happens in such cases, first thoughts are best, and the bold course the safest. By descending on the sentry-box, I should at least reach the ground without injury; and if I were to have a "tussle" for it with the guard, it would be without the disadvantage of a previous damage. Besides this, the incessant noise of the tempest, the crashing of the sea, and the deep booming of the thunder, gave hopes that my descent might be unheard. Nay more—the sound of my heavy body over his head would be rather an admonition to stay quietly within than risk himself outside, to the danger of tumbling tiles, or masses of masonry from the parapet. The more I reflected upon this, the clearer I saw that the storm was a heaven-sent accident for me; that the darkness, the tumult, and the deserted streets, were all accessories the most favorable; that to neglect such an occasion of escape would be downright madness. If I took some time to arrive at this conclusion, I made up for the delay by the rapidity of my subsequent movements. I hastily returned to my room; and had I been bred a rope-maker, my two sheets and counterpane could not have been fashioned into a three-stranded rope more handily; and my sailor's experience favoring, I adjusted the cord in a "timber hitch" round one of the battlements, and well satisfied myself that I might trust to the other extremity—"Con. Cregan" and his fortunes.

I then took a hurried survey of my room,—trimmed my lamp, that it might burn till morning, secured the three or four papers of value which still remained to me, and then issued forth to my enterprise.

A cannon-shot from the bay rang out as I again stepped upon the terrace, and I accepted the augury as an omen of welcome. I will not deny that my hands trembled as I examined for the last time, the fastening of the cord; nor do I seek to conceal, that as I buttoned my coat, the beating of my heart smote heavily against my fingers. I even hesitated for an instant,—and during that instant, brief as it was, I could have faced death itself, rather than the uncertainty before me. The weakness passed quickly away, and with a short, but fervent prayer, I grasped the rope, and slipped noiselessly over the parapet.

A sudden gust of wind swept past at the moment, and swung me out from the wall, as though I had been a thing of no weight; calling for all my strength to prevent me from being blown away! and now I was buffeted about—tossed here and thrown there, with a violence that almost dislocated every joint in my body. The jerking motion, and the chafing of my rope on the parapet, made me tremble for my security, and not without cause; for in one great swing, in which I described an arch, no other pendulum living or dead, ever compassed before, I came back with such force against the roof of the sentry-box, striking it with both my feet together at the same instant, that my cord snapped short in the very centre.

The force of my fall, added to the previous blow, capsized the sentry-box, and I came to the ground along with it, in a state of fright, that even to this very hour I cannot recall without shuddering. Half-stunned by the fall—bruised and almost lifeless from terror

I sat there waiting for the moment when the sentry would issue forth and seize me; nor was it till after the lapse of several minutes that I perceived that the soldier was in a trap, the weighty sentry-box had fallen over on the front, and effectually debarred him from any chance of self-extrication.

I stooped over to listen, but all was still; he never spoke a word—probably stunned by the shock, or he might have fainted from terror. Whatever the cause, neither my humanity nor my curiosity cared to explore further; but rising to my feet, and ascertaining to my inexpressible delight that I was uninjured, I set off at full speed toward the shore. The sea suggested escape, and thither I bent my way, without thinking more on the matter.

I could see from the hurried movement of lights along the pier, that boats were rapidly leaving for the various ships in the harbor. To get on board any of these, no matter what, or whither bound, was all my object,—a Tunis pirate, or a Malay prow, would have been a happy exchange for the black prison at Malaga.

I had almost run myself out of breath, when I came up with a knot of some dozen people who were hastening onward as fast as they could. Two heavily-laden barrows with luggage, and a multitude of cloaks, shawls, and mantles, pronounced them to be travellers; and I soon collected from the expressions dropped by the boatmen, that they were about to embark in the French steamer for Leghorn. Mingling with the group, which the darkness freely permitted, I heard a voice say in English, something about the weather; and now listening more attentively, I picked up that they were an English family hurrying to Pisa, to see a son, whose failing health gave them no time for delay. I gathered, too, that the packet, which should not have started till the next day, was now leaving suddenly: the captain having sent a message to say, that he had determined to put to sea rather than ride out the gale so near shore.

The travellers were mingling their complaints at this peremptory summons, with others over the absence of their courier, who had got leave to see some of his friends about a league away, and must now inevitably be left behind. In the course of their lamentings, I could learn that they had only engaged the man the evening before at the recommendation of the landlord, and had scarcely seen him above a couple of times.

In fact, except that he was an Italian, and his name Raffaello, they knew nothing about him. At last they reached the jetty, where the boat lay, and now I could hear their discussion, whether it were better to leave the courier's effects behind, or take them on, in the hope that he might yet come up.

"He's a smart fellow, and depend upon it he'll be here before we sail," said a young man of the party.

"No, no," cried another, "he'll never hear a word of the packet till she's half-way to Leghorn."

"What did you tell him, William?" asked an elderly lady.

"To be back by six o'clock to-morrow morning," said the first speaker.

"Ay, but in what language did you speak?"

"I spoke Italian, and afterwards I said it in French, for he doesn't know a word of English."

This was all I wanted: I slipped noiselessly away, and retiring to some distance behind the party, waited till I saw them descend the stairs to the boat. This occupied some time, for the party were numerous, and their trunks and portmanteaus were without end. At last, just as the word to shove off was given, I dashed forward at the top of my speed, crying out in Spanish,—"Hold fast, there! wait for the courier!"

"What's the matter?" asked one of the Englishmen.

"A courier, señhor," said a sailor, "wants to come with us."

"Oh, Raffaello, by George!" exclaimed the other; "I knew he'd be up: put back sails, he belongs to us."

"Pardon, signori," said I, stepping lightly over the guuwale, "I have had a sharp run for it;" and away we went! Seated on a great coat or black sheepskin, which from its style and cut I knew must have belonged to my predecessor, Raffaello, I could see the rapid passage of lights on the shore in the direction of my late prison, and at last could detect one glimmering from a part of the building where my cell stood. The roll of drums beating to arms was soon heard, and it was evident to me that my escape had become known,—that the garrison of the fortress was on the alert to recapture me. Although fully a mile from land, and rowing with all the vigor of twelve stout sailors towards a vessel whose steam was already whizzing through the escape funnel, my heart almost sank within me from very fear; and rather than be retaken, I would have jumped into the boiling tide that swelled and broke around me.

The sailors more than once relaxed their efforts to watch what was going forward on shore; and how fervently did I, in silence, curse their curiosity. Externally, however, I maintained my calm demeanor, and even ventured to conjecture that a fire must have broken out in the fortress, such was the commotion and excitement discernible in that quarter.

Another suggested the possibility of its being some prisoner that had made his escape,—a notion which I took occasion to ridicule, by

averring that the carcel was reputed to be the strongest prison in Spain, and an instance of evasion altogether unknown.

Thus chatting, we reached the steamer. To my intense delight the anchor was already weighed; and scarcely had we mounted the ladder, than she broached round, head to sea, and clove through the water like a fish.

Every plunge of the great ship shook the strong timbers, and made her huge frame-work tremble, sending a thrill of pleasure through me. With each mountain wave that rolled past, I saw my chance of safety increase, and knew that no boat—manned by Spaniards at least, would dare pursuit in such a storm. I had abundant leisure for these reflections, since my "masters" had only time to get on board when they retired to their berths, overcome by sea-sickness, so that I was at full liberty to indulge my own thoughts, and dispose of myself, without the slightest interruption. From a smart little French maid, I learned that the family was called Grimes,—that they had recently come from England, by way of Gibraltar, where one of the sons, now with them, was quartered with his regiment. That the party consisted of a widow lady with three daughters and two sons,—a third being the invalid at Pisa. They were rich, good sort of folks, very ignorant of the Continent, very credulous, and altogether a satisfactory kind of connection for a cunning French *femme-de-chambre*, and a roguish courier, to fall in with. This latter fact Mademoiselle Virginie insisted upon, with no small degree of self-gratulation, giving me to understand that we might have a very thriving career as fellow-laborers in the same vineyard.

Her sketches of English life, manners, and prejudices, were not a little amusing; while the rules she laid down for the due management and control of her master, were a perfect chapter in domestic machiavelism. There had once been a time when I would have enlisted willingly under such a banner—glad to reach the upper story of life, even by such a back stair; but now that I had tasted the glorious supremacy of command myself,—that I had reveled in the mastery of a great household—that I had rolled along in my own chariot, clothed in fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, I felt my return to a menial situation a degradation unendurable. I determined that once in Italy, I would escape from the thraldom of such servitude, come what might of it.

By long dwelling on the theme, I had contrived to impress myself with the most profound conviction that I was a much injured individual—that my case, if not sufficient for a war with Spain, was a fair ground for a parliamentary "flare-up," angry diplomatic notes, and heaven knows what threats of our outraged Foreign-office. That a man with such a glorious grievance should sink down into a courier—to wrangle with landlords, bully waiters, and flirt with the "maid in the rumble," was not to be thought of. I felt that I was sworn at Highgate, and destined for the inside of the travelling-carriage, and not the "out."

Scarcely were we arrived at Leghorn, and installed at the San Marco, than I began to prepare for my emancipation;—a bold step, considering that all the available resources I possessed was a ruby ring set round with brilliants, which I had concealed in my cap along with my papers. I was admonished to lose no time in my departure, by remarking that another packet from Malaga was expected within a week, which probably would convey the rightful courier in search of his missing baggage; and I was by no means desirous of being confronted with the real Simon Pure.

I am not sure that this latter consideration did not weigh most with me in the matter—since the novelty of my situation and the sense of its creature-comforts might have induced me to linger a little longer in a capacity even as humble. With such people as the Grimes's the courier was supreme, and his rule despotic. From the hour at which they were to dine, to what they were to eat—how they were to spend the day—what to see, and what to avoid, were all at his dictation; while from the landlord came a perfect volley of civilities that plainly showed who was the real personage to whom adulation was due. If my masters dined on chekeios, *I* fed upon ortolans; while *they* made wry faces over their "Cheante," *I* luxuriated on Chateau La Rose a Chambertin. For my table were reserved the oysters of Venice, the fresh "sardines" of Gorgona—the delicate mutton of Pistoja—the delicious Beccafeco of the Val d'Arno, while Piscia was ransacked for my desert, till I saw myself surrounded with rarities, that even in my great days I scarcely dreamed of.

There was a kind of "abandon" too in this mode of life that pleased me well,—a delightful sense of irresponsibility pervaded every thing I did, or imagined.

The courier knows nothing of that hesitation which besets his master at the thought of some costly indulgence. *He* neither doubts nor denies himself. The Emperor of Russia may have bespoke the post-horses, but *he* knows how to bribe even against the Czar himself, and would intrigue for the fish intended for a Cardinal's Friday dinner. He is perhaps the only traveller who is indifferent to the bill: nay, he even glories in its extravagance, as increasing his own per centage. I was beginning to see and appreciate all these

advantages when caution admonished me to escape. The real Raffaello was doubtless already at sea, and might arrive ere I had evacuated the territory.

I only waited then to see "my family" snugly housed at Pisa, when I proceeded to tender my resignation. It was very flattering to my vanity to see the distress my announcement created. They evidently felt like a crew about to be deserted by the pilot in a difficult navigation. They were but indifferent linguists, and worse travellers; and I almost repented of my resolve as I perceived the dismay it occasioned,—the full measure of which I was admitted to witness, since—from my supposed ignorance of English—they discussed the question very freely in my presence.

"Does he say he's dissatisfied with his situation?" asked the old lady.

"It is difficult to make out what he means, mamma," replied a daughter.

"These fellows are always intriguing for higher wages," observed the subaltern.

"Or to engage with people of greater consequence," remarked the second son.

"We had better send for the tutor, mamma; he speaks French better than we do."

"This proposition—albeit not accepted as a compliment to themselves by the two brothers—was at last acceded to, and, after a brief delay, the individual in question made his appearance. To avoid any semblance of understanding what went forward, I stood in patient silence, not even turning my head in the direction where the family were now grouped around the "Dragoman."

"You are to find out what he wants," said the old lady, eagerly. "Say that we are perfectly satisfied with him; and if it be an increase——"

"That he'll not get a sous more with my consent," broke in the sub. "He receives already more than a captain in the line."

"I only know that I never had as much to spend at Cambridge," echoed the other.

"They are always extravagantly paid," said the elder daughter.

"The creatures give themselves such airs," observed number two.

"And when they are at all well-looking they're intolerable," broke in number three, who had been coolly scanning me through her eye-glass.

The tutor by this time had evidently received his instructions in full, and beckoned me to follow him into a small room adjoining the saloon. I obeyed; and scarcely had the door closed upon us than I started, and broke out into an involuntary exclamation of surprise. The individual before me was no other than my first friend—the kind youth who had taken me by the hand at the very outset of my career—the student of Trinity, Dublin, named Lyndsay.

As I perceived that he did not recognise me, I had time enough to observe him well, and mark the change which more than twelve years had wrought upon him. Though still young, anxiety and mental exertion had worn him into premature age. His eye was dulled—his cheeks pale and sunken—and in his manner there was that timid hesitation, that stood abashed in the presence of my own cool effrontery. I could see easily, that the man of thought and reflection was succumbing before the man of action and of the world, and I was selfish enough to revel in the triumph.

In a low diffident voice he proceeded to ask me if there was anything in the nature of my situation, that induced me to quit a service where I had given the fullest satisfaction.

I replied by an easy caress of my long black moustache, and a certain expressive gesture of the shoulders, meant to convey that my objections were of a nature that did not admit exactly of discussion, rather questions of delicate personal feeling than of actual difficulty; hinted that I had rarely served anything less than a Royal Highness, and feared that I should be likely to injure myself—of degenerating into an easy and familiar manner, by associating with those so nearly of my own level.

I saw the blood mantle in the pale cheek of the student, as he listened to this impertinence, and thought that I could mark the struggle that was passing within him, while, in a calm, collected tone, he said, "that those were questions on which he could not give any opinion; and that if I desired to leave, of course no further objections would be offered. Might I ask," added he, with a manner where a most courteous politeness prevailed, "might I ask what are the qualifications of a person in your condition of life."

"I think," replied I, "that I appreciate the meaning of your question. You would ask by what right a man, humbly born, educated to mere menial duties, can aspire to the position and pay a courier claims. I am willing to tell you. To begin then: he must be familiar with the geography of Europe—I speak here of the mere Continental courier;—he must know the boundaries, the high roads, the coinage, the customs, the privileges of every petty state, from the smallest principality of Germany, to the greatest sovereignty of a czar. He must know the languages,—not as grammarians and scholars know them, but in all their dialects and "patois." It is not enough that he has learned the tongue in which Dante wrote, or Metastasio sung; he must speak Venetian and Milanese, Neapolitan and Piedmontese. He should know the

low German of the Black Forest, the Weiner dialect of the Austrian, and talk every gradation of French from the frontiers of Flanders to the vine-groves of Provence and Auvergne. He must be as familiar with every city of Europe, as though it were his birth-place; with the churches, the galleries, their monuments and their history. He must know the delicacies of each land, and every rarity it can produce for the palate of the epicure. He must be a connoisseur in wine, pictures, china, cuisine, statuary, engravings, armor, ancient, furniture, manuscripts, horseflesh, the Drama and Bohemian glass. Able to pack a trunk, or expatiate upon a Titian. To illustrate a fresco, to cheat a custom-house, to bully a prefect, make an omelette, ride postillion. These, with a running knowledge of international law, and the code Napoleon, and some skill in all the minor operations of surgery —these are a brief summary of a courier's qualifications."

"And do you tell me, friend," said he, earnestly, "that you can do all this?"

"Indifferent well," said I, carelessly. "There are, doubtless, others who have gained a higher proficiency in the craft; but as I am still young, I'll not despair of future eminence."

He heaved a deep sigh, and leaned his head upon his hand.

I fancied I could read what was passing in his mind, and at a hap-hazard, said, "You are contrasting the catalogue with that of your own acquirements, and perhaps asking yourself,—to what end the midnight toil of scholarship? why have I labored hard with aching brow and fevered heart, when one with vulgar attainments like these—the scattered fragments—the crumbs that fall from the table of real knowledge, can secure a better livelihood and more real independence than myself? and the reason is,—mine are marketable wares that find purchasers in every class, and among every gradation of society. 'My lord' must have his courier: so must the rich cotton-spinner, or the barrister on his wedding tour. The wealthy dowager, the blooming widow, the ex-minister travelling from 'distraction,' the young heir, journeying for dissipation. The prelate, the banker, the ruined duke, the newly-enriched mill-owner, — all, however differing in other points, agree in this one want; and must have one who will think for them and speak for them, bargain and bully for them, assert their rank and importance wherever they appear, so that, of the obstacles of travel, its difficulties and contrarieties, they should know as little, as though their road lay between London and Croydon."

"Still is it a puzzle to me," sighed the young man, "how these people achieve the attainments you speak of. Even a smattering of such knowledge would seem to require both time and study."

"They have but a smattering," said I, "yet "it is gained exactly in the very school where such small proficiency goes farthest — 'the world;' and which you will one day discover, has its sources of knowledge, its tests of ability, ay, and its degrees of honor, marked out as palpably as Oxford and Cambridge. There is this advantage, too, sir, in the University— the track in which you are to travel is marked out for you,—you must not stray to the right or to the left; while in 'the world' the field of direction is wide, open, and expanded— there's a path for every one—if they'll only look for it."

He started as I said these words; and as his cheek flushed up, he said, "I remember once upon a time, hearing those very words from a poor friendless boy in my own country. He was setting out as he said, to seek his fortune, and his whole stock in life, was the hope inspired by that sentiment."

"And what became of him?"

"I never could learn,—he disappeared suddenly,—and whether he enlisted into some regiment abroad, or died at home, I never ascertained."

"Then I can tell you, sir,—he now stands before you, the same whom once you so kindly succored; the houseless, friendless child, whom you protected and sheltered — I am Con. Cregan."

It would be difficult to describe the bewilderment of poor Lyndsay, as I said this; he sat down, closed his eyes, opened them again, rubbed them, stared at me, tried to speak, and at last, rising up, grasped my hand warmly, and cried, "Then of course you remember *my* name?"

"I could never forget it, Mr. Lyndsay," said I, affectionately.

This was enough, and he now shook me by both hands with all the warmth of old friendship.

As he was madly eager to learn the story of my life, and as I was bent on my departure by the morning mail for Genoa, we agreed to meet at an hour when the household had retired to bed; meanwhile he was to charge himself with the office of making an explanation to the family, and informing them that matters of urgency required my presence at Paris, without delay. This agreed upon, we separated.

The entire night we passed in talking—for he had insisted upon hearing my adventures from the very hour we had parted company in Dublin down to the very moment we were then seated together. It was evident at times, from the tone of questioning, that he accepted several of my statements at least as doubtful—but gradually, as he discovered my acquaintance with various languages, the knowledge I possessed of different remote countries, their habits and natural produc-

tions, this incredulity gave way; and when finally I produced the letters of the Havannah banker, with the receipts for my instalments, he showed that every shade of hesitation had vanished, and that he no longer entertained a doubt of my veracity.

As the hour of separating drew nigh, he turned the subject to my own immediate requirements; and although I assured him that my ring, which I had already disposed of, was sufficient for all immediate wants, he insisted upon my accepting a loan of one hundred dollars, to be repaid, as he himself said, when I "resumed my Countship." These were his parting words as I ascended to the roof of the diligence.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"A NEW WALK IN PROGRESSIVE LIFE."

I WILL not trespass on my reader's patience with the details of my journey, nor ask him to form acquaintance with any of those pleasant travelling companions, whose whims, caprices, and merry fancies lightened the road. The company of a diligence is a little world, in all its features of selfishness, apathy, trustfulness, credulity, and unbelief. It has its mock humilities and absurd pretensions, even more glaringly displayed than every-day life exhibits them. Enough, then, if I say ours were fair specimens of the class; and when, on arriving at the Messageries Royales, the heavy "conveniency" deposited us in the court, we shook hands all round ere separating, like people who were well pleased when together, but yet not broken-hearted at the thought of parting,

And now I found myself at Paris,—that glorious capital whose very air is the champagne of atmospheres, and where, amid the brilliant objects so lavishly thrown on every side, even the poor man forgets his poverty, and actually thinks he has some share in the gorgeous scene around him. I heaved one heavy sigh, from the very bottom of my heart, as I thought what might have been the condition in which I could once have rolled along these same streets; and with this brief tribute to the past, I trudged along towards the embassy. All my hope lay in the prospect of an interference on the part of the English government, and the demand of an indemnification for my loss.

After some little delay, and a slight catechising on the part of a bulky porter in scarlet livery, I was admitted to a room, where a number of people, chiefly couriers, and "Laquais de Place," were assembled, to obtain signatures or passports, and who were summoned from time to time to enter an inner chamber where the official sat. *My* turn came at length, and with a heart almost swelling to suffocation, I entered.

"For England, I suppose," said a pale young gentleman, with black moustaches, not looking up from the table, where he sat reading his "Galignani."

"No, sir, mine is not a passport case. I am here to make a charge against the Spanish government for false imprisonment and spoliation."

The young gentleman raised his head, and stared at me fixedly for a couple of seconds, and then, in the most silvery of accents said, "Be good enough to repeat what you have said."

I did so; adding, "as my case has occupied the attention of the Foreign Office for some time back, you may possibly have heard of my name—Count Cregan."

The youth sprung up from his chair, and hastened into another room, whence I could hear loud shouts of laughter immediately proceeding.

"No, no, Barrington," said a deeper and an older voice. "I don't want to see the fellow, and I advise you to get rid of him at once. He'll be a bore to us every day of the week, if you give him the slightest encouragement."

"But is there really nothing in his case?"

"Nothing whatever; he is a downright impostor."

"But Puzzleton certainly corresponded with him."

"Of course he did, to prevent the opposition making a handle of his case in 'the House;' but he soon saw the whole thing was a trumped-up charge; and as we want to go on smoothly with the Madrid government, it would be absurd to disturb our relations for the sake of a fellow like this."

"Oh, that's it," said the *attaché*, catching a faint glimmering of the secret machinery of diplomacy.

"To be sure," added the other; "if we wanted a grievance, that man's would do as well as another; but there is no need to hold him over; we can always catch these Spaniards tripping when we want it. My advice is, therefore, get rid of him. Say that he must embody his statement in the form of a memorial, supported by whatever he can adduce in the way of evidence; that a personal interview can lead to nothing; and, in fact, dismiss him in the usual way."

And with these lucid instructions—given in a tone far too loud to be diplomatic—the *attaché* returned to the room where I waited.

"You'll have to reduce this to writing, Count Cregan," said he, standing with his back to the fire, and assuming an air that he fancied was quite that of a Talleyrand, "something in the form of a memorial, you understand."

"I have already done so, unsuccessfully," said I, shortly.

"Ah!—wasn't aware," sighed the young gentleman, stroking his moustache.

"The Secretary of Foreign Affairs acknowledged the receipt of my statement, and at one time held out some hope of redress."

"Ah, indeed!" echoed the other.

"The state of our relations with Spain, however," added I, "not requiring a grievance just then, my case was naturally shelved."

"He started, bit his lip, and evinced unmistakable signs of being ill at ease. "In fact," resumed I, growing warmer as I proceeded, "no further notice was taken of me than what barely sufficed to take my case out of the hands of Opposition members. I was assumed to be an impostor, because the moment was not favorable to believe me honest. Good diplomacy, perhaps, but rather lax morality. Now, sir, I have lost *my* cause—that is quite evident: let us see if *you* have gained *yours*. The press is the great vindicator of individual wrongs, and I'll make its columns the arena in which this struggle shall be decided."

"Be good enough to wait one instant,—take a seat, Count," observed the young gentleman in his very politest of tones, while he hastily retired into the inner room once more. This time the conversation was so low, that not a whisper reached me. After a few seconds he re-entered.

"Your case will be inquired into, Count, and representation made to the Spanish minister at this court. May I ask where you are staying here?"

"I have not yet taken up my residence at Paris."

"Your passport is of course with the police?"

I bowed an assent, while a sudden thought flashed across me. "They mean to send me out of the country!" The *attaché* had twice said, "Good morning," ere I remarked it, and with a hurried leave-taking I quitted the room, well aware of the folly into which a momentary fit of passion had betrayed me.

It was palpable enough—my passport would at once offer a ground for my expulsion,—I was an English subject, travelling on a Spanish passport. I must of course expect to be disowned by the Spanish minister, and not acknowledged by my own.

This was a sorry beginning, and I sauntered out into the streets in a very depressed state of mind. What was I to do? my funds were at a low ebb,—I had not above four hundred francs in the world. Into what career could I throw myself, and while obtaining a livelihood, avoid discovery. I knew various things in that smattering sort of way, which, by the aid of puffing and notoriety, often succeed with the world; but yet notoriety was the very thing I most dreaded! There was nothing for it—but to change my name. Many would doubtless say, that this was not any great sacrifice,—need not have cost me any very poignant sufferings; but they would be wrong. I had clung to my name through all the changes and vicissitudes of my fortune, as though it embodied my very identity. It was to make that humble name a great one, that I had toiled and struggled through my whole life. In that obscure name lay the whole impulse of my darings. Take that from me, and you took away the energy that sustained me, and I sunk down into the mere adventurer, living on from day to day, and hour to hour, without purpose or ambition. I had borne my name in the very lowest passages of my fortune, hoping, one day or other, to contrast these dark periods with the brilliant hours of my destiny. And now I must abandon it! "Well, be it so," thought I, "and by way of compromise, I'll keep half of it, and call myself Monsieur Corneille; and, as to nationality, there need be little difficulty. Whenever a man talks indifferent Spanish, he says he is from the Basque. If he speaks bad German, he calls himself an Austrian; so, I, if there be any irregularities in my regular verbs, will coolly assert that I am a Brave Belge, and a subject of king Leopold; and if humility be a virtue, this choice of a native land ought to do me credit."

I raised my head from my musings at this moment, and found myself at the corner of the Rue Goguenarde, exactly opposite a house covered with placards and announcements from the street to the third story. A great board with gilt letters over the entrance, proclaiming it the "Bureau des Affiches" for all nations. Nor was the universality a mere pretence, as a single glance could show the range of advertisements, taking in everything, from an estate in Guadaloupe, to a neat chamber in the Marais; from a foundry at Lyons, to the sweeping of a passage in the Rue Rivolé. All the nostrums of medicine,—all the cheap appliances of the toilet, remedies against corpulence, preventatives to extrême emaciation, how to grow hair, how to get rid of it, governesses, ballet-dancers, even ladies "with suitable portions and great personal attractions," were all at the command of him, rich enough to indulge his indolence. "There must surely be something applicable to me in all these varied wants," thought I; and I entered a great room where several knots of men and women, of different ranks and conditions, were gathered around large tablets of advertisements.

Some were in search of lost articles of dress, or jewelry, a runaway child, or a missing spaniel; some inquiring for cheap apartments, or economical modes of travel with

others going the same road; but the greater number were in pursuit of some means of livelihood,—and what a host they were! Professors of every art, science, and language: journalists, poets, tenors, gardeners, governesses, missionaries, rope-dancers, frail little damsels who performed as goddesses in a pantomime, and powerful fellows who performed the "life-models" of academies, together with a number of well-dressed gentlemen of a certain age, who announced themselves as "discreet friends to any party engaged in a delicate and difficult transaction."

My heart sunk within me as I saw the mass of capability by which I was surrounded. "What could the world want with me," thought I, "in such a glut of acquirements as I see here?" And I was about to turn away, when my attention was drawn to a very little elderly man, who was most importunately entreating one of the clerks to do him some service or other. The old man's eagerness was actually painful to witness. "I will sell it for a mere nothing," said he, "although it cost me five hundred francs!"

"You'll be fortunate if you get one hundred for it," said the clerk.

"I would accept of even one hundred, nay! I'd take eighty," sighed the old man.

"So you ought," said the other. "These things are all at a discount now; men like more active and energetic situations. Retirement is not the taste of our day."

"Retirement," thought I, "that may be exactly what would suit me at this moment," and I drew near to listen.

"Find me a purchaser with seventy francs," ejaculated the old man, "and I'll close with him."

"What is it, Monsieur?" said I, bowing civilly to both.

"A 'quatorzième,' sir," said the clerk, interposing, that he might earn his commission in the event of a deal. "A quatorzième, and I am bound to say one of the best in this quarter of Paris. It takes in the Rue de la Chuine, the Place de la Boucherie, with a very large sweep of the Boulevard Mont Parnasse."

"A quatorzième," cried I in amazement, "I never heard of any one living so high up. Are there really houses in Paris fourteen stories high?"

They both burst into a fit of laughing as I said this, and it was some time ere the clerk could recover his gravity sufficiently to reply; at last he said, "I perceive that Monsieur is a stranger to Paris and its ways, or he would know that a quatorzième is not an apartment fourteen stories high, but an individual who holds himself always in readiness at the dining hours of his neighborhood, to make the fourteenth at any table, where, by accident, the unlucky number of thirteen should be assembled;—a party which every well-informed person would otherwise scruple to sit down with. This, sir, is a quatorzième; and here is a gentleman desirous of disposing of his interest in such an enviable property."

To my question as to what were the necessary qualifications, they both answered in a kind of duet, by volubly recapitulating that nothing was needed but a suit of black and clean gloves; unobtrusive demeanor, and a moderate appetite, being the certain recommendations to a high professional success. I saw the chief requirement well—to eat little and to talk less,—to come in with the soup and go out with the salad,—never to partake of an *entrée*, nor drink save the "ordinaire:" these were the duties; the reward was ten francs. "It used to be a Napoleon, Monsieur," said the old man, wiping his eyes. "In the time of Charles the Tenth it was always a Napoleon; but these 'canailles' now-a-days have no reverence for anything; I have known even the ministry dine thirteen on a Friday;—to be sure the king was fired at two days afterwards for it—but nothing can teach them."

The old gentleman grew most communicative on the subject of his "walk," which he was only abandoning in consequence of the rheumatism, and the difficulty of ascending to dinner-parties on a high elevation. He depicted with enthusiasm the enjoyments of a profession that demanded, as he observed, so little previous study, was removed from all the vicissitudes of commerce, pleasant in practice, and remunerative in pay. He also insinuated the possible advantages to a young and handsome man, who could scarcely fail to secure a good marriage, by observing a discreet and decorous demeanor; and, in fact, he represented his calling in such a light, as at least to give me the liveliest curiosity to enter upon it for a brief space, and while meditating what future steps I should take in life.

The same afternoon I saw myself announced at the porter's window of a very shabby-looking house in the Rue de la Forge, as Monsieur de Corneille—the "de" being advised by my predecessor. "Quatorzième pret a tout heure," and thus opened my professional career. I was told that it was all-important in my vocation, that I should not be seen much abroad in the world. There should be a certain mysteriousness about me, when I appeared at a dinner-table, that might permit the host to speak of me—to strangers—as his old friend the Baron de so-and-so, who rarely ventured out even to dine with him. In fact, I should be as guarded against publicity, as though I were a royal personage. This was not a hard condition at the time, since I was desirous of escaping notice. I passed all my mornings, therefore, in writing, —sometimes memorials to a minister,—some-

times statements for the press; now, they were letters to the banker at Guajuaqualla, or to Don Esteban, or to the great firm at the Havannah. The cost of postage deterred me from despatching most of them, but I continued to write them, as though to feed the cravings of my hope. When evening drew nigh I abandoned the desk for the toilet; and having arrayed myself in most austere black, waited for the summons which should invite me to some unknown feast. I have often perused records of the early struggles of a professional life,—the nervous vacillations between hope and fear, which haunt him who watches day after day, for some sign that he is not forgotten of the world. The fretful jealousies of the fortunate rival—the sad depressions over his own failure — the eager watching lest the footfall on the stairs stop not at his door, and the wearisome sinking of the heart, as the sounds die away in the distance, and leave him to the silence of his own despair. If I had not to feel the corroding regrets of him who has toiled, long and ardently, for the attainment of a knowledge that now lies 'a rust," unused, unasked for, unwanted—I had to learn what are his tortures who waits till the world call him.

There I sat in all my "bravery." What a contrast between my sleek exterior, and the half-famished creature within! Sometimes, my impatience would break out into a fit of passion, in which I railed at the old knave who had entrapped me—at fortune that deserted me—at myself, who had grown indolent, and void of enterprise. Sometimes, I became almost stupid, by long reflection, and would sit to a late hour of the night, unconscious of everything; and sometimes I would actually laugh outright, at the absurdity of my assumed calling, wondering how I ever could have been fool enough to embrace it.

The world had evidently grown out of its superstitions: republicanism and socialism, and all the other free and easy notions by which men persuaded themselves that the rich are thieves, and the poor the just inheritors of the gains, had knocked down many a mock idol besides monarchy. Men no longer threw a pinch of salt over their left shoulder, when they upset the salt-cellar—didn't pierce their egg-shell, lest the fairies might make a boat of it; and so, among many other remains of the custom of our ancestors abandoned, they sat down to dinner, careless whether the party were thirteen or thirty.

"I might as well try and revive astrology," thought I, "as seek to trade upon superstition, in this unbelieving age! I doubt if all Paris contains another Quatorzième than myself; the old villain knew the trade was ruined, when he sold me his 'good-will' of the business."

I was in the very deepest and darkest abyss of these gloomy thoughts one evening, when the heavy down-pour of rain, and the sorrowful moanings of a December wind, added melancholy to my wearied spirit. It was such a night, that none would have ventured out, who could have claimed the humblest roof to shelter him. The streets were perfectly deserted, and early as it was, the shops were already closed for the night. The very lamps, that swung to and fro with the wind, looked hazy and dim, amid the sweeping rain, and the chains clanked with the dreary cadence of a gibbet.

I knew it was needless to go through the ceremony of dressing on such a night. "Better face all the imaginary terrors of a thirteen party than brave the real danger of a storm like this," so I reasoned; and, in all the freedom of my tattered dressing-gown, I paced my room in a frame of mind very little above despair. "And this in Paris," cried I; "this the city, where in some hundred gilded saloons—at this very moment—are met men, brilliant in all the gifts of genius, and women more beautiful and more fascinating than the houris of Paradise. Wit and polished raillery —bright glances and soft smiles, are now mingling among the glitter of stars, and crosses, and diamonds; while some thousands, like me, are actually famishing with hunger—too poor, even, to have a fire to thaw the icicles of despair that are gathering around the heart!

Had it not been better for me, if I had lived on in the same humble condition to which I was born, than have tasted of the fascinations of riches, to love and pine after them for ever? No! this I could not agree to. There were some moments of my glorious prosperity that well repaid me for all I had, or all I could suffer for them; and to whatever depth of evil destiny I might yet be reserved, I should carry with me the delicious memory of my once happiness. Con. Cregan—the light-hearted—was himself again! Con.—the vagrant—the passionate lover of whatever life offered of pleasure, of beauty, and of splendor—who only needed a good cash account with Coutts to make his existence a "fairy tale." I forgot for a moment that I lived in a mean chamber, with a broken window, a fireless grate, a table that never was graced with a meal! a bed that resembled a "board," and a chair, to sit upon which without smashing, required the dexterity of a juggler.

A sharp knocking at my door cut short these meditations, and a voice at the same time cried out my name. "Come in," said I, authoritatively. I fancied it might be the landlord, and was not sorry to brave him—by the darkness. The door opened, and a figure, which even in the gloom I could perceive was that of a stranger, entered. "Monsieur de Cornelle lives here?" said he.

"I have the humble honor to be that individual," responded I.

"Have you got no light? I have smashed my shins across a confounded chair," said he, querulously.

"You're all safe now," said I; "keep round by the wall, but take care of the rat-trap near the corner."

"Let's have a light, mon cher," said the other, half coaxingly.

"I never have a light," said I; "I detest glare,—hate snuffing a candle, and can't endure the thought of patronizing Russia and her tallow."

"Couldn't we have a bit of fire, then?" asked he.

"Fire before Christmas!" exclaimed I; "are we in Tobolsk? What Sybarite talks of fire in Paris at this season?"

"I really am ambitious of seeing you, Monsieur," said the other; "can we not compass this object without any violence to your feelings?"

"Have you a cigar-case?" said I.

"Yes."

"Well, strike a light; and here's a letter which you may set fire to: you can thus make an inspection of me by 'inch of paper.'"

He laughed pleasantly at the conceit, and lighted the letter, by the aid of which, as he held it above his head, he took a rapid survey of the chamber and its contents; myself being the chief moveable it boasted.

"Of a truth, my friend," said he, "this apartment has nothing superfluous about it."

"Cool and airy," said I, calmly, "with a magnificent view of red tiled roofs and chimney-pots."

"And you—would it be an impertinence to ask—if you ever condescend to the restriction of anything more limited than that very graceful dressing-room?"

"Oh certainly!" exclaimed I; "only be good enough to say why you ask the question?"

By this time the stranger's torch had burned down so close to his fingers, as to cause an exclamation of pain as he threw it on the ground, and thus were we once more in the dark.

"Not from mere motives of idle curiosity, Monsieur," said he, "did I ask; but simply, having come here, to request the pleasure of your company at dinner to-day, I made the inquiry with a direct object. My name is Paul de Minérale.'

"Not the distinguished writer—the inimitable novelist—the delightful composer of the 'Curate's Niece'—'The Path through the Vineyard'—'The Rose of Auteuil?'"

"I am much flattered," said he, cutting short my enumeration, "to discover so ardent an admirer of my poor productions; but, as time presses, will you be good enough to hasten your toilet, for my 'cottage' is near Belleville, and will take us nigh an hour to reach."

I proceeded accordingly to array myself in cleaner costume, while my visitor kept up an agreeable conversation, chiefly bearing upon my line of life, the changeful passages of which, he seemed to think, ought to offer much amusement: nor could he conceal his astonishment on learning that he himself was my first and only client. "What an age we live in!" cried he; "where is that 'ancient faith' departed? Can men so openly disparage the gods?"

"Though my theology has been changed," said I, "that's all. The Bourse and the Ballet are the modern deities, and he must be a rare sceptic who refuses to believe in them."

"You are a philosopher, I perceive," said he.

"Only before dinner," replied I. "I am speculative with the soup, and grave with my 'petit pâté;' reserved with the first entrée; blandly communicative after the 'pièce de résistance;' playful over the asparagus or peas; soothing with the roté; and so descend into a soft and gentle sadness as the dessert appears. I leave digestion to take its course, waiting for my mocha and maraschino. In the drawing-room I blaze forth in all the vividness of agreeability."

"What could have induced one so evidently intended for a foreground figure to prefer the humble and shadowy part of a Quatorzième?" said he in surprise.

"The 'Res Dura' that cross every man's destiny, and a spice of that spirit of investigation which teaches one to explore very unwholesome depths, and very unrewarding regions; a blending of that which made the Czar a carpenter, and Louis Philippe a teacher of mathematics."

"Ah! that reminds me," interposed he, "that I ought to put you on your guard. To-day a Royal Prince will honor us with his company. There are a couple of ministers and a general. The rest of he party are of the artiste class, whose susceptibilities you cannot wound,—authors, actresses, journalists, and danseuses, however touchy in the great world, are angels of good temper in small societies." With this he proceeded to give me a nearer insight into the kind of company into which I was to be introduced,—a society, so far as I could learn, that a rigid moralist might have deemed "more fair than honest." I learned too, that I owed the distinction of my invitation to a wager between his Royal Highness le Duc de St. Cloud, and my host. The bet being that de Minérale was to find out a "Quatorzième," and bring him to dinner, his search for one not to begin till after five o'clock, P. M. The Prince being fully convinced that no regular practitioner in that walk any longer existed: "Your pre-

sence, my dear sir," continued he, "is worth, independent of the charm of your conversation, fifty Napoleons; one-half of which I must beg you to accept:" saying which, he gracefully presented me with a purse, whose pleasant weight descended in my palm, with a sensation indescribably soft and soothing.

All this time we were rattling along towards Belleville at a rapid pace; and although the rain swept past in torrents, the lightning flashed, and the wind tore the strong trees from their roots, and strewed the ground with their gigantic limbs, I sat in a reverie of sweet and delightful fancies—the only alloy to my ecstasy being a passing fear that at each moment shot through me—can this be real—am I awake? or has long fasting so weakened my faculties that this is but a delusion; and instead of hastening to a dinner-party with a Royal guest, I am speeding onwards to a prison, or, mayhap, a mad-house? These fancies, at first but fitful and at intervals, became at length so distressing, that I was on the very point of communicating them to my companion, and asking for his counsel and comfort, when we drove into a small avenue, and then almost immediately drew up in front of a porch, where amid a blaze of light stood three or four servants in gaudy liveries, awaiting our arrival.

"Well, Paul!" cried a young fashionable-looking fellow, with a very imposing black beard—"What success?"

"I've won—here he is!" cried my companion. "Have I much time to spare?"

"Something less than two minutes," said the other, as he coolly surveyed me through his glass. "Present me, Paul."

"Mons. Alphonze de Langeron—Mons. de Corneille."

"The author of the 'Fancies by Starlight,'" said I; bowing with a most respectful devotion.

"Guilty, sir! and of fifty other indiscretions,—to the full as great," said he laughing.

"Ah, sir, I know it by heart; that stanza on the 'Waled Letty,' haunts me like a dream."

"Sharp fellow, our friend the 'Quatorzième!'" whispered Alphonse to Paul, as we walked along towards the drawing-room.

How I should like to dwell upon the details of that dinner, the most delightful entertainment of my whole life! It needed not the sudden transition from the dark and dreary chamber I inhabited to the gilded saloon, all in a blaze with wax-lights, to make me feel it such. The "service" was splendid—the cookery perfection—the wines the rarest of every vintage—the apartment itself had all the chastened grandeur of a mediæval chamber, with the gorgeous splendor contributed by a magnificent beaufet of silver;—and the guests! what beauty and fascination of female loveliness—what charm of wit and agreeability among the men! The great damper upon my enjoyment was my actual doubt of the reality of the whole scene. It was not, alone, that all the splendor appeared so wonderful—that the glitter of gold, and the beauty of porcelain dazzled the eye; but the very names of the illustrious guests themselves, suggested incredulity. What wonder if I could not credit my senses, as I heard the first names in all the genius of France, on every side of me. Here the great historian, and philosopher, and statesman; there, the delightful lyric poet; yonder, the first novelist of Europe; and next to him the distinguished painter, whose great battle-piece was in commemoration of the young Prince beside him, a hero of "two-and-twenty."

Nothing could be more easy or familiar than the tone of conversation—that happy pleasantry, that tickles but never wounds, so unlike the English propensity for "quizzing"—that vulgar version of Gallic "badinage;" and then how eloquent, without pedantry—how sparkling and how suggestive! Ah, my kind reader, I see the rippling smile over the broad Atlantic of your countenance. You have guessed all the secret of my enthusiasm, and you know the mystery of my admiration. Be it so: I am ready to confess all. It was my own success that made the chief enchantment of the scene. I was the lion of the evening. Not a theme on which I did not hold forth, not a subject I did not discuss,—politics, bull-fighting, cookery, dress, literature, duelling, the ballet, horse-racing, play, scandal, naval tactics, colonization, cotton spinning, music, railroads, and the "dry-rot." I was profound, playful, serious, jocose, instructive and amusing by turns. Madmlle. de la Bourdonaye, the first actress of the "Français," was charmed with my dramatic criticism; the poet—enthusiastic at my recital of a stanza of his own; the general pronounced me the very best judge of cavalry evolutions he had ever met; the great painter begged the favor of a visit from me at his studio; and the Prince's aid-de-camp, himself a distinguished soldier, told me, in a whisper, to hold myself disengaged for the following Wednesday.

These were, after all, but the precursors of greater triumphs in the drawing-room, where I played and sung several Mexican ballads; danced the Bollero with Madmlle. Rose Jasmin, of the Grand Opera; and lassoed a Mount Saint Bernard mastiff with the bell-rope. After this I beat the statesman at chess; rolled up Indian cigarettes for the ladies, whom I taught to sit squaw fashion; told various anecdotes of my prairie adventures; and wound up all, by concocting a bowl of "punch à l'Americaine," at once the aston-

ishment and the delight of all. I must not suffer myself to dwell longer on this theme, nor speak of that supper, with its champagne and culembourgs, its lyrics and its lobster salads, with ortalons, epigrams, seductive smiles, and maraschino jelly. Enough.—The orgies—for it was no less—lasted till nigh morning, and when we arose from table a pale streak of coming day was struggling between the margins of the curtains.

"His Royal Highness will set you down, Mon. de Corneille," said the aide-de-camp, advancing to me.

Blushing with pleasure and shame together, I accepted what could not be declined, and proceeded to take leave of my kind host and his friends. Cordial greetings, and flattering wishes soon to meet again, met me on every side, and I retired actually overwhelmed with civil attentions.

"Do we pass by your quarter, Monsieur?" said his Royal Highness, as I took my seat in the carriage.

I would have given all my worldly wealth, and expectations to boot, to be able to say that I lived in the Place Vendome or the Rue Royale; but there was no help for it; the murder would out one day, since my host knew my address; and with an easy, unabashed air, I said that I lodged in the Rue de la Forge, near the Mount St. Parnasse.

The Prince bowed, and took no notice of the announcement; but I thought that I could read a very peculiar twinkle in the eye of the aide-de-camp. I might have easily been mistaken, however, for I felt myself on my trial, and thought everything an accusation. How gratuitously I tortured myself, subsequent knowledge of life has repeatedly convinced me; for while to some upstart rich man, the acknowledgment of my humble abode would have been a shock sufficient to sever us for ever, to the Prince the matter had no other significance than that it suited my means, with which, whether ample or the reverse, he had no right to meddle. Indeed, I was not sorry to remain in doubt upon the fact, since, in the difficult negotiation between the aid-de-camp and the coachman, who had never so much as heard of my unhappy street, his Royal Highness never evinced any surprise whatever, but sat patiently to the end of the discussion, without vouchsafing even a word upon the subject.

"This must be the house, number 21,748," said the chasseur, at length; and we drew up at the well-known door, where the old porter sat reading on one side, while his wife was peeling carrots at the other.

It was the first moment of confusion I suffered, since I had left the same spot; but my cheek was in a flame, as the lacquey let down the steps, and offered me his arm to descend. The lowly veneration of the old porter, as he stared at the royal liveries, and the emblazoned panels of the carriage, was but a sorry compensation for the mock servility of the chasseur, whose eyes seemed to look through into my very heart, so that I actually did not hear the parting words of the Prince, as the equipage drove away.

Curious anomaly! the half-insolent glances of the lacqueys sank deeper into my spirit than the flattering smile of the Prince's adieu. How much more alive is our nature to the pang of scorn, than to the balm of kindness. These were my reflections as I entered my humble chamber, every portion of which seemed doubly miserable to me now. "Is it possible," thought I, "that I have endured this hitherto? have I really sat in that crazy old chair, and stretched my limbs upon that wretched pallet? Can it be real? or which is the delusion—my recent splendor or my present squalor?" Although up all night, I was far too much excited for sleep, even could I have persuaded myself to seek it on so humble a couch. I therefore set myself to think over the future, and wonder whether the brilliant scene in which I had so lately mixed, would remain in its isolated brightness amid the desolation of my life, or be the guide-star to future greatness and distinction. My late success emboldened me to think that Fortune had not yet deserted me. "Who knows," thought I, "but the Spaniards may behave handsomely yet, and make restitution of my property; or what if the Mexican banker should be a true man, and acknowledge my claim upon him? If I could but enlist the Prince in my cause," thought I again, "how certain should I be of the issue! French influence always was powerful in Spain. Napoleon used to say, 'There were no Pyrenees;' I should be content if there were only a good road over them to convey the despatches that might assert my just right."

A quick step upon the stairs at that instant caught my ear; few ever ascended so high up as my story, so I listened, and almost at once my door was thrown open, and my host of the preceding evening rushed into the room. Having shaken hands with me cordially, he said, "Corneille, mon ami! I have made another wager about you; and although the sum is a trifling one, I am curious to ascertain if I am the winner. Jules de Montserrat, and Emile de Gengy, and myself, had a dispute last night about your nationality, which ended in a bet. I am bound in honor not to tell you what our several opinions and guesses were; but still at liberty to ask you, what is your native country?"

"I am an Irishman, and derive my name from the ancient family of Cregan. Cornelius is but my Christian name, which I assumed to cover the disgrace of my altered fortune."

"As to our wager, then, we were all in

error,—none of us guessed Ireland. As to your being a man of birth and station, I need scarcely say, we were all agreed."

"Would it were otherwise," said I with a deep sigh: "a humble position might be endured well enough, if unalloyed by the regrets of a condition forfeited for ever. If you are curious to hear a very unhappy story, I am willing to relate it."

"You couldn't do me a greater favor," said he; seating himself like one eager to listen.

"First, then, we'll have some breakfast," said I; "and then, with a good fire and no fear of interruption,—for I have not one acquaintance in Paris,—you shall hear my history from beginning to end."

Chocolate and cutlets, Champagne and devilled kidneys, brioches, sardines, and coffee, made their appearance as rapidly as though such delicacies were in the habit of daily mounting these steep stairs; and a cheerful blaze glowed once more in a grate where the oldest inhabitant had never beheld a fire.

These preparations being made, we began our meal, and I opened my narrative. The reader must not feel offended with me, if I ventured to draw upon my imagination for the earlier facts of my history. Nature had not been generous to me in the article of a father, what great harm if I invented one for myself? Fortune had placed my birth beneath the thatched roof of an Irish cabin; was it not generous of me to call it the ancient baronial seat of the Cregans? She started me poor and in rags: I was above repining, and called myself rich and well nurtured; but why weary my reader with such a recital. If it was necessary to raise the foundation on fiction, the after events of my career I was satisfied to state pretty nearly as they happened, merely altering the reasons for my journey to the New World, which I ascribed to my search after a great inheritance belonging to my family, who were originally from Andalusia, and grandees of Spain.

"And this, of course, you failed in," said my friend, who rather felt this portion of my story less interesting than certain other and more stirring passages.

"On the contrary," said I, "I succeeded perfectly. I not only discovered the banker in whose hands my family wealth was deposited, but established my claim most satisfactorily, and received a very large sum in gold, with bills to a high amount on various mercantile houses, besides leaving in his hands an important balance, for which I had no immediate necessity." After a slight sketch of my Mexican progress—very little embellished or exaggerated—I narrated my voyage to Europe and my capture at Malaga exactly as they occurred, circumstantially recording every detail of name and date I could remember, down to the moment of my reaching Paris.

"One question more, my dear friend," said M. Paul, after some fifty very searching interrogatories as closely argued as the cross-examination of a counsel at law. "One question more and I have done; I know you'll not be offended at the liberty I am about to take—nay, I feel you'll be even gratified with my candor. Tell me frankly, as between man and man, is there one word of truth in all this, or is it not downright moonshine—sheer invention from beginning to end?"

I started to my legs, my face crimson with anger, but as suddenly recovering myself, said, "You were right, sir, to bespeak a degree of command over my feelings before you ventured upon this freedom, which if I cannot altogether pardon, yet I will not resent."

"So it is true, then," said he, with a degree of melancholy in his voice I could not fathom.

"Of course it is," rejoined I.

"Sorry to hear it; deeply, sincerely sorry, that's all," replied he in the self-same manner —"I cannot express to you one-half of my disappointment."

"Sorrow! disappointment!" exclaimed I. "May I ask what possible interest you could have in supposing me to be an impostor and a cheat."

"Hard names these," said he, laughing; "but I will explain myself: if the story you have just told me were fiction, I could give you three hundred francs a day to write feuilletons for the 'Debats.' If one-half of it were even invention, you'd be worth two hundred on the 'Siècle' or the 'Presse;' say you stole the material, and you'd still do admirably for the 'Mode.'

"Are you—so conversant with a hundred thousand things—ignorant that the grand principle of the division of labor has extended itself from the common arts of manufacture, to the operations of genius; and that, now-a-days, no man would think of composing an entire work himself, any more than he would of turning mason, carpenter, slater, locksmith, and glazier, were he about to build a house. On the contrary, having fixed upon the site, and determined the proportions of his future edifice, he surrounds himself with competent and skilful hands in all the several walks of constructiveness; reserving to himself that supervision and direction, which could not be practicable were he engaged in actual labor; thus is he a master-builder in fiction—selecting his artificers—storing his materials—apportioning the quantity—keenly watching the variations in public taste—and producing at last a mass and variety that no one brain—however fertile and assiduous—could be capable of. This," said he, drawing himself up proudly, "this is my walk. By the aid of this discovery—for it is mine, and mine only—I am enabled to draw tears in the 'Debats' and convulse with laughter in the 'Constitution

ne.;' and while writing of the torrid zone in one journal, I have an Icelander as my hero in another. Men stare at the range of my knowledge of life under aspects so various and discordant; and well may they wonder, were I to draw upon my own unassisted faculties. But it is men like you, Cregan, I want: shrewd, sharp, ready-witted dogs; quick to remark, and quicker to report. What say you, then, will you join my corps in the fiction-foundry over which I preside?'

"Were I but capable—"

"You are eminently so. We need no literary ability—no craft of authorship—no more than the child who picks the wool in the factory is called on to direct the loom that weaves it into cloth. Let me finish the article; I'll give it the gloss for sale! What say you? five thousand francs a-year—free admission to every theatre in Paris, and a dinner at 'La trou aux Bois'—where you dined yesterday—every Sunday?"

"A bargain," cried I, in ecstacy.

"Concluded by both parties, who thus acknowledge their hand and seal," cried he, tossing off a glass of champagne, and then rising from table, he prepared to take his leave. "I conclude," said he, "that you'll not continue your residence here much longer. Seek out some quarter less near to heaven, and more accessible to poor human nature."

I promised to follow the advice, and we separated. He, to repair to his haunts—the cafés, the editorial snuggeries, and other gossip shops of Paris; and I, to seek out a more congenial abode, and one more befitting that favorable turn which Fate had now imparted to my fortune.

The afternoon of that same day saw me installed in a pleasant little apartment overlooking the garden of the Luxembourg, and where, from a little terrace, I could inhale the odor of the orange-blossoms, and see the children at play amid the plashing of fountains and the waving of the tall grass. It was, as I discovered, the quarter of the whole artiste class,—poets, painters, actors, sculptors, feuilletonists, and caricaturists; nor was it difficult to ascertain the fact, as a certain extravagance of beard, various modifications of hat, and peculiarly cut coats and trowsers, presented themselves at every moment. Resolving to don "the livery of my race," I made my appearance in a suit of coffee-brown, hat and russet boots to match; as for beard, a life of seclusion for several weeks had only left me the task of retrenchment; and the barber, whose services I invoked, had but to ask my career to impress me with that artiste stamp, that makes every full-faced man a mock "Holbein," and every thin one a bad Vandyke.

"The novelists wear it straight across, and square below the chin, sir," said he. "This is a plate of Monsieur Eugene Sue; but there is a certain dash of energy about Monsieur's eyes—a kind of 'beauté insolente,' if I may be pardoned the phrase, that would warrant the beard to be pointed. May I venture to trim Monsieur as Salvator Rosa?"

"Use your own discretion, Monsieur Palmyre," said I; "the responsibility is great, and I will not clog it by even a suggestion."

To say that I could not have known myself on arising from his hands, is no exaggeration, so perfectly changed had my features become in their expression. As a disguise, it was perfect; and this alone was no small recommendation.

As I walked the alleys of the Luxembourg, where at every instant men travestied like myself, came and went, I could not help recalling the classical assertion, that "no two augurs could meet face to face without laughing;" and I wondered excessively how we artistes surveyed each other, and preserved even a decent gravity.

My career as a littérateur began the next day, and I received a short editorial summons from the office of "La Tempête" to furnish a feuilleton of a hundred and twenty-four lines; the postscript adding, that as Admiral Du Guesclin had just arrived from Macao, some "esquisses des moeurs Chinoises" would be well-timed. Of China I only knew what a lacquered tea-tray and the willow pattern could teach me; but I set to work at once, and by assuming my sketches to be personal adventures and experiences, made up a most imposing account of Chinese domesticity.

The article had an immense success: the air of veracity was perfect; and the very officers of the fleet were so deluded by the imposition, as to believe they must have frequently met me at Shang-kee-shing, or Fong-wong-loo.

Thus was I launched into a career of all others the most amusing, the most exciting, and I must also add, the most dissipated. Living apart from all mankind in a little circle of our own, where we only recognised the world as we ourselves were pleased to paint it, our whole lives were one long scoff and sneer at everybody and everything. Friendship meant the habit of meeting at dinner: the highest nobility of soul, was his who paid the reckoning.

If there was little actual happiness amongst us, there was certainly no care nor any touch of sorrow. A great picture condemned, a poem cut to pieces, a play hissed off, only suggested a "souper de consolation," when the unlucky author would be the first to cut jokes upon his own failure, and ridicule the offspring of his own brains. Who could look for sympathy where men had no feeling for themselves! Even thieves, the proverb tells us, observe "honor" with each other;

but we were worse than thieves, since we actually lived and grew fat upon each other's mishaps. If one exhibited a statue at the Louvre, another was sure to caricature it for the Passage de l'Opera. If one brought out a grand drama at the Français, a burlesque was certain to follow it at the Palais Royale. Every little trait that near intercourse and familiarity discloses, every weakness that is laid bare in the freedom of friendly association, were made venal, and worth so much a line for "Le Voleur," or "L'Espion."

As to any one sulking, or dreaming of resenting these refractions, he might as well try to repress the free-and-easy habits of a midshipman's berth. They were the "masonry of the craft," which each tacitly subscribed to when he entered it.

All intercourse was completely gladiatorial, not for display, but for defence. Everlasting badinage on every subject and on every body was the order of each day; and as success was to the full as much quizzed as failure, any exhibition of vanity or self-gratulation met a heavy retribution. Woe unto him whose romance went through three editions in a fortnight, or whom the audience called for, at the conclusion of his drama!

As for the fairer portion of our guild, being for the most part ostracised in general society, they bore a grudge against their sex, and affected a thousand airs of manishness. Some always dressed in male attire; many sported little moustaches and chin tufts, rode man-fashion in the Bois de Boulogne, fought duels, and all smoked. Like other converts, they went further in their faith than the old believers, and talked Communism, Socialism, and Saint Simonianism, with a freedom that rose high above all the little prejudices ordinary life fosters.

If great crimes, such as shock the world by their enormity, were quite unknown among us, all the vices, practicable within the Law and the Code Napoleon, were widely popular, and the worst of it all was, none seemed to have the remotest conception that he was not the beau ideal of morality. The simple fact was, we assumed a very low standard of *right*, and chose to walk even under *that*.

With Paris, and all its varied forms of life, I soon became perfectly familiar; not merely that city which occupies the Fauxbourg St. Honoré, or St. Germain—not the Paris of the Boulevards or the Palais Royale only; but with Quartier St. Denis, the Batignolles, the Cité, and the Pays Latin. I knew every dialect, from the slang of fashion, to the conventional language of its lowest populace. I heard every rumour, from the cabinet of the Minister, down to the latest gossip of the "Coulisses;" what the world said, and thought, in each of its varying and dissimilar sections; how each political move was judged; what was the public feeling for this or that measure; how the "many-headed" were satisfied or dissatisfied, whether with the measures of the ministry, or the legs of the new danseuse; and thus I became the very perfection of a feuilletoniste. There is but one secret in this species of literature—the ever watchful observation of the public—and when it is considered that this is a Parisian public, the task is not quite so easy as some would deem it. This watchfulness, and a certain hardihood that never shrinks from any theme, however sacred to the conventional reserves of the general world, are all the requisites.

I have said it was a most amusing life; and if eternal excitement—if the onward rush of new emotions, the never-ceasing flow of stimulating thoughts, could have sufficed for happiness, I might have been, and ought to have been, contented. Still, the whole was UNREAL. Not alone was the world we had made for ourselves unreal, but all our judgments, all our speculations, our hopes, fears, anticipations, our very likings and dislikings! our antipathies were mock; and what we denounced with all the pretended seriousness of heartfelt conviction in one journal, we not unfrequently pronounced to be a heaven-sent blessing in another. Bravos of the pen—we had no other principle than our pay, and were utterly indifferent at whom we struck, even though the blow should prove fatal. That we should become sceptical on every subject; that we should cease to bestow credence on anything; believing that all around was false, hypocritical, and unreal as ourselves, was natural enough; but this frame of mind bears its own weighty retribution, and not even the miserable victim of superstitious fear dreads solitude like him whose mind demands the constant stimulant of intercourse, the torrent of new ideas, that whirls him along, unreflecting and unthinking.

It will be easily seen that all my narrative of myself met but little faith in such company. They unhesitatingly rejected the whole story of my wealth; and my future restoration to rank and riches used to be employed as a kind of synonym for the Greek calends. The worst of all this was, their disbelief infected even me, and I gradually began to look upon myself as an impostor. My hope—the guide-star that cheered me in many a dark and gloomy period—began to wane, and I felt that ere long all those aspirations which had spirited me on in life would lie cold and dead within me, and that my horizon would extend no further than where each daily sun sunk to rest. To show my discontent with my walk, to evince, in the slightest degree, any misgivings that we of "La petite Presse" did not give laws to taste, morals, jurisprudence, and legislation, would have been high treason. To imply a doubt that we held in our hands, not

alone the destinies of Paris, but of Europe—of all civilization—would have been a rank and outrageous heresy. Like the priest, the journalist can never unfrock himself. The mark of the ink, more tenacious than the blood on Lady Macbeth's fingers, will "never out." What, then, could I do? for, wearied of my calling, I yearned for a little truth,—for a new glimpse of reality, however short and fleeting.

Full of these thoughts, I repaired one morning to the Trouaux-Bois, were fortunately I found my friend Paul alone; at least, except three secretaries, to whom he was dictating by turns, he had no one with him: "Wait till I have finished this 'Attack of Wolves on a Caravan,'" said he, "and the 'Death of Jules de Tavanne by Poison,' and I'm your man; meanwhile step into my study,—there are masses of newspapers, and letters, which you can read freely."

He did not detain me long; apparently the wolves were weak, and soon beaten off, and the poison was strong and soon did its work; for he joined me in less than half an hour.

My explanation was listened to patiently, and what surprised me more, without astonishment. He saw nothing exaggerated or high-flown in the difficulties I started; and even went the length of confessing, that many of my objections had occurred to his own mind. "But then," said he, "what is to be done. If you turn soldier, are you always certain that you will concur in the justice of the cause for which you fight? Become a lawyer, and is not half your life passed in arraigning the right, and defending the wrong. Try medicine; and where will be your 'practice' if you only prescribe for the really afflicted, and do not indulge the caprices, and foster the complainings of the 'malade imaginaire?' As an apothecary, you would vend poisons; as an architect, you would devise gaols and penitentiaries; and so to the end of the chapter. Optimism is just as impracticable as it is dangerous. Accept the world as you find it, not because it is the best, but because it is the only policy; and, above all, be slow in changing a career where you have met with success. The best proof that suits you is, that the public think so.'

Being determined on my course, I now affected a desire to see life in some other form, and observe mankind under some other aspect. To this he assented freely; and after a few moment's discussion, suddenly bethought him of a letter he had received that very morning. "You remember the Duc de St. Cloud, whom you met at dinner the first day you spent here?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, he was, as you are aware, ordered off to Africa to take a high military command a few days after, and has not since returned to France. This day I have received a letter from him, asking me to recommend some one among my literary acquaintances to fill the office of his private secretary. You are exactly the man for the appointment. The duties are light, the pay liberal, the position agreeable in every way; and in fact, for one who desires to see something of the world, which the Boulevard du Ghent, and the Café de Paris cannot show him, the opportunity is first-rate."

The proposal overjoyed me! had I been called on to invent a post for myself, this was exactly the thing I should have fancied. A campaign against the Arabs—the novelty of country, people, and events—a life of adventure, with a prince for my companion,—these were the very crowning desires of my ambition.

"I'll write about it this very day: there will be a mail for Algiers made up this evening, and not a moment shall be lost in making the application."

I could not express one half of my gratitude for this opportune kindness; and when I again turned my steps toward Paris, my heart had regained the bouyant elasticity which had so often lifted me above all the troubled waves of life.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"MOI ET MON PRINCE."—*Jules Janin.*

In less than a forthnight after the interview I have just recorded, I received a letter from De Minérale, inclosing another addressed to himself, and whose royal seal at once proclaimed the writer. De Minérale's was only a few lines, thus:

"Dear C.—I forward you the 'Duke's' reply to my note, by which you will see that we have been in time, and fortunate enough to secure your appointment. Lose not a moment in fulfilling the instructions contained in it, and dine with me to-day at the 'Freres,' at seven.

"Yours, P. de M."

The Duke's epistle, almost equally brief, was to the effect:

HEAD QUARTERS, ORAN.

"My dear De Minérale,—Of course I remember perfectly our friend the Quatorzieme, whose lucubrations in the journals I have since been much amused with. In some respects he would suit me well, being a fellow of high animal spirits—great readiness—and, if I mistake not, well fitted for the rough usage of a campaign. But, it strikes me, that if his position be such as you represent it, the exchange would be anything but profitable. This is a land of few pleasures and no

luxuries. Tell him that we never see truffles —that champagne is only a tradition: and, except Moorish damsels, who never show us more of their faces than a pair of eyes—darting fire and anger—we have no beauties. Yet, if, despite all these drawbacks, he be still willing to tempt his fortune, and trust to 'a razzia' for the rest, let him call on Count du Vergnoble, at the 'Ministère de la Guerre,' where he will find everything in readiness for his appointment.

"Should he desire it, he can also receive his commission in my own regiment, the 13.h Chasseurs-a-cheval; and as he will not be called on for duty, he might as well accept an appointment that will at least give him forage for his horses and some other advantages.

"Send me all the new things that are out, and tell me what you and Alphonse are doing. 'Mes amitiés' to our fair friend in the Rue Ponchaule, and the like—indiscriminately—to all the others.

"Yours, affectionately, H. de St. C.

"You call him 'Le Comte de Creganne,' and so I have written it for the Minister,—is this right?"

I read and re-read the letter till I knew every sentence of it by heart; and then, dressing myself with a degree of care the importance of the occasion suggested, I drove off for the Minister's office. It was not the hour of his usual reception; but on sending in my name, which I did as Le Comte de Creganne, I was at once admitted.

His Excellency was all smiles and affability, praised His Royal Highness's selection of a name so greatly honored in literature, and paid me manny flattering compliments on my writings, which, by the way, he confounded with those of half-a-dozen others; and then, after a variety of civil speeches, gently diverged into a modest inquiry as to my native country, rank, and fortune. "We live in days, mon cher Comte," said he, laughing, "in which high capacity, and talent, happily take precedence of mere lineage; but still an illustrious personage has always insisted upon the necessity of those immediately about the person of the princes being of noble families. I am quite aware that you can fulfil every condition of the kind, and only desire such information as may satisfy His Majesty."

I replied by relating the capture of my property at Malaga, which, among other things, contained all the title-deeds of my estates, and the patent of my nobility. "These alone," said I, producing the banker's letters addressed to me as Conde de Cregano, "are all that remain to me now, to remind me of my former standing; and although, as born a British subject, I might at once apply to my minister to substantiate my claims, the unhappy events of Ireland which enlisted my family in the ranks of her patriots, have made us exiles—proscribed exiles for ever."

This explanation went further than my previous one. The old French antipathy to England, found sympathy for Irish rebellion at once; and after a very brief discussion, my appointment was filled up, and I was named Private Secretary to the Duc de St. Cloud, and Lieutenant in the 13th Regiment of Chasseurs-a-cheval.

A new career had now opened before me, and it was one of all others the most to my choice. The war in Africa had become by that time a kind of crusade; it was the only field where Frenchmen could win fame and honor in arms, and the military fever of the nation was at its height. Into this enthusiasm I threw myself ardently; nor did it need the stimulation derived from a new and most becoming uniform, to make me fancy myself a very Bayard in chivalry.

A truly busy week was spent by me in preparations for departure; as I had to be presented at a private audience of the Court, to wait upon various high official personages, to receive instructions on many points, and lastly, to preside at a parting dinner, which I was to give to my literary brethren, before retiring from the guild for ever.

Last dinners and leave-takings are generally sad affairs: this of mine was, however, an exception. It was a perfect orgie of wild and enthusiastic gaiety. All the beauty which the theatres and the "artiste" class generally could boast, was united with the brilliancy and convivial excellence of the cleverest men in Paris,—the professional sayers of smart things,—the ready-witted ones, whose epigrams were sufficient to smash a cabinet, or laugh down a new treaty: and, all in high spirits, since what promoted *me*, also left a vacancy in the corps, that gave many others a step in the ranks of letters.

What speeches were made in my honour,—what toasts. prefaced by all the exaggeration of praise that would have been fulsome, save for the lurking diablerie of fun, that every now and then burst forth in the midst of them. And then there were odes, and sonnets, and songs, in which my future achievements were pictured in a vein half-flattering, half-satirical, —that peculiar eau sucre, with a squeeze of lemon, that only a Frenchman knows how to concoct!

During one of my most triumphant moments, when two of the very prettiest actresses of the "Odeon" were placing a laurel crown upon my brow, a cabinet-messenger was announced, and presented me with an order to repair at once to the Tuilleries with my official letter of appointment, as His Majesty, by some accident, had forgotten to append to it his signature. Apologising to my worthy

friends for a brief absence, which they assured me should be devoted to expatiating on those virtues of my character, which my presence interdicted them from enlarging upon, I arose and left the room. It was necessary to arrange the disorder of my dress and appearance, and I made a hurried dressing, bathing my temples in cold water, and composing myself, so far as might be, into a condition fit to meet the eyes of royalty,—two of my friends accompanying me the while, and lending their assistance to my toilet. They at length pronounced me perfect, and I drove off.

Although already past midnight, the king, with several members of the royal family, were seated at tea,—two of the ministers, a few general officers, and a foreign ambassador being of the party.

Into this circle, in which there was nothing to inspire awe, save the actual rank of the illustrious personages themselves, I was now introduced by the Minister of War. "Le Comte de Creganne, please your Majesty," said he, twice, ere the king heard him.

"Ah! very true," said the king, turning round, and with a smile of most cordial expression, adding, "My dear Count, it seems I had forgotten to sign your appointment,—a mistake that might have caused you some inconvenience and delay at Algiers. Pray let me amend this piece of forgetfulness."

I bowed respectfully, and deposited before him the great square envelope, with the huge official seal annexed, that contained my nomination.

"The Princess de Verneuil will be happy to give you some tea, Count," said the king, motioning me to sit down, and I obeyed, while my heart, beating violently at my side, almost overpowered me with emotion. Only to think of it!—the son of an Irish peasant seated at the family tea-table of a great sovereign, and the princess herself, the daughter of a king, pouring out his tea!

If nothing short of the most consummate effrontery can maintain a cool, unaffected indifference in presence of royalty, there is another frame of mind indicative of ease and self-possession, perfectly compatible with a kingly presence; and this is altogether dependent on the manner and tone of the sovereign himself. The king,—I have heard it was his usual manner,—was as free from any assumption of superiority as would be any private gentleman under his own roof; his conversation was maintained in a tone of perfect familiarity with all around him, and even when differing in opinion with any one, there was a degree of almost deference in the way he insinuated his own views.

On this occasion he directed nearly all his attention to myself, and made Ireland the subject, asking a vast variety of questions, chiefly regarding the condition of the peasantry, their modes of life, habits of thinking, education, and future prospects. I saw that my statements were all new to him, that he was not prepared for much that I told him, and he very soon avowed it by saying, "These, I must own, are not the opinions I have usually heard from your countrymen, Count; but I conclude that the opportunities of travel, and the liberalism of thought which intercourse with foreign countries begets may lead you to take views not quite in accordance with mere stay-at-home politicians." I could have given him another and more accurate explanation of the difference. It was the first, and only time his majesty had conversed with the son of peasants—one, himself born and bred beneath the thatch of a cabin, and who had felt the very emotions which others merely draw from their imaginations. As it grew late, his majesty arose, and the ministers one by one retired, leaving me the only stranger present.

"Now, Count, I must not detain you longer; you leave Paris early to-morrow morning, and I should have remembered how large a portion of your night I have monopolised. This paper—where is it?"

I at once took up the envelope, and drew forth a document,—but conceive my horror when I discerned that it was a piece of verse—a droll song upon my new dignity, that one of my villanous companions had stuffed into the envelope in place of my official letter of appointment. Crushing it in my hand, I pulled out another—worse again! It was the bill of fare of our dinner at Very's, where "entrées" and "hors-d'œuvres, salmis, and macédoines," figured in imposing array. One document still remained, and I drew it out; but, as his Majesty's eyes were this time bent upon me, I had not a moment to see what might be its contents; indeed, I half suspected the king saw my indecision, and, determining to put a bold face on the matter, I doubled down a blank piece of the paper, and placed it for his majesty. Apparently his thoughts were wandering in some other direction, for he took up the pen abstractedly, and wrote the words, "Approved by us," with his name in a routine sort of way, that showed he gave no attention to the act whatever.

It was all I could do! To avoid any indecent show of haste in enclosing the paper within the envelope, my hand trembled so that I could scarcely accomplish it. When I had replaced it in my pocket, I felt like a drowning man at the moment he touches land.

The king dismissed me with many flattering speeches, and I returned to Very's, where my friends were still at table. Resolved not to gratify the triumph of their malice, I affected to have discovered the trick in time to remedy it, and to replace my appointment in its enclosure. Of course the possibility of what might have occurred, gave rise to many a

droll fancy and absurd conceit, and I plainly saw how very little compunction there would have been for my disaster if a ludicrous scene had ensued between the king and myself.

We separated now with all the testimonies of sincere affection; some of my fair friends even wept, and our parting had all the parade, and about the same amount of sincerity—as a scene in a drama. Paul alone showed any real feeling; he liked me probably, because he had served me—a stronger bond of affection than many people are aware of. "Tell me one thing, Creganne," cried he, as he shook my hand for the last time, "we are, perhaps, never to meet again—life has so many vicissitudes—tell me frankly, then, if your Mexican history, your riches, and gems, and gold, your diamonds, your rubies, your doubloons, and your moidores, are not all a humbug, together with your imprisonment in Malaga, and all its consequences?"

"True, every word of it," said I impressively.

"Come, come, now, your secret is safe with *me*. Be open and above-board; say, honestly that the whole was a 'get up.' I promise you fairly that, if you do, I'll have a higher value for your talents at an episode, than I now place upon your lost wealth and your countship to boot."

"I'm sorry for it," replied I. "There are few men whose esteem I set more store by. If I could oblige you by becoming a cheat, my regard for you might possibly overmaster my better judgment; but, unhappily, I am what I represent myself, and want I trust one day yet to convince you." With this we parted. As the diligence drove away, I could see Paul still standing in the same place, evidently unable to resolve the difficult problem of my veraciousness.

And now I am approaching a chapter of my history whose adventures and chances are alone a story in themselves. The varied fortunes of a campaign in a strange land, with strange enemies, new scenes and climate, of course were not without incidents to diversify and interest them; and although I could probably select more passages of curious adventure from this than from any other portion of my life, I am forced to pass by all in silence; and for these reasons: first, the narrative would lead me to a greater length than I have any right to presume upon in this history, or to believe that my reader would be a willing party to; and, secondly, the recital would entail the acquaintance with a vast variety of characters, not one of whom ever again occurred to me in life, and of whom, when I quitted Africa, their very names never were heard by me more. And here I may be pardoned for saying, that I have been sadly constrained in these my Confessions, to avoid, upon the one hand, any mention of those persons who merely exercised a passing influence on my fortunes, and yet to show by what agencies of personal acquaintanceship my character became formed and moulded. In a novel, the world would seem to consist of only the very characters introduced, or rather, the characters serve as abstractions, to represent certain qualities and passions of mankind; but in real life is this the case? Nay, is it not precisely the reverse. Do not the chance intimacies we form in the steamboat, or the diligence, very frequently leave deep and lasting impressions behind them? Are not phrases remembered, and words treasured up as axioms, that we have heard passingly from those we are never to see again. Of how many of our strongest convictions the origin was mere accident—ideas dropped, like those seed of distant plants that are borne for thousands of miles upon the wind, and let fall in some far-away land, to take root and fructify. And are these the agencies to be omitted, when a man would give a "confession" to the world? Why are the letters of an individual his best biography, save as recording his judgment upon passing events or people, with whom, in all likelihood, he has little subsequent connexion? But enough of this: I have said sufficient for apology to those who see the difficulty of the case. To those who do not, I have been prolix without being profitable.

Of Africa, then, I must not speak. Three years of its burning sun and parched soil—the life of bivouac and battle—had done the work of ten upon my constitution and appearance. I was bronzed almost to a Moorish tint; a few straggling hairs of grey showed themselves in my dark beard and moustache while emergencies and hazards of different kinds had imparted a sterner character to my features, that little resembled the careless gaiety of my earlier days. In addition to this, I was wounded; a sabre cut received in defending the Prince from an attack of Arab horsemen, had severed the muscles of my right arm; and although encouraged to believe that I should yet recover its use, I was, for the time at least, totally disabled, and as incompetent to wield a sword as a pen. A very flattering mention of me in "general orders," my name recorded in a despatch, and the ribbon of the "Legion," well rewarded me for these mishaps; and now, as a season of peace intervened, I was about to return to France with the rank of "Chef d'Escadron," and the fame of a distinguished officer. As the Prince, my master, was to make a tour in the provinces before his return to Paris, permission was given me to visit Italy, whither the physician advised me to repair to recruit my strength, before adventuring upon the trials of a more northern climate. The "Duc" overwhelmed me with kind protestations at parting, and gave me a letter to

the French minister at Naples, especially commending me to his friendship, and speaking of my services in terms that my modesty cannot permit me to repeat. Thus was fortune once more my friend; and could I have but obliterated all memory of the past, and of those fatal riches—the brief enjoyment of which had given an impulse to all my desires—I might now have been well contented High character as a soldier, a certain rank in the service, and the friendship of a Royal Prince, were not trifling advantages to one who had often sued destiny with success, even "*in formâ pauperis*;" still, the "great game" I should have played, as the man of large fortune was never out of my thoughts; and in secret I resolved to return to Mexico, and, as the phrase has it, "look after my affairs."

This determination grew more fixed the longer I considered it; and here I may remark, that the document to which the king had appended his signature and approval, was a statement of my claims on Spain, drawn up by myself,—one of those hundred representations which I made in idle hours, to while away time and amuse hope. If I was well aware that the signature was obtained by a mere accident, and without knowledge of the contents, I was not deterred from speculating, as to what useful purpose it might be employed; scruples of conscience being, of all things in the world, those I best knew how to dispose of.

On reaching Naples I discovered that the Envoy to whom my letter was addressed had just been recalled, and in his place a young Secretary of Embassy was officiating. One of those admirably-dressed and inimitably-gloved young gentlemen, whom France despatches to foreign countries, as representatives of her skill in neckcloths and waistcoats, and her incomparable superiority in lacquered leather. Monsieur de Bussenaç was a veritable type of Paris dandyism,—vain, empty, and conceited; with considerable smartness in conversation, and unquestionable personal courage; his life was passed in abusing England, and affecting the most ludicrous imitation of all that was English—in dress, equipage, and livery.

Although my name was not unknown to him, he received me with the condescending courtesy the diplomatist usually assumes in his intercourse with the soldier—protested his regret that the gay season was over—that Naples was thinning every day—that he hardly knew where, or to whom, to present me.

I assured him that pleasure was not among the ambitions of an invalid like myself; but next to the care of my health, one of my objects in Naples was to press a claim upon the Spanish Government, to which the residence of a Spanish Minister of high rank at that court gave a favorable opportunity; and with this preface I gave a brief history of my loss and imprisonment. The young Chargé d'Affaires looked horridly bored by my story, of which it was clear he only heard a very small part; and when I concluded, he made a few notes of my statement, and promised to see the Spanish Ambassador upon it that very day.

I believe that my experience is not a singular one; but from the moment that I announced myself as a person claiming the aid of the "Mission," the doors of the Embassy were hermetically sealed against me. If I called, "His Excellency" (everything is Excellency to an embassy porter) was either in conference with a colleague, or replying to a despatch, or with the court. If I wrote, my answer was always a polite acknowledgment of my note, and no more. Even when we met passingly in the street, his salute was cold, and markedly distant; so that I began to suspect that either he had heard something to my disadvantage among his colleagues, or that he had received some hint respecting me.

I knew if I were to address the Duc de St. Cloud on the subject, that my essenced friend would at once receive a check, and possibly a heavy reprimand; but I was too proud to descend to this, and resolved to right myself without calling in the aid of others. With this intention I repaired one day to the Mission, and having waited for some time, till I saw a person leave the cabinet, from whom I learned that the Envoy was at home, I advanced to the door. "Out, Sir," said the porter, barring the way. I pushed him aside, with the air of one who was not to be trifled with, and opening the door, walked in.

Whether it was, that the suddenness of my appearance unmanned him, or that something in my manner showed there was no time for further deception, he arose to receive me, and handed me a chair.

"I have come, sir," said I, calmly, but resolutely, "to ask, if in the matter which I entrusted to your hands, any progress has been made, or if I am still to be the patient recipient of notes, which tell me nothing?"

"What if there be nothing to tell, sir!" said the young diplomatist; now recovering his self-possession, and standing with his back to the fire, in the very easiest of attitudes.

"I will beg of you to be more explicit," said I.

"You shall not have to complain of me, on that score, sir," said he, with a most affected air of courtesy; "and as brevity is the very essence of clearness, I may as well state, that on representing the case of El Condé de Cregano to the minister of Spain, he very gravely assured me, that I was inventing a personage; for that no such name existed among the nobility of his land. The dignity may be recognised in Mexico," added he, "but the Mexican

minister is equally perverse, and disclaims having so much as heard of you. I spoke of your wealth, and great treasures, and they actually were rude enough to laugh—not at you, sir—don't be angry—but at *me*. The Spanish Ambassador indeed said that nothing was more common than for Carlist agents of inferior station, to assume styles and titles, which might entitle them to greater consideration if taken prisoner; and that in this wise, you might have succeeded to your countship; but that to real rank, he persisted in asserting you had no claim whatever. This, you must allow, sir, is awkward."

"For you, certainly, it will prove so," said I, haughtily. "You may rely upon it, sir, that your career as a diplomatist will end where it begun. You have dared to insult one whose slightest word could crush you, did he not feel that such an exercise of influence would be ludicrously disproportioned to the object it was directed against. There, sir,—there is a written statement of my claim,—there a full and explicit demand for reparation; and there, the signature of your master the King, at the foot of it. You cannot be ignorant of the hand, nor can you dare pretend it is a forgery."

If my insulting language had brought the flush of anger to his cheek, this "damning proof" completely overcame all his presence of mind, and left him in a state of confusion and perplexity that any one, save myself, must have pitied.

"The writing is certainly in the King's hand," said he, "and therefore I am obliged to concede the fact, that your claim possesses features I was not previously aware of; with your leave, then, I will lay this document before the Spanish minister——"

"You shall do no such thing, sir," said I, haughtily; "my asserted right is just what it was before I showed you that paper; nor shall I stoop to any corroborative testimony of my claim, even from the hand of royalty;" and, with this impertinent speech, I advanced toward the grate, and thrust the paper into the fire, pressing it down into the blaze with my foot, and watching till I saw it consumed.

The diplomatist watched me narrowly throughout this brief proceeding, and I half feared that he had seen through my stratagem, as he said: "Well, Count, as not a shadow of doubt can exist now as to the authentic character of your demand, the best course will be, to have a personal interview with the Spanish Ambassador. He 'receives' this evening at his palace, and, with your leave, we will wait upon him together. Of course the time and place will not admit of any discussion of this claim; but you can be presented,—a necessary preliminary to the intercourse that will follow."

This all looked marvellously like a trap; but as any doubt or indecision now would be ruin, I affected to be much pleased with the proposal, and we parted.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SOIREE IN THE "GREAT WORLD."

It was not without considerable trepidation and great misgiving, that I awaited the evening. What subtilty might be in store for me, I could not guess; but it seemed clear that the young secretary meditated a heavy vengeance upon me, and would not lightly pardon the insult I had passed upon him.

"I have it," thought I, after long and deep pondering; "his plan is to introduce me into a great and crowded assembly, with ministers, ambassadors, and generals, and then in the face of a distinguished company, to proclaim me a cheat and impostor. He has, doubtless, the train all laid, only waiting for the match; and as the outrage will be inflicted conjointly and diplomatically, any demand for personal satisfaction will be vain; while a very slight hint at the Prefecture would suffice to have me expelled from the country."

Should I confront this danger, or hazard the risk of such an exposure; or should I suffer judgment to be given against me by default? What a trying alternative! In the one case, a peril the greater for its shadowy ill-defined consequences; and the other, certain and irretrievable disgrace! How often did I curse my ambitious yearning after wealth, that had not left me contented with my own fortune; the hard-won, but incontestible rewards of personal distinction. As the gallant officer who had gained each step upon the field of battle, and whose services had claimed the especial notice of his Prince, I ought to have rested satisfied.

My promotion would have been certain and rapid, and what higher condition should I dare to aspire to than the command of a French regiment, or possibly some brilliant staff appointment! Why will not men look downward as they climb the mountain of life, and see the humble abyss from which they have issued? Were they but to do so, how many would be convinced that they had done enough, and not risk all by striving to mount higher! The son of the poor peasant a General of Division!—one among that decorated group surrounding the sovereign of a great nation! was not this sufficient, and so much assuredly was within my reach, merely by length of life, and the ordinary routine of events! and yet all this must I jeopardize for the sake of gold. And now what course should I adopt? My whole philosophy through life had been comprised in that one word which summed up all Marshal Blucher's "tactics,"—

"Forwards!" It had sufficed for me in many a trying emergency,—it had cut the black knot of many a tangle;—should I not still abide by it? Of course. This was not the moment to abandon the bold policy.

From the "host of mine inn" I learned that the Spanish minister, whose receptions were little less splendid than those of the Court itself, occupied a position which in countries of more rigid morality, would have left his salons less crowded. In fact, it was asserted that he owed his eminent station to his having consented to marry a lady, who had once been the rival of royalty itself in Spain, and whose banishment had been thus secured. Being still in the full pride of her beauty, and possessing great wealth, the "scandal" only added to her claim, in a society where notoriety of any kind is regarded as a distinction.

She was the reigning belle of the capital. Her word was law on every theme of fashion and taste; her opinions exerted a considerable influence on matters of high political bearing; and despite the ambiguity of her position, she was the arbitress of every claim to admission into that society, which arrogated to itself the name of being "the best."

It is needless to say that a station of the kind engenders a species of tyranny to which the world responds by inventing all manner of stories and strange histories; and thus the Marchesa de la Norada was by some proclaimed a natural daughter of the Emperor Napoleon,—by others, of an English Royal Duke. She was a widow, and the wife of half-a-dozen personages together. There was not an European court into which she had not brought discord,—not a cabinet where she had not sown intrigue. Her beauty had seduced, her gold corrupted, and her wiles entrapped, half the great statesmen of the age; while there was scarcely a crime within the red catalogue of the law, that was not laid to her charge; and yet, with all these allegations against her, she was more sovereign in that capital than the rightful queen of the land. This was the presence into which I was to be introduced to-night, and—I frankly own it,—I would have rather confronted the searching scrutiny of the most penetrating of men, than meet the careless, half-bestowed glances of that woman! nor was it at all unlikely that to such a test they wished now to subject me and my pretensions.

It is far easier for many men to confront a personal danger, the peril of life or limb, than to meet the trying difficulty of a slight before the world. To myself the former would be as nothing in comparison. I could face any amount of peril in preference to the risk of a public mark of depreciation, and from a woman too! where redress was as impossible as reply was useless.

It was already midnight ere I could muster courage to set out,—not that the hour was inappropriate, for the Marchesa's receptions only began when the opera was over. As I drove along the Chiaia, the crowd of carriages told that this was a night of more than ordinary attraction; and more than one equipage of the Court passed by, showing that some members of the royal family would be present. This again terrified me. Was royalty to be among the witnesses of my shame? When a man's thoughts do take the turn of self-tormenting, what ingenuity will they not exhibit,—what astonishing resources of annoyance! I am convinced that my greatest enemy in life could never have inflicted a tenth part of that suffering which now I experienced from my own fancies! Among the thoughts which crossed my mind, one kept continually recurring, and made an impression that my memory will probably never lose—it was my doubt whether I ought not to return and exchange my uniform for plain clothes, and thus avoid exposing the epaulette of a French officer, and the proud cordon I wore, to the chances of open insult.

This question was yet unsolved in my mind, as I drove into the court-yard of the palace. The turmoil and confusion of the scene—carriages interlocked, poles smashing panels, and horses rearing—was an actual relief to me, and I would have felt a heart-warm gratitude for any accident that might have upset half the company, and broken up the reception in disorder. Such "good-luck" was, however, not in store for me. My calèche at length drew up at the door, and I handed my card with my name to the major domo, who stood at the top of the stairs with an army of liveried lacquais around him. "Le Comte de Creganne!" resounded now through the spacious antechamber, and the voices of others took it up, and the echo without repeated it, every syllable falling upon my heart like the bang of a death-bell!

Although our progress was soon arrested by the dense crowd, and all chance of moving further, for a time at least, out of the question, the lacquey continued to call my name aloud, with what I deemed, a most needless importunity of announcement. At last he ceased, leaving me to the enjoyment of a momentary tranquillity in mixing with the crowd. It was indeed but momentary; for the young attaché had made his way through the throng, and whispered in my ear, "Let us retire this way, and I'll lead you by another passage, otherwise you will run a great risk of never being presented to the Merchesa. I could have told him that I would have borne even this misfortune like a man, but I did not, and merely followed him as he led the way through a suite of rooms, of which only one was occupied, and that by a card party.

The buzz and hum of voices apprised me

that we were again approaching the company, and suddenly on opening a door, we found ourselves in a small but gorgeously furnished chamber, where three or four ladies and about a dozen men were assembled, while the main body of the guests passed through in defile, each stopping to salute and say a few words to a lady, who did the honors of the reception. As her back was towards me, I could only mark that she was tall, and of an air that was queenly in state and dignity. The stars and decorations around her showed that some of the party were princes of the blood, and others, ambassadors and ministers of state.

"Wait where you are," whispered my companion; and he moved forward and entered the crowd. I stood an eager spectator of the scene, in which, despite all my anxieties, I could not but feel interested. It was the first great review I had ever witnessed of that fashionable world, whose recognition and acceptance I so ardently coveted. Its slightest gestures, its least and most insignificant observances, were all matters of study to me. Every deep reverence, each motion of respectful courtesy, were things to mark and imitate, and I was storing up many a hint for future guidance, when I observed that a gentleman, whom I had rightly conjectured to be a royal prince, appeared to press some remark upon the "Marchesa," to which at last she replied, "I believe I must follow your Royal Highness's counsel, and take a few minutes' rest;" and so saying, she dropped back from the group, and retired within a few paces of where I stood.

"May I beg you to hand that chair, sir," said the Prince to me, and in a tone in which I own a certain haughtiness seemed to rebuke my want of thoughtfulness in not presenting it unbidden. I hastened to perform this service. The lady turned to acknowledge it; our eyes met, and we stood fixed and rooted to the spot, each speechless and pale with emotion. In those few seconds I felt as if I had lived years.

"La Señhora Dias," murmured I unconsciously to myself. "Lupo!" ejaculated she, as if in answer, and she trembled from head to foot.

"You have really over-exerted yourself," said the prince, as taking her hand he pressed her down into a seat.

Her eyes never quitted me for an instant, and the expression of her features became almost that of agonizing pain as she motioned me to approach her. "Is it possible that I see before me my old friend the Duke of ———?" She stopped, and with a look of entreaty I can never forget, intimated that I should fill up the blank.

"Le Comte de Creganne, Madame," said I, coming to the rescue, "who is but too happy to find himself remembered by the Marchesa de la Norada."

"Very true, Comte; I was confounding you with your constant companion the Duke de La Breanza; I hope he is well, and the dear duchess—and you—when did you arrive from the Brazils? I trust very lately, or you have treated me shamefully."

Rapidly as these words were uttered, they were enough to give me the "consigne" of what rank my intimate friends held, in what class we met, and from whence I came. While I replied to her questions, she motioned me to a seat beside her, and with a smile and a courteous apology to the prince for devoting herself to the old friend who had so unexpectedly presented himself, she dropped her voice to a whisper, and said, "Not now, nor here, but to morrow we will speak together."

"Enough," said I rapidly, "I am your old and esteemed friend the Comte de Creganne; you are not compromised in calling me so."

Nor can your memory fail to recall me as a Lady of honour at the Brazilian court."

And now some of the company had gathered around us, to most of whom she presented me, always adding some few courteous expressions, indicative of our ancient friendship, and of the pleasure she felt at our unexpected meeting. If I have occasionally given way to those erratic flights of fancy which led me to believe myself a scion of a noble house, well born and nurtured, with wealth at my command, and a high station in store, all these delusions were nothing to the creative efforts of *her* imagination, who commenced by reminding me of a hundred people who never existed, and places and incidents which were all as unreal. How we did bewail the death of some, rejoice over the good fortune of other "dear, dear friends," who had never breathed! and with pleasant laughter we remembered eccentricities and oddities that once used to amuse us so much!

Never can I forget the look of astonishment of the young attaché as he came up and found me seated on the ottoman beside the Marchesa, with her pet spaniel upon my lap, while my whole air was redolent of that triumphant expression so unmistakably denoting security.

"I perceive," said he, with difficulty repressing his ill-humor, "that Madame la Marchesa is acquainted with the Comte de Creganne"

"For many years, sir, the Comte and I have known each other, and I have only to own my surprise that none of my friends at Naples ever mentioned to me the arrival of one in every way so distinguished—but here is the Marquese; I must present you, Comte;" so saying she introduced me to a tall, pompous-looking, elderly gentleman, who, it is but fair to add, did not evince half so much satisfaction at sight of me as his wife showed. And now

was I the lion of the evening. I, who had walked the Chiaia every day for weeks back without notice or recognition, and who might —had the idea occurred to me—have fallen down and died without one to pity me—I became all of a sudden a most "interesting personage!" My African campaign was exalted into a perfect career of glory, and even *my* modesty was pushed hard to accept the praises most lavishly bestowed upon acts of heroism of which I had not even heard.

The Duke of Vallabretta, the younger brother of the king, was certain he had often heard of me from his "friend De St. Cloud." He was quite positive that I was the officer of dragoons who, with one squadron of horse, captured "a Smala" defended by twelve hundred Arabs, while fully one-half of the illustrious cruelties of the Oran war was generously laid to my charge. A dash of atrocity adds immensely to the charm of heroism in Italian estimation; and so I discovered that various acts of roasting prisoners, sending a cargo of noses to Toulon, and such like, were exceedingly popular with the ladies, who regarded me as a modern "Bayard."

Not all these sensations of triumph, however, gave me one-half the pleasure that I felt in trampling upon the little French attaché, whom I persecuted with a proud disdain that nearly drove him mad. All my ignorance of Neapolitan society, the obscurity in which I had lived hitherto, I laid at his door. I deplored most feelingly to the prince the inefficient mode in which we were represented at his Court, and promised to use my influence in effecting a change. I fear my disposition is not so angelic as I usually conceive it, for I actually taxed my ingenuity for little subjects of attack against the unlucky diplomatist, and saw him at length retire from the salons crushed, crest-fallen, and miserable.

Another consideration, perhaps, added venom to my malignity; I knew not how short-lived might be my power, and determined to "make my running while the course was free." The vicissitudes of fortune had often reversed in one short day, all the prospect I trusted to be the most stable and certain; and for the future I was fully resolved never to forego the stroke to-day, for which my arm might be too weak to-morrow. As I saw him depart, I felt like a naval hero when his enemy has struck, and in the pride of victory abandoned myself to pleasure.

If the Marchesa watched me at first with an uneasy, and anxious eye, doubtful, perhaps, how I should acquit myself in that high and polished world, I soon saw that her fears were allayed as she saw the easy quietude of my manner, and that tranquil self-possession which is supposed to be only acquired by long admixture with the world of fashion. It was evident, too, that if any failure on my part would entail disgrace, success was just as certain to do her honor and credit, since I was a strong, rebutting evidence, against all those who denied that the Marchesa was ever known, or recognised before, in the high circles of a court.

"To-morrow, at noon," said she, as I made my bow at parting; and it was not likely I should forget the appointment.

It was with very different feelings I drove up to the palace of the Marchesa on the day following, from those I had experienced on approaching it on the evening of the reception; nor was I long without perceiving that my confidence was well founded. The Groom of the Chambers received me with his most bland courtesy, and by his manner showed that he expected my arrival.

Preceding me through a suite of rooms, whose magnificence I had not time to observe on the previous evening, he ushered me into a small chamber leading into a conservatory, from which the view extended over the wide Bay of Naples, and presented Vesuvius from base to summit. As I was left by myself here for some minutes, I had leisure to notice the varied elegance by which I was surrounded. Rare plants and flowers, in jars of costly porcelain; alabaster statues and rich bronzes, appeared amid the clustering foliage; and in the midst of all, two tiny swans, of the rare breed of Morocco, lay tranquilly in a little basin, whose water spouted from a silver fountain of most elaborate workmanship.

While yet gazing on the tasteful objects around, the Marchesa had entered, and so noiselessly, that she was at my side ere I knew it. Paler than on the previous evening, she looked even handsomer: but in the sunken eye, and the wearied expression of the mouth, I could see that she had passed a sleepless night.

Having taken a seat upon a sofa, and motioned me to seat myself beside her, she looked fixedly at me for several minutes without a word: at last, and in a voice of deep feeling, she said; "Do you remember the pledge with which we parted; do you recollect the oath by which you bound yourself?"

"Perfectly, Señhora!" said I; "nor was I aware yesterday, till the very moment of our meeting, in whose presence I was standing."

"But you had heard of me here?"

"Only as the Marchesa de la Norada—not as the Señhora."

"Hush! let that name never escape your lips: I believe you and trust you. The commission I gave you was well and faithfully executed: were it otherwise, and did I deem you false, it would not be difficult for me to rid myself of the embarrassment. We live in a city where such things are well understood." My blood ran cold at this threat, for I remembered the accusation which hung over

her in Mexico: she saw what was passing in my mind, and added, "You have nothing to fear, we shall be good friends while you remain here; but that time must be brief. I cannot, I will not live a life of terror; a moment of impatience, an unguarded word, a hasty expression of yours, might compromise me, and then—When can you leave Naples?"

"To-morrow—to-day, if you desire it."

"That would be too hurried," said she, thoughtfully. "We must not encourage suspicion. Why are you here?"

I gave the restoration of my health as the reason, and then alluded to the circumstances of my Spanish claim, which I had hoped Naples would have proved a suitable place for pressing.

"Who knows of this transaction? what evidence have you of its truth?" said she, hurriedly.

"The minister by whose order I was imprisoned, the Governor of Malaga, his official underlings, all know of it."

"Enough. Now, by whom was the information given on which you were arrested?"

"A man who called himself the Consul at Campecho, and to whose early history I am disposed to suspect I have the clue; but to whom, unfortunately, in a hasty moment, I betrayed that secret knowledge."

"And thus he dreads and hates you," said she, fixing her dark eyes sternly on me.

"He rather fears me, without reason," said I.

"But still you would have traded on that fear had it served your purpose?" reiterated she, with a pointedness that showed how the application to her own case was uppermost in her thoughts.

"You are less than just to me, Señhora!" said I, proudly. "A variety of circumstances led me to connect this man with a very unhappy incident which took place years ago in England, and wherein his conduct—supposing him to be the same—was base to the last degree. This suspicion I was weak enough to let escape me. His enmity was the consequence, and from it followed all the misfortunes I have suffered."

"Was he a murderer?"

"No—not that."

"Nor a forger? for methinks in English esteem such is the parallel offence."

"In the case I speak of, forgery was the least of his crimes,—he seduced the wife of his friend and benefactor."

"Oh, the wretch!" exclaimed she, with a derisive smile, that gave her features—beautiful as they were—an almost demoniac expression. "I trust he never prospered after such iniquity."

Not heeding the tone of sneer in which she uttered this, I replied, "You are right, Señhora; he lived a life of terror and misery. He was a coward; and the man he had injured never ceased to track him from country to country. Over sea and land he followed him; the thirst for vengeance stimulating a heart dead to every other emotion. Accident, when I was a mere boy, brought me into close relation with poor Broughton."

"With whom!" said she, grasping my wrist, while her eyes strained till the very blood started in them.

"Sir Dudley Broughton," said I; but the words were not out ere she fell senseless on the floor. I raised her and placed her on a sofa; and then dipping her handkerchief in the fountain, bathed her temples and her lips. But she gave no sign of returning animation; her arms dropped powerless at either side. She did not even seem to breathe. What was I to do? I knew not where to find a bell to summon the servants, even should I dare to leave her. In my excitement I believed that she was dead, and that I had killed her; and then there darted through my brain the terrible conviction that this could be no other than Lady Broughton herself—the unhappy Lydia Delmar. With a long drawn sigh she at length awoke, and, opening her eyes, looked up at me. A convulsive shudder speedily followed, and she closed them again, and remained still, with her hands clasped tightly over her heart.

"Have I been dreaming a terrible dream," said she at last, in a weak and broken voice, "or are my dreadful thoughts, realities. Tell me, of what were we speaking?"

I did not answer. I could not tell her of the sad theme, nor did I dare to deceive her. In this dilemma I became silent; but my confusion did not escape her, and with a voice, every syllable of which struck deep into my heart, she said, "Is this secret your own, or have you ever revealed it to another?"

"I have never told it, nor indeed till now, was the full mystery known to myself?"

These few words, which served to confirm her own wavering terrors, at the same time that they showed how she herself had betrayed her dreadful secret, increased her suffering, and for a space she seemed overwhelmed by affliction.

"Let us speak of this no more," said she at last, in the same hurried voice which once before had made me suspect the soundness of her intellect. "I cannot, I dare not, trust myself to dwell upon this theme; nor will I suffer any one to usurp an ascendency over me from terror. No, sir; you shall not deceive yourself by such a delusion. I have friends, great and powerful friends, who will protect me. I have money, and can buy the aid that outstrips patronage. Beware, then, how you threaten me!"

"You are unjust to me, lady," said I, calmly but resolutely. "I never meant to threaten. A mere accident has put me in possession

a secret, which, while you live, none shall ever hear from my lips; nor need you fear that any allusion to it will ever escape me, to yourself."

"Then, let us part. Let us see each other no more," said she, rising, and approaching a small ivory cabinet, which she unlocked. "See, here is enough to satisfy the desire for mere money, if your heart be so set upon wealth that it has no other idol. Take these, and these, and these. They are gems of price, and taken from a royal crown. That necklace of rubies once graced the shoulders of an empress; and here are rings, whose value will buy long years of dissipation and excess."

"I must interrupt you, Señhora," said I, offended at the tone she assumed towards me; "there is no need to 'buy me off;' I am ready to take my leave—to quit Naples within an hour—and I pledge myself that we shall never meet again, or if we do, as utter strangers to each other."

"These were the terms of our contract once before," said she, fixing her gaze steadfastly on me.

"And by whom broken, and how?" said I.

"True—too true!" exclaimed she, in a voice of deep emotion. "Fate that did this, has, doubtless, other punishments in store for me! It is plain, then, that I must trust you—I, who can feel confidence in none!"

"I do not seek for it, Señhora," replied I; "my offer is to leave this city, where already I see but little prospect of urging my suit with success. Why should we meet again in life, when both of us are travelling opposite roads."

"This suit of yours is, then, a real demand, founded upon an actual loss,—matter of fact throughout?" This, although said in these few words, had nothing offensive in its tone, and I replied by an assurance of my good faith and veracity.

"Send me the memorial this evening; to-morrow, or the day after, at farthest, you shall have an answer. As for your demand upon the Havana, the banker is my own, and I can answer for your being honorably dealt with; all your property in his keeping I will guarantee."

"If that be so, Señhora, I am indifferent about the Spanish minister's reply; I shall have wealth more than enough for all my desires without him."

"How do you call yourself in these papers?" asked she hurriedly.

"El Conde de Cregano."

"And you were known by that title in Mexico?"

"Certainly; I have no other."

She stared at me fixedly for a minute or two, and then muttered to herself, "By what pretension should *I* question HIS rank!" then turning to me said, "Señhor el Conde de Cregano, I receive the world at large, every evening save Saturday; that night I reserve for my friends. Come as often as you can, during the week, but never omit a Saturday; visit me at the opera frequently; speak to me always when we meet in public places; be my intimate friend, in fact, but not more—you have too much tact to be my admirer." With this she gave me her hand, which I pressed respectfully to my lips, and bowing deeply, moved towards the door.

"We understand each other," said she calmly.

"Perfectly, madame," replied I.

"Then never say, sir," resumed she, in a stern, determined voice, "never say that you are not an adventurer; never dare to tell me that one who so quickly assumes a part is not a professed actor on the great boards of life—ready to take the character assigned him, be it broad farce, or comedy—ay, or even tragedy, if needs were. Do not deny nor seek to contradict me; I did not care that your countship had fourteen quarterings behind it,—nay, I like you even better as you are. There, now, you look natural and at your ease. Adieu, Mon. Le Comte."

"Adieu, Madame La Marquise," said I, putting as much irony into my accent as might repay her, and then we parted. What were her feelings I know not: mine, I own, were scarcely of the pleasantest; prompting me to make my residence at Naples as brief as might be, and to see no more of my "dear friend of former years," than was absolutely indispensable.

Were I to dwell upon those portions of my history which afforded me the highest amount of enjoyment, while passing, I might linger upon the weeks I spent in Naples, as perhaps the very pleasantest of my life. The world of fashion was new to me. All those fascinations to which habit renders men either apathetic or indifferent, came fresh upon *me*. The outward show of splendor in dress and jewels, gorgeous saloons, rare flowers, exquisite pictures and statues, soon cease to astonish and amaze; but it takes a long while ere the charm of intercourse with really brilliant society begins to wear off; and ere a man recognizes a degree of sameness in the pleasures and amusements of his fashionable friends.

I am not sure that the society which I frequented had not more power of captivation, than a more rigidly scrupulous circle; since while exacting all the observances of polished life, it yet admitted a degree of liberty, almost of familiarity, among its members, that I have since remarked is not common in the wider intercourse of the world.

Pretty women were not ashamed to look their best, and dress the most becomingly; witty men were not chary of their smartness;

courtiers were confidential; statesmen were candid; men of the world unbent, as if in a circle where their freedom would not be misinterpreted, and said a hundred things that in other societies would have been, to say the least, indiscreet. It is true that individuals were more discussed than events, and that characters, not facts, formed the staple of the talk; but how amusing was it—what stores of anecdote were opened; what strange histories, and curious illustrations of life unfolded. Pretension was ridiculed, vulgarity exposed, stupidity laughed at, awkwardness criticised, and want of tact condemned with most unsparing ridicule; but, I am bound to own, that there were few commendations reserved for virtuous conduct or honorable action. The debtor-side of the account was full, but the credit had not an item on it!

No rank, however exalted, could escape the judgments of a "set," who, with all the exclusiveness of fashion, affected a most democratic spirit of equality. It was, however, a "Communism" that assumed to start on the basis of every one having at least ten thousand a-year—not so bad a theory, were it only practicable.

I must not linger longer on this subject, on which I have only touched to remark, that here it was where I acquired that knowledge of forms and conventionalities which constitute the tactique of life; those "gambits" and "openings," to use a chess phrase, by which you at once obtain an advantage over an equal adversary, and secure yourself against injury with even a superior player. I learned when to use an illustration or a story; when to become a mere listener; how to assist a slow man without his detecting the aid; and how to close a discussion with an epigram; and all this without the faintest show of premeditation or the very slightest sign of forethought. While my education as a man of the world was progressing, my material fortune was also advancing. The Spanish ambassador, who had referred my case to his court, ascertained that I had been most infamously treated; that not alone my rank and fortune were indisputable, but that the individual on whose affirmation I was arrested, was himself a Carlist spy, and the noted agent of a great Northern power. In fact, so manifold were his infractions against law, in every country in Europe, that the only difficulty was to what particular Power to hand him over, so many laying claim to the honor of punishing him. In the end, Naples obtained this distinction; and at the very period that I was enjoying the luxurious pleasures of that capital, "my friend the Consul," was expanding his chest and his faculties in the less captivating career of a galley-slave. "Fortune is just," said I, as I arranged my cravat at the window which overlooked the Bay, on whose glassy surface some half-dozen boats moved sluggishly, as the red and yellow rowers kept time to the "stroke" by the clanking of their fetters.

Governments move slowly, particularly when the case is one of refunding a previous spoliation; meanwhile, they admitted my claim; and by way of keeping me in good-humor, they sent me a cross of the order of Isabella, of the first class—a very gratifying recognition of my noble birth and merits. My intimacy with the Duke of Medina—the brother of the king—obtained for me the Neapolitan order; and thus was I decorated with three very distinguished cordons, which I wore in my button-hole as a "tri-color,"—a fact insignificant in itself; but I mention it here, as many of my imitators have since that affected to be the inventors of the method.

Periods of expectancy are generally deemed great trials,—making inroads upon the health, and sapping the energies of the mind. Such was not my case here; I waited like one who loiters in some delicious garden, surrounded with blooming flowers and sweet odors. The delays and procrastinations of cabinets—for which the most profuse apologies were made, I bore with a degree of calm equanimity that won for me the appellation of a most finished gentleman; and thus was I almost unconsciously perfecting myself in that grand element of breeding whose triumph is "impassiveness."

There were moments when I actually dreaded the termination of my cause, so agreeable had Naples become to me; but as the rich gamester is certain to win, while the poor player is luckless ever, successes crowded on me, because I was half indifferent to them.

Six months had now nearly elapsed since my arrival at Naples, and I was paying a morning visit to the Marchesa, whom I was engaged to accompany to a grand *djeuné*, to be given on board of a British ship of war in the Bay. It was one of those gorgeous days of brilliant coloring, which in Italy seem to exaggerate the effect of landscape, and defy all efforts of art to imitate; the scene was heightened, too, by the objects moving across the bay. The various boats, with ensigns floating and music playing—the swift "Lateeners" skimming along the glassy surface, almost without a breath of wind—and then the great three-decker herself, in all the pride of her majestic size, with flags of every nation fluttering from her halyards, were splendid adjuncts to the picture.

"Here are three letters for you, Mon. le Comte," said the Marchesa: "they came in the Spanish minister's bag this morning; but I suppose there is nothing sufficiently interesting in them to withdraw your thoughts from that magnificent panorama."

Of course I affected concurrence in the sentiment, and thrust them into my pocket with assumed indifference. The room soon after filled with arriving visitors, and among the rest the Spanish Ambassador.

"Ha, Señhor Condé," said he, approaching me; "let me offer my warmest felicitations. How happy am I to be the means through which your good tidings have reached you."

I bowed, smiled, and seemed charmed, without the slightest notion wherein lay my good fortune. His practised eye, however, soon detected my game; and he said, "You have received your letters, I hope?"

"Yes," replied I, carelessly; "the Marchesa has been kind enough to give them to me."

"And you have read them?" asked he again.

"Not yet," said I; "I make it a rule never to risk the pleasure of a happy day by opening a letter at hazard."

"What if its contents were but to increase the enjoyment; what if the tidings were to fill up the very measure of your wishes, Señhor?"

"In that case," rejoined I, as coldly as before, "they will be very acceptable to-morrow morning; and thus I shall have gained two days of happiness, vice one."

"Admirable philosophy, indeed," said he. "Still I must be pardoned for interfering with its exercise. I shall therefore take upon me to inform the honorable company, that Her Majesty, my royal mistress, has named the Count de Cregano a Grand Cordon of the Fleece, in consideration of his distinguished services in arranging the Mexican debt: that all his property taken from him, under a false and traitorous imputation, shall be at once restored; that any additional recompense he may demand for his imprisonment and other inconveniences incurred, shall be immediately accorded; and that all envoys and ministers of the Court of Spain are instructed to receive the Count de Cregano with every honor and distinction, affording him every protection, and facilitating him in the prosecution of any project in which he may be interested."

This speech, delivered in a very imposing manner, was followed by a round of felicitation from the assembled company, the Marchesa offering me her hand in congratulation, and whispering the words, "How soon?"

"To-morrow, if I must," replied I, sorrowfully.

"To-morrow be it," said she; and turned away hastily.

The information conveyed to me by the Ambassador was what formed the substance of two of the letters: the third I contrived to peep into unobserved, was a formal notification from the Havana that my bills for the amount in the banker's hands would be accepted and negotiated at a well-known house in Paris. Thus, then, and in one moment, was I once more rich—the possessor of immense wealth, and not alone of mere fortune, but of all the honors and dignities which can grace and adorn it. Of course I became the hero of the day. To me was entrusted the arm of the Marchesa as we descended to the pier; to me was accorded the seat of honor beside her in the boat. All the pleasant flatteries that are reserved for rich men were heaped upon me, and I felt that life had but one prize more with which to fill up the most ambitious of my cravings. That, alas, could never be—Donna Maria was the wife of another; and thus should I learn that complete happiness is never to be the lot of any mere mortal!

The fête on board the Tariffa was very splendid: but it had another charm still more rarely met with,—I mean that hearty cordiality which graces every entertainment where British sailors are the hosts, their courtesy being blended with an actual warmth of hospitality that wins even upon the coldest guest, and gives a tone of friendliness to the most promiscuous gathering.

Every one appeared to experience the influence of this peculiar magic, and all gave way to the impulse that suggested the fullest enjoyment of the hour.

Two waltzes had succeeded the manolo and the bolero; dances of the wild regions of Calabria and Sicily were performed by men of noble birth—the petty princes of those countries; and all were vying who should introduce something new and unknown to the rest, when, suddenly, the distant sound of the church bells of the city was borne along the water, announcing the "Vinti quatro," as it is called—the hour of evening prayer. In a moment a sudden air of devotional seriousness spread itself over the company, and most bent their heads in pious reverence while they recited to themselves the words of the "Angelus." If there seemed to the sense of English Protestantism something strange and unnatural in this great revulsion, there was a degree of earnestness and sincerity in the features of the worshippers that showed their piety to be unfeigned; and here I might leave the theme, were it not for an incident which, taking place at the same moment, will remain for ever associated in my mind with that brief interval of prayer.

The hour of sunset, or as the Neapolitans term it, the "Vinti quatro," is that in which the galley-slaves, employed from dawn of day at convict-labor, return to their prisons; and while the streets at that period exhibit long lines of men whose terrible appearance needs not the heightening accessaries of a shocking dress and a heavy lumbering chain to pronounce them criminals, over the bay are seen boats moving in sad procession, the clanking of the fetters creaking mournfully upon the

ear, and sounding like the wail of hopeless captivity.

No scene of pleasurable enjoyment can stand the contrast of such a sight; the revulsion is too sudden and too painful, from the light frivolity of mirth to the terrible reality of suffering and sorrow. To escape, therefore, from the gloomy picture, the officers of the vessel endeavored to withdraw their guests from the deck to the shelter of the cabin. The change was accomplished well and naturally; and we were all gathered between decks in that turmoil and confusion which form no insignificant part of the success of every entertainment; the buz of talking, and the sounds of pleasant laughter were heard on every side—when suddenly a cry was heard above, and then the loud voice of the officer of the watch commanding a boat to be instantly manned and lowered.

A hundred conjectures at once ran round as to the meaning of the order; but one of the officers hastily entering, a few minutes later, put an end to all guessing, by informing us that a very dreadful incident had just occurred within a short distance from where we lay. "You may have remarked a handsome yacht, which anchored last night in the bay, coming up from the eastward: she belonged to an English gentleman, with whose name we were not acquainted, but whose conduct is calculated to confirm all that Frenchmen are accustomed to say of our national taste for eccentricity even in crime. It would seem that at an early hour this morning he landed at the Mole, and by means of letters with which he was provided to the minister of police, obtained leave to inspect the different prisons of the city, and to pass under the most minute examination all those condemned to the galleys for life. As already all those who work at Castela mare had been sent away, he obtained an order to visit the galleys there, being determined, as it would seem, to leave nothing unseen. On reaching Castela mare, it is said he again commenced his tour of inspection, going over the roll of the prisoners, with the muster-book in his hand, as if to compare their features with the crimes alleged against them, and scrutinizing each with a most searching look. The visit lasted till nigh evening; and although the governor was not a little astonished at the proceeding of the stranger, still less was he prepared for the singular request which succeeded: it was, that he might be permitted to return to Naples in one of the convict boats instead of in his own gig. The demand might have been treated lightly, or altogether refused, but that the Englishman's appearance and manner indicated rank, while the letter he carried from the minister showed him to be one with claims for consideration. The governor therefore gave the permission, smiling at the same time at the caprice which could not have proceeded from the native of any other country.

"The Englishman took his seat in the stern of the boat, and, as I am told by the steersman, never spoke nor moved for nigh half an hour's time, muffling himself up in his cloak so that his very face was concealed; he neither cast his eyes over the bay nor looked towards the shore, but sat like one in deep reflection. As we neared the 'Tariffa,'" said my informant, "our passenger affected to feel cold and chilly—he might have been so, since the evening breeze was just springing up; and said that he would like to row for a spell, just to warm himself. The petty-officer in charge explained that the request could not be complied with, since, amongst other reasons, the men were chained two and two on every bench, and there obliged to tug at the same oar.

"The Englishman who, throughout the day, had invariably overruled every objection opposed to him, grew only more positive in his demand, and at last produced the minister's order to strengthen his proposal; and finally said, that as he had obtained the permission to learn all he could of the condition of the convicts, he was determined not to depart without experiencing in his own person the amount of labor exacted from them. 'You shall chain me to that fellow in the bow of the boat,' said he, 'for I have my doubts that this same punishment is not equal to what our own sailors perform every day, as a mere duty.'

"I need not dwell upon the arguments he used, and the reason he pressed; and although I have not heard of it, I have little doubt that bribery was among the rest. His demand was granted, and he was actually placed beside the convict, and his left wrist enclosed in the same fetter with the other's right.

"His face became almost purple as he grasped the oar, and his eyes glared fiercely round upon his fellow-laborer, like the red and staring orbs of a wild beast. 'So dreadful was the expression of his face,' said the steersman, 'that I believed him to be insane; and a shocking fear of evil consequences shot through me for having yielded to him.'

"I at once called out to the crew to ship their oars, determining to make him resume his place beside me. The order was obeyed by the bow-oar as by the rest. I was then about to issue a command for him to be released, when, with a yell that I shall never forget, he sprang up in the boat, and then calling out something in English, which I could not understand, he seized his comrade by the throat and shook him violently.

"The convict—himself a strong man, yet in the prime of life—seemed nothing in the grasp of the other, who held him at arms' length, as though he were a child; and then letting go his hold, clasping him round the waist, with both arms, he jumped into the sea.

"They were seen in mortal conflict for a second or two as they sank in the clear water, but they never rose to the surface,—the weight of the massive fetters and their own struggles soon finished their sufferings!"

Such was the terrible story which now broke in upon the gay current of our festivity, and threw a gloom over a scene of brilliant pleasure. Of course various surmises as to the motive of this fearful act were uttered, but they all tended to the conclusion that it proceeded from insanity, which occasionally displays amongst its wonderful phenomena all the premeditation and circumspection of accomplished guilt.

There is that of solemnity about an event of this nature that even frivolity itself stands rebuked by; and so, now, instead of resuming the occupation of pleasure, many took their leave suddenly; and of those who still remained, but one topic engrossed the conversation—that of madness as an element in all great cases of guilt.

Of course, as in all similar discussions, the superiority lay with those who, with more readiness of expression, also possessed greater resources in anecdote and illustration, and of these the greater number were disposed to believe that all great criminality is allied with deranged intellect. The Marchesa, however, took the opposite side, and insisted that the passion which prompted to the most terrible and appalling acts, was perfectly consistent with right reason and sound judgment.

"It is too rash in us," said she, "to assume a mere blind impulse in cases even where recognised insanity exists. Were we to know the secrets of the human heart, we might, perhaps, see a long-cherished purpose in acts which appear to be dictated by momentary passion. These impulses may be excessive, ill directed, and ill judging; but still they may have their origin in some train of thought where generous feelings and noble aspirations mingle. Witness those heroic—for they are, after all, heroic assassinations of the student Sandt and Charlotte Corday. What a perfect abrogation of self did these acts evince; what consummate devotion to a cause! Deeply as we may condemn the horrid nature of the crime, it would be a great error to class these men with vulgar criminals, or deny to them—the motives at least—of something great."

I am not able—were I even disposed—to repeat all the ingenious arguments by which the Marchesa supported her opinion, nor the instances she so readily adduced in support of it. She became highly excited by the theme, and soon, by the eloquence of her words, and the fascinations of her manner, enchained the whole company in a mute attention around her.

It was just as she concluded a very animated and glowing description of that condition of the human mind, when by a volcanic effort, as it were, the long buried flames burst forth, to scatter ruin and destruction on every side, that a young officer entered the cabin, and stood fascinated by the powers of her fervid eloquence.

'Well, Mr. Hardy," said the captain, recalling the youth's attention to duty, "have you been on board of her?"

"Yes, Sir, she is an English yacht, the 'Fire-fly,' and her late owner was an English baronet, whose name I have written down in my pocket-book."

The Captain took the note-book from the young officer's hand, and after reading the name, said; "If I mistake not, this is the same person that once was so well known in London life. Most of the present company must have heard of the rich and eccentric Sir Dudley Broughton."

A low groan broke from me, and I turned my eyes slowly and stealthily towards the end of the table, where the Marchesa sat. Not a word, not the faintest sound had issued from her lips; but she sat still and motionless, her lips slightly parted, and her eyes staring straight before her. The pallor of her features was that of death itself; and indeed, the rigid contour of the cheeks, and the firm tension of the muscles, gave no evidence of life.

"You are ill, Madam la Marchesa," said a gentleman who sat beside her; but as she made no reply, several now turned towards her, to press their attentions, and suggest advice. She never spoke; indeed she seemed not to hear them, but sat with her head erect, and her arms rigidly stretched out on either side, motionless as a statue.

The shocking incident that had occurred, and the discussion which followed it, were sufficient to account for this sudden attack in one whose nervous temperament was so finely strung; but as she showed no signs of recovering consciousness, nor gave the slightest indication of rallying, it was decided at once that she should be conveyed to shore, where in her own house medical aid might be had recourse to.

I was one of those who assisted to carry her to the boat, and sat beside her afterwards, and held her hand in mine, but she never recognised me; her hand, too, was cold and clammy, and the fingers felt rigid and cramped. The stern impressive look of her features, the cold stare of her fixed eyes, were terrible to behold; far more so than even the workings of mere bodily sufferings.

During the passage to the shore, at the landing itself, and on our way to the Palazzo, she remained in the same state, nor did she ever evince any trait of consciousness till she reached the foot of the great staircase, where a crowd of servants in the richest liveries, awaited to offer their services. Then, sud-

dently, she moved her head from side to side, regarding the crowd with a glance of wild and terrible meaning; she raised her hand to her brow and passed it slowly across her forehead. For an instant it seemed as if the lethargic paroxysm was about to pass away, for her features softened into a look of calm but melancholy beauty. This too glided away, and her mouth settled into a hard and rigid smile. It was the last change of all—for she had become an IDIOT!

From that hour forth she never spoke again; she never knew those about her, neither missing them while absent nor recognizing them when they re-appeared. She had none of the childish wilfulness of others in her sad condition, nor did she share the likings and dislikings they usually manifest; and thus she lingered on to her death.

Of her secret I was the sole depository—and from that hour to this in which I write, it has never escaped my lips.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CONCLUSION.

I HAD few inducements to prolong my stay at Naples. The society in which I moved had received a shock so terrible, that for some time at least it could not hope to recover, and an air of gloom and despondency prevailed, where so lately all had worn the livery of pleasure.

I made my farewell visit, therefore, at the court, and the various embassies, and set out for Paris. This time, grown wiser by experience, I did not seek to astonish the world by any gorgeous display of my riches. I travelled with but two carriages,—one of which contained my luggage; the other, a light "coupé," I occupied alone. My route lay through Rome and Florence, across the Appenines to Milan, and thence, by the glorious scenery of the Spleigen, into Switzerland; but I saw little of the varied scenes through which I journeyed. My whole thoughts were engaged upon the future.

I had once more won the great prize in the world's lottery, and I never ceased catechizing myself in what way I should exercise my power.

From what I had already observed of life, the great mistake of rich men seemed to me, their addiction to some one pursuit of pleasure, which gradually gained an undue ascendancy over their minds, and exercised, at last, an unwonted degree of tyranny. The passion for play—the love of pictures—the taste for company-seeing—the sports of the field, and so on, ought never to be allowed any paramount place, or used as pursuits; all these things should be simply employed as means of obtaining that ascendancy over other men, and of exercising that sway which is never denied to success.

Some men are your slaves because your cook is unrivalled, or your cellar incomparable; others look up to you because your equipages exhibit an elegance with which none can vie; because your thorough-breds are larger, show more bone, and carry the highest condition. Others, again, revere you for your Vandykes and your Titians—your Rembrandts and Morellos—your illuminated Missals—your antique marbles. To every section of society you can exhibit some peculiar and special temptation, which in their blind admiration, they refer to as an attribute of yourself. Your own fault is it, if, they ever discover their error! The temples of Raphael and Velasquez shed a reflected light upon him who possesses them; and so of each excellence that wealth can purchase.—You stand embodied in the exercise of your taste, and in your own person receive the adulation which greatness and genius have achieved.

To accomplish this, however, requires infinite tact, and a great abrogation of self. All individuality must be merged, and a new character created, for the desjecta membra of many crafts and callings.

To have any one inordinate passion is to trace a weak spot in one's *amour propre* of which the cunning will soon take advantage. Such were among my meditations as I rolled along towards Paris; and so long as I journeyed alone, with no other companionship than my own thoughts, these opinions appeared sage and well-reasoned; but how soon were they routed as I drove into that gorgeous capital, and saw the full tide of its pleasure-loving inhabitants, as it rolled proudly past! How vain to reason further upon the regulation of a life to which wealth set no limits! how impossible to restrain oneself within the barriers of cold prudential thought, where all was to be had for asking.

Ah, Con., your philosophy was excellent, while, sitting in the corner of your coupé, you rolled along unnoticed, save by the vacant stare of some Vigneron in a blue cotton night-cap, or some short-legged wench in wooden "sabots;" but, now that you stand in the window of your great hotel in the Place Vendome, and see the gathering crowd, which inquires—who is the illustrious arrival? your heart begins to beat quicker and fuller; you feel like a great actor, for whom the house is already impatient, nor is the curtain to remain longer down. You are scarcely an hour in Paris when your visitors begin to call. Here are cards without number—officers in high command—courtiers, ministers, and aid-de-camps of those whose rank precludes the first visit.

The place is like a fair, with its crush of equipages—the hotel is actually besieged.—Every language of Europe is heard within its "porte-cocher," and your own chasseur is overwhelmed with questionings enough to drive him distracted.

Is it any wonder how the poor man adulates wealth, when those in high station—the great and titled of the earth—are so ready to worship and revere it!

My first care was, of course, to present myself before the prince, my gracious master, and I drove at once to the Tuilleries. There was a reception that morning by the king, and the Duc de St. Cloud led me forward, and presented me to his Majesty, with a very eulogistic account of my services in Africa.

The king listened most graciously to the narrative, and then, with a cordial courtesy that at once put me at my ease, asked me several questions about my campaigns, all ingeniously contrived to be complimentary to me.

"Yours is not originally a Spanish family, Count; I fancy the name is Celtic."

"Yes, Sire, we came from Ireland," said I, blushing in spite of myself.

"Ah, very true. There was always a great interchange of races between the two nations. And have you never tried to trace back, among your Irish ancestors, so as to learn who are the lineal descendants of your house?"

"I have been hitherto, Sire, rather a man of action than of thought or reflection. To obtain possession of a property belonging to my family, I undertook a journey to, and a long residence in Mexico, and although successful in this, a subsequent misfortune deprived me of all I owned, and left me actually in want. The good fortune which led me to take service under your Majesty, has, however, never deserted me, and I am enabled once again to assume the station that belonged to me."

The king heard me with apparent pleasure, and after a few generalities about Paris and my acquaintances, said:

"His Royal Highness, the Duc de St. Cloud has asked me to appoint you on my personal staff. There is not at the present a vacancy, but you shall be named as extra aid-de-camp in the meanwhile."

Overwhelmed by this distinction, I could only bow my gratitude in silence, and with an air and show of great devotion, I retired from the royal presence. Thus did proper feeling suggest the truest politeness; for had I been more assured, the chances were, I should have endeavored to say something, and consequently committed a very grievous breach of etiquette.

The following day I received an invitation to dine at Court. The company was numerous, and among them I discovered the young English attaché, who had so insolently treated my demands on my first visit to Paris. With what sovereign contempt did I now look down! He was there, exactly as I left him, muddling away in the petty details of his little routine life,—signing a passport, or copying a despatch,—playing off the airs of grand signeur to couriers and laeques de place, while in the same time I had won honors and rewards upon the field of battle, and now stood where the Prince leaned upon my arm, and chatted familiarly over the assembled company. Nothing gave me a more confident sense of my own standing in the world, than the feeling with which I now regarded those whom once I looked up to with a kind of awe. It is precisely as we discover that the hills which, in childhood, we believed to be gigantic mountains, are mere hillocks, that in after life we find out how indescribably small are many of those we used to think of as "high and mighty."

I therefore sneered down my poor attaché, and as I passed him, I believe I even suffered my sabre to jar against his leg, not without hoping that he might notice the slight, and seek satisfaction for it. In this I was disappointed, and I left him, never to trouble my head more about him.

Among the pleasures which awaited me in Paris, none gave me more sincere satisfaction than the renewal of my acquaintance with De Minérale, who, however, could never believe that my good fortune was other than some lucky accident of my African campaign.

"Come—out with it," he would say. "You have robbed a 'smala,'—you pillaged a 'deira,' or something of the sort. Tell me frankly how it was, and on my honor I'll never print it till you're dead and gone. In fact, if you persist in refusing, I'll give you to the world with name in full. I'll describe you as a fellow that picked up a treasure in some small island of the Mediterranean, and turned millionaire after being a pirate!"

"Put me down for fifty copies of the book," said I, laughing; "I'm rich enough now to encourage the small fry of literature."

Thus did we often jest with each other, and we met continually; for when not invited out myself, I gave entertainments at home, at which I assembled various members of that artistic set in which I had once moved—a very different order of society from that in which I mixed in Naples—and I am free to own, with far less claim to real agreeability. The "wits by profession" were not only less natural than the smart people of society, but they wearied you by the exactions of their drollery. Not to laugh at the sorriest jest was to discredit the jester, and the omission became a serious thing when it touched a man's livelihood. In fact, from first to last, in whatever country I have lived, I have ever found that the best,—that is, the highest society,—was always the most agreeable, as well as the

most profitable. Its forms were not alone regulated upon the surest basis of comfort, but its tone ever tended to promote whatever was pleasurable, and exclude everything that could hurt or offend. So is it,—your great aristocrats are very democratic in a drawing-room—professing and practising the most perfect equality; while your "rights of man" and "popular sovereignty" advocate, insists upon always being the king of his company. Forgive this digression, my dear reader, if for nothing else than because it shall be the last time of my offending.

I had now enjoyed myself at Paris about two months, or thereabouts, in which, having most satisfactorily arranged all my monetary matters, and—besides having a considerable sum in the English funds—found myself down in the "Grand Livre" for a couple of million of francs—a feature which made me a much caressed individual in that new social order just then springing up, called the "financiere" class, one which, if with few claims to the stately manners of the "Fauxbourg," numbered as many pretty women, and as agreeable ones as could be found anywhere. Had I been matrimonially disposed, this set would certainly have been dangerous ground for me—the attentions which beset me being almost like adulation. The truth was, however, Donna Maria had left an impression which comparison with others did not efface. I felt, if I were to marry, it might as well be for high rank and family influence, since I never could do so for love. My nobility required a little strengthening, nor was there any easier, or more efficient mode of supporting it, than by an alliance with some of those antiquated houses, who, with small fortunes, but undiminished pride, inhabited the solitudes of the "Fauxbourg St. Germain." I cannot afford space here to recount my adventures in that peaceful and deserted quarter, whose amusements ranged between masses and tric-trac,—where piety and Pope Joan divided the hours. The antiquity of my family, and the pureness of my Castilian blood! had been the pretensions which obtained admission for me into these sacred precincts, and there, I must say, everything seemed old and worn out: the houses, the salons, the furniture, the masters, servants, horses, carriages—all were as old as the formalities and the opinions they professed.

Even the young ladies had got a premature cast of seriousness that took away every semblance of juvenility. Whether from associating with them, or that I had voluntarily conformed to the staid Puritanism of their manners, I cannot say, but my other acquaintances began to quiz and rally me about my legitimate air, and even said that the change had been remarked at Court.

This was an observation that gave me some uneasiness, and I hastened off to the Duc de St. Cloud, whose kindness had always admitted me to the most open intercourse.

"It is quite true, Creganne," said he, "we all remarked that you were coquetting with the 'vieux'—the old ones of the Fauxbourg—and although I had never any misgivings about you, others were less charitable."

"What is to be done, then?" said I, in my distress at the bare thought of seeming ungrateful.

"I'll tell you," said he; "there's the post of Secretary of Embassy just vacant at Madrid; your knowledge of the language, and your Spanish blood, admirably fit you for the mission. Shall I ask for it in your behalf?"

I could scarcely speak for gratitude. I was longing for some "charge,"—some public station, that would give me a recognized position as well as wealth.

The Duc hurried from the room, and after an absence of half an hour came back laughing, to say,—'This was quite a brilliant idea of mine, for the Minister of Foreign Affairs was just in conversation with the King, and seeing that they were both in good humor, and discussing the Madrid mission, I even asked for the post of ambassador for you,—ay, and what's better, obtained it too."

I could not believe my ears as I heard these words, and the Prince was obliged to repeat his tidings ere I could bring myself to credit them. "And now for a little plan of my own," resumed he; "I am about to make a short visit to England, and, better still, to Ireland. You must accompany me. Of course I travel "incog.;" which means that my real rank will be known to all persons in authority, but avoiding all state and parade. I shall be able to see something of that remarkable country of which I have heard so much."

I acknowledged a degree of curiosity to the full as great, but bewailed my ignorance of the language, as a great drawback to the pleasures of the journey.

"But you do know a little English," said the Prince.

"Not a word," said I, coolly. "When a child, I believe I could speak it fluently,—so I have heard; but since that period I have utterly forgotten all about it." This may seem to have been a gratuitous fiction on my part, but it was not so; and to prove it, I must tell the reader a little incident which was running in my mind at that moment. A certain Tipperary gentleman, whose name is too familiar for me to print, once called upon a countryman in Paris, and after ringing stoutly at the bell, the door was opened by a very smartly-dressed "maid," whose grisette cap and apron immediately seemed to pronounce her to be French. "Est Capitaine—est Monsieur O'Shea ici?" asked he, in considerable hesitation.

"Ah sir! you're English," exclaimed the maid, in a very London accent.

"Yes, my little darlin', I was asking for Captain O'Shea?"

"Ah, sir, you're Irish!" said she, with a very significant fall of the voice. "So," as he afterwards remarked, "my French showed that I was English, and my English that I was Irish."

"Now, although my French would have passed muster from Cannes to Caen, my English had something of the idiomatic peculiarity of the gentleman just alluded to; and were I only to speak once in Ireland, I must be inevitably detected. There was then no choice for it: I must even consent to talk through an interpreter,—a rather dull situation for a man about to "tour it" in Ireland!

As the Prince's journey was a secret in Paris, our arrangements were made with great caution and despatch. We travelled down to Boulogne with merely one other companion, an old Colonel Demannais, who had been for some years a prisoner in England, and spoke English fluently, and with only three servants; there was nothing in our "cortège" betraying the rank of his Royal Highness.

Apartments had been prepared for us at Mivart's, and we dined each day at the French Embassy,—going to the Opera in the evening, and sight-seeing all the forenoon, like genuine "country cousins." The Court was in Scotland; but even had it been in London, I conclude that the Prince would have been received in some mode which should not have attracted publicity.

Ten days sufficed for "town," and we set out for Ireland, to visit which his Royal Highness was all impatience and eagerness.

Never can I forget the sensations with which I landed on that shore, which, about a dozen years before, I had quitted barefooted and hungry! Was the change alone in me; or what had come over the objects to make them so very different from what they once were? The hotel that I remembered to have regarded as a kind of palace, where splendor and profusion prevailed, seemed now dirty and uncared for. The waiters slovenly, the landlord rude, the apartments mean, and the food detestable! The public itself, as it paraded on the pier, was not that gorgeous panorama I once saw there; the mingled elegance and fashion I used to regard with such eyes of wonderment and envy. What had become of them? Good looks there were, and in abundance,—for Irish women *will* be pretty, no matter what changes come over the land: but the men! good lack, what a strange aspect did they present! Without the air of fashion you see in Paris, or that more strongly marked characteristic of style and manliness the parks of London exhibit, here were displayed a kind of swaggering self-sufficiency, whose pretension was awfully at variance with the mediocrity of their dress, and the easy jocularity that leered from their eyes. Some were aquatics, and wore Jersey shirts and frocks, loose trowsers, and low shoes; but they overdid their parts, and lounged like Tom Cooke in a sea-piece!

Others appeared as elegans, and were even greater burlesques on the part. It was quite clear, however, that these formed no portion of the better classes of the capital, and so I hastened to assure the Prince, whose looks bespoke very palpable disappointment.

In Dublin, however, the changes were greater than I expected. It was not alone that I had seen other and greater capitals, were affluence and taste abound, and where, while the full tide of fashion sets "in" in one quarter, the still more exciting course of activity and industry flows along in another; but here an actual decline had taken place in the appearance of everything. The shops, the streets, the inhabitants, all looked in disrepair. There were few carriages, nothing deserving the name of equipage—none of that stir and movement which characterise a capital. It all looked like a place where people dwelt to wear out their old houses and old garments, and to leave both behind them when no longer wearable; windows mended with paper, pantaloons patched with particolored cloth, "shocking bad hats," mangy car-drivers, and great troops of beggars of every age and walk of mendicaney, were met with even in the best quarters; and with all these signs of poverty and decay, there was an air of swaggering recklessness in every one, that was particularly striking; All were out of temper with England and English rule; and "Ireland for the Irish" was becoming a popular cant phrase, pretty much upon the same principle that blacklegs extinguish the lights, when luck goes against them, and have a scramble for "the bank" in the dark. The strangest of all was, however, that nobody seemed to have died, or left the place since I remembered it as a boy. There went the burly Barrister down Batchelor's-walk, with the same sturdy stride I used to admire of yore, his cheeks a little redder, his presence somewhat more portly, perhaps, but with the self-same smile with which he then cajoled the jury; and that imposing form with which he repelled the freedom of a witness. There were the same civic magistrates, the same attorneys, dancing-masters; ay, even the dandies had not been replaced, but were the old crop, sadly running to seed, and marvellously ill-cared for.

Even the Castle officials were beautifully consistent, and true to their old traditions; they were as empty and insolent as ever. It was the English pale performed over again at the Upper Castle-yard, and all without its

limits were the kerns and "wild Irish" of centuries ago.

How is a craft like this ever to take the sea, thought I with misery and mutiny everywhere! with six feet of water in the hold, the crew are turning out for higher wages, and ready to throw overboard the man who counsels them to put a hand to the pump!

But what had I to do with all this? nor would I allude to it here, save to mention the straits and difficulties which beset me, to account for changes that I had never anticipated.

We dined everywhere, from the vice-regal palace in a swamp, to the musty halls of the chief-secretary in the castle. We partook of a civic feast, a pic-nic at the waterfall; we had one day with the military; and here, by the way, I recognised an old acquaintance of other days, the Hon. Captain De Courcy. He was still on the staff, and still constant to his ancient flame, who, with a little higher complexion, and more profuse ringlets,—it is strange how color and hair go on increasing with years,—looked pretty much what I remembered her of yore.

"You had better wait for your groom, Mons. Le Compte," said De Courcy to me at the review, as I was dismounting, to speak to some people in the crowd of carriages. "Don't trust those fellows. I once had a valuable mare stolen by one of those vagrants, and, what was worse, the rascal rode her at a steeple chase the same day."

"Pas possible!" exclaimed I at the bare thought of such an indignity. "What became of the young villain?"

"I forget now, whether I let him off, or whether he was publicly whipped; but I am certain he never came to good."

I felt a flush of anger rise to my cheek at this speech, but I checked my passion; and well I might, as I thought upon my *own* condition and upon *his*. To have expended any interest or sympathy as to the boy, besides, would have been absurd, and I was silent. Among our invitations, was one to the house of a baronet, who resided in a midland county, only a few miles from my native place. We arrived at night at Knockdangan Castle, an edifice of modern Gothic style, which means a marvellously expensive residence, rendered almost uninhabitable, by the necessity of having winding stairs, narrow corridors, low ceilings, and pointed windows. The house was full of company, the greater part of whom had arrived unexpectedly; still, our reception was everything that genial hospitality could dictate. One of the drawing-rooms had been already converted into a kind of barrack-room, with half a dozen beds in it; and now the library was to be devoted to the Prince, while a small octagon tower leading off it, about the size and shape of a tea-tray, was reserved for me. If these arrangements were attended with inconvenience, certainly nothing in the manner of either host or hostess showed it. They, and their numerous family of sons and daughters, seemed to take it as the most natural thing in life to be thrown into disorder, to accommodate their friends; not alone their friends, but their friends' friends, for so proved more than half of the present company. Several of "the boys," meaning the sons of the host, slept at houses in the neighborhood; one actually bivouacked in a little temple in the garden. There seemed no limit to the contrivances of our kind entertainers, either in the variety of the plans for pleasure, or the hearty good nature with which they concurred in any suggestion of the guests. All that Spanish politeness expresses, as a phrase, was here reduced to actual practice. Everything was at the disposal of the stranger. Not alone was he at liberty to ride, drive, fish, shoot, hunt, boat, or course at will,—but all his hours were at his own disposal; and his liberty unfettered even, as to whether he dined in his own apartment, or joined the general company. Nothing that the most courteous attention could provide was omitted, at the same time that the most ample freedom was secured to all. Here, too, was found a tone of cultivation that would have graced the most polished society of any European capital. Foreign languages were well understood and spoken; music practised in its higher walks; drawing cultivated with a skill rarely seen out of the hands of professed masters; subjects of politics and general literature were discussed with a knowledge and liberality that bespoke the highest degree of enlightenment; while to all these gifts, the genuine warmth of native character lent an indescribable charm of kindliness and cordiality, that left none a stranger who spent even twelve hours beneath their roof.

The Prince was in ecstacies with everything and every one, and he himself no less a favorite with all. Every fall he got in hunting made him more popular; every misadventure that occurred to him in trying to conform to native tastes gave a new grace and charm to his character. The ladies pronounced him "a love;" and the men, in less polished, but not less hearty encomium, called him "a devilish good fellow for a Frenchman."

The habits I have already alluded to, of each guest living exactly how he pleased, gave a continual novelty to the company; sometimes two or three new faces would appear at the dinner-table, or in the drawing-room, and conjecture was ever at work whether the last arrivals had been yet seen, and who were they who presented themselves at table?

"You will meet two guests to-day, Count," said the host one day, as we entered the drawing-room before dinner: "a Spanish bishop

and his niece—a very charming person, and a widow of nineteen! They came over to Ireland about some disputed question of property—being originally Irish by family—and are now, I regret to say, about to return to Spain in a few days. Hitherto a severe cold has confined the bishop to his chamber; and his niece, not being I fancy a proficient in any but her native language, had not courage to face a miscellaneous party. They will both, however, favor us to-day; and as you are the only one here who can command the 'true Castilian tongue,' you will take the Countess in to dinner."

I bowed my acknowledgments, not sorry to have the occasion of displaying my Spanish, and playing the agreeable to my fair countrywoman.

The drawing-room each day before dinner had no other light than that afforded by a great fire of bog deal, which, although diffusing a rich and ruddy glow over all who sat within the circle around it, left the remainder of the apartment in comparative darkness; and few, except those very intimate, were able to recognise each other in the obscurity. Whether this was a whim of the host, or a pardonable artifice to make the splendor of the well-lighted dinner-table more effective, on the principle of orators, who begin at a whisper to create silence, I know not, but we used to jest over the broken shins and upset spider-tables, that each day announced the entrance of some guest, less familiarized to the geography of the apartment.

On this particular occasion the party was unusually large, possibly a certain curiosity to see the new guests had added to the number, while some of the neighboring families were also present. Various were the new names announced; and at last came the bishop, with the lady of the house upon his arm, the young widow following with one of the daughters of the house. I could only distinguish a very white head, with a small black skull-cap, a stooping figure, and a great gold cross, which I concluded represented the holy man; something in black, with a very long veil descending from the back of her head, being as evidently the niece.

A few formal introductions were gone through in clever pantomime, dinner was announced, and the company paired off in all stateliness, while the host, seizing my arm, led me across the room, and in a few words presented me to the fair widow, who curtseyed and accepted my arm, and away we marched in that solemn procession by which people endeavor to thaw the ice of first acquaintance.

"Your first visit to Ireland, I believe, Señhora?" said I, in Spanish, wishing to say something as we walked along.

"Yes, Señhor, and yours also, I understand?" replied she.

"Not exactly," muttered I, taken too suddenly to recover myself, "when I was a boy, a mere child,"—I here by accident employed a Mexican word almost synonimous with the French "gamin,"—she started, and said eagerly, "How! you have been in Mexico?"

"Yes, Señhor, I have passed some years in that country."

"I am a Mexican," cried she delightedly. "Tell me where have you travelled, and whom did you know there?"

"I have travelled a good deal, but scarcely knew any one," replied I. "At Guajaqualla."

"Oh, were you there?—my own neighborhood—my home," exclaimed she fervidly.

"Then, probably, you know Don Esteban Olares," said I.

"My own father!"

I turned round; our eyes met; it was just at the very entrance of the dinner-room, where a blaze of light was shed on everything, and there upon my arm—her hand trembling, her cheek colorless, and her eyes swimming in tears—was Donna Maria! Neither of us spoke—neither of us could speak!—and while her eyes wandered from my face to the several decorations I wore upon my breast, and I watched with agonizing intensity the look of terror she threw down the table towards the place where her uncle was seated, I saw plainly that some painful mystery was struggling within her mind.

"Do not let my uncle recognize you," said she in a low whisper; "he is not likely to do so, for both his sight and hearing are much impaired."

"But why should I not claim him as an old acquaintance, if not a friend, Señhora, if he be the same Fra Miguel?"

"Hush, be cautious," cried she, "I will tell you all to-morrow—to-night—if there be a fitting opportunity. Let us talk of something else, or we shall be remarked."

I tried my best to obey her, but I fear my attempt was a poor one; I was able, however, to listen to her with a certain amount of composure, and while doing so, to remark how much she had improved in grace and beauty since we met. Years had developed the charms which girlhood then but shadowed forth, and in the full and liquid softness of her dark and long-lashed eyes, and the playful delicacy of her mouth, I saw how a consciousness of fascination had served to lend me powers of pleasing.

She spoke to me of her widowhood without any affectation of feeling grieved or sorry. So long as Don Geloso had lived, her existence had been like that of a nun in a cloister; he was too jealous to suffer her to go into the world, and save at the Court Chapel each morning and evening, she never saw anything of that brilliant society in which her equals were moving. When her uncle was created

Bishop of Seville, she removed to that city to visit him, and had never seen her husband after. Such, in few words, was the story of a life whose monotony would have broken the spirit of any nature less buoyant and elastic than her own. Don Esteban was dead; and of him she spoke with deep and affectionate feeling, betraying, besides, that her own lot was rendered almost a friendless one by the bereavement.

That same evening, as we walked through the rooms, examining pictures and ancient armor, of which our host was somewhat vain, I learned the secret to which the Señhora had alluded at table, and, divesting which of all the embarrassment the revelation occasioned herself, was briefly this:—The Fra, who had never, for some reasons of his own, either liked or trusted me, happened to discover some circumstances of my earlier adventures in Texas, and even traced me in my rambles to the night of my duel with the Ranchero. Hence he drew the rash and somewhat ungenerous conclusion that my character was not so unimpeachable as I affected, and that my veracity was actually open to question! An active correspondence had taken place between Don Geloso and himself about me, in which the former, after great researches, pronounced that no noble family of my name had existed in old Spain, and that, in plain fact, I was nothing better than an impostor! In this terrible delusion the old gentleman died, but so fearful was he of the bare possibility of injuring one in whose veins flowed the pure blood of Castile, that on his death-bed he besought the Bishop to ascertain the fact to a certainty, and not to desist in the investigation, till he had traced me to my birth, parentage, and country. Upon this condition he had bequeathed all his fortune to the Church, and not alone all his own wealth, but all Doana Maria's also.

The Bishop's visit to Ireland, therefore, had no other object than to look for my baptismal certificate,—an investigation, I need scarcely say, somewhat difficult and intricate!

Of course, in this confession, the fair Contessa never hesitated to regard me as an injured and calumniated individual; but so assured was she of the Bishop's desire to endow the church with her wealth, that he would have less brooked to discover me a noble of title and rank indisputable, than to find me a poor and ignoble adventurer. "Were he but to recognise you," said she, "*I* should be condemned to a nunnery for life!" and this terror, however little startling to *my* ears, had too much of significance to *her* mind to be undervalued.

Of course my present position, the companionship of the Prince,—the foreign orders I wore, were more than sufficient to accredit me to her as anything I pleased to represent myself; but somehow I felt little inclination for that vein of fiction in which so often and so largely I had indulged! For the first time in my life I regarded this flow of invention as a treachery! and, when pressed by her to relate the full story of my life, I limited myself to that period which, beginning with my African campaign, brought me down to the moment of telling I was in love; that is the simple solution of the mystery; nor can I cite a more convincing evidence of the ennobling nature of the passion, than that it made *me*, such as I was,—tenacious of the truth.

Every succeeding day brought me into closer intimacy with the Señhora, and taught me more and more to value her for other graces than those of personal beauty. The seclusion in which she had passed her last few years had led her to cultivate her mind by a course of study such as few Spanish women ever think of, and which gave an almost serious character to a nature of more than child-like buoyancy. We talked of her own joyous land, to which she seemed longing to return, and of our first meeting beside the "Rio Colloredo," and then, of our next meeting on her own marriage-day, and she wondered where, if ever, we should see each other again? The opportunity was not to be lost. I pressed her hand to my lips, and asked her never to leave me! I told her, that, for me, country had no ties,—that I had neither home nor kindred. I would, at that moment, have confessed everything, even to my humble birth! I pledged myself to live with her amidst the sierras of the far west, or, if she liked better, in some city of the old world. I told her that I was rich, and that I needed not that wealth of which her uncle's covetousness would rob her. In fact, I said a great deal that was true, and when I added anything that was not so, it was simply as painters introduce a figure with a "bit of red," to heighten the landscape. I will not weary my *jair* readers with all the little doubts, and hesitations, and fears, so natural for her to experience and express; nor will I tire my male companion by saying how I combated each in turn. Love, like a law-suit, has but one ritual. First comes the declaration—usually pretty unintelligible pieces of business in either case; then come the "affidavits," the sworn depositions; then follow the cross-examinations; after which, the charge and the verdict. In my case it was a favorable one, and I was almost out of my senses with delight.

The Bishop, with whom my acquaintanceship had never betrayed my secret, was to leave Ireland in a few days, and the Prince, to whom I told everything, with the kindness of a true friend, promised that he would take the very same day for his own departure. The remainder we were to leave to fortune. Love-making left me little time for any other

thoughts; but still, as for appearance' sake, I was obliged to pass some hours of every day apart from Donna Maria, I took the occasion of one of these forced absences to visit a scene which had never quitted my mind through all the changeful fortunes of my life—the little spot where I was born. Rising one morning at break of day, I set out for Horseleap, to see once more, and for the last time, the humble home of my childhood. The distance was about sixteen miles; but as I rode slowly, my mind full of old memories and reflections, I did not reach the place till nigh noon. Alas! I should never had known the spot! There had been a season of famine and pestilence, and now the little village was almost tenantless. Many of the cabins were unroofed: in some, the blackened rafters bore tokens of fire. The one shop, that used to supply the humble luxuries of the poor, was closed, and I passed on with a heavy heart towards the cross roads where "Con's Acre" lay.

I had not gone far when my eye, straining to catch it, detected the roof of the cabin rising above the little thorn hedge that flanked the road. Ay, there was the old stone-quarry I used to play in; as a child, fancying that its granite sides were mountain precipices, and its little pools were lakes. There was the gate on which for hours long I have sat, gazing at the bleak expanse of moorland, and wondering if all the wide world beyond had nothing fairer or more beautiful than this.

"Who lives in that cabin yonder?" asked I, of a peasant on the road.

The man replied that it was "the minister;" adding his name, which, however, I could not catch. Long as I had been away from Ireland, I could not forget that this was the especial title given to the Protestant clergyman of the parish, and I rode up to the door wondering how it chanced that he was reduced to a dwelliug of such humble pretensions. An old woman came out as I drew up, and told me that the curate was from home, but would be back in less than an hour; requesting me to "put in my beast," and sit down in the parlor till he came.

I accepted the invitation, followed her into the cabin, which although in a condition of neatness very different from what I remembered it of old, brought back all my boyish days in an instant. There was the fire-side, where with naked feet roasting before the blazing turf, I had sat and slept full many an hour, dreaming of adventures which were as nothing to those my real life had met with. There the corner where I used to sit throughout the night, copying those law papers my father would bring back with him from Kilbeggan. There stood the little bed, where often I have sobbed myself to sleep, when, wearied and worn out, I was punished for some trifling omission, some slight and accidental mistake. I sat down and covered my face with my hands, for a sense of my utter loneliness in the world came suddenly over me; I felt as if this poor hovel was my only real home, and that all my success in life was a mere passing dream.

Meanwhile the old woman, with true native volubility, was explaining how the Bishop—"bad scran to him! wouldn't let his rivirence have pace and ease 'till he kem and lived in the parish, though there wasn't a spot fit for a gentleman in the whole length and breadth of it! and signs on it," added she, "we had to put up with this little place here, they call Con's Acre, and it was all a ruin when we got it."

"And who owned this cabin before?" asked I.

"A villain they call Con. Cregan, your honor, the biggest thief ye ever heard of; he was paid for informin' agin the people, and whin the Government had done wid him, they transported him too!

"Had he any children, this same Con?"

"He had a brat of a boy that was drowned at 'say,' they tell me; but I'd never believe it was that way Con. Cregan's son was to die!"

I need scarcely remark, that I saw no inducement for prolonging this conversation, wherein all the facts quoted were already familiar, and all the speculations the reverse of flattery; and I was far more agreeably occupied in discussing the eggs and milk the old lady had placed before me, when the door opened, and the curate entered. A deep cavernous cough, and a stooped figure, announcing the signs of some serious chest disease, were all I had time to observe; when with the politeness of a gentleman, he advanced toward me. The first sound of his voice was enough, and I cried out, "Lyndsay! my oldest and best friend—don't you know me?"

"I am ashamed to say, that I do not," said he, faltering while he still held my hand, and gazed into my face.

"Not yet?" asked I again, smiling at the embarrassment of his countenance.

"Not even yet," said he. "Tell me I beseech you, where did we meet?"

"Come here," said I, leading him to the door, and pointing to the wide stretching moor that lay before us; "it was there—yonder, where you see that heavy cloud shadow stealing along, yonder we first met. Do you know me now?"

He started; his pale cheek grew paler, and he fell upon my neck in a burst of tears. Who shall ever know the source, or what the meaning? They were not of joy, still less of sorrow,—they were the outbreak of a hundred emotions. Old memories of happy

days, never to come back,—boyish triumphs, failures,—moments of ecstasy,—of bitter anguish; his own bleak, joyless existence perhaps contrasting with mine, and then at last the fell consciousness of the malady in which he was but lingering out life.

"And here are you, and here I!" cried he, in a voice which his faltering accents made scarce intelligible; "who should say that we were to meet thus?" then, as if his words had conveyed a meaning of which he was ashamed, he blushed deeply, and said, "And oh, my friend! how truly you told me that life had its path for each, if we but knew how to choose it."

I must not say how the hours were passed, nor how it was nightfall ere either of us guessed it. Lyndsay insisted upon hearing every adventure that had befallen me, questioning me eagerly as I went how each new feature of prosperity had "worked with me," and whether gold had yet hardened my heart, and taught me indifference to the poor.

I told him of my love, and with such rapturous delight that he even offered to aid me in my object, by marrying me to Donna Maria; a piece of generous zeal, I am certain, that originated less in friendship than in the prospect of a proselyte,—the niece of a Bishop too! Poor fellow, he might make many converts if he were thus easily satisfied.

The next day I drove Donna Maria out for an airing, and, while occupying her mind with various matters, contrived to prolong our excursion to Horseleap. "What a dreary spot you have chosen for our drive," said she, looking around her.

"Do you see yonder little hut," said I, "where the smoke is rising?"

"Yes, that poor cabin yonder! You have not come to show me *that?*" said she, laughing.

"Even so, Maria," said I; "to show you that poor and humble hut, and to tell you that it was there I was born—a peasant's son; that from that same lowly roof I wandered out upon the world friendless and hungry; that partly by energy, partly by a resolution to succeed, partly by the daring determination that would not admit a failure, I have become what I am,—titled, honored, wealthy, but still the son of a poor man. I could not have gone on deceiving you, even though this confession should separate us forever." I could not speak more, nor needed I. Her hand had already clasped mine, as she murmured—"Yours more than ever."

"Now is the moment then to become so," said I, as I lifted her from the carriage and led her within the cabin.

* * * * * * *

The company were already waiting dinner ere we returned to the castle. "I have to make our excuses," said I, to the hostess; "but we prolonged our drive to a considerable distance."

"Ah, we feared you might have taken the road by the lake, where there is no turning back," said she.

"Exactly, Madame; that is what we did precisely, for we are married!"

Need I dwell upon the surprise and astonishment of this announcement. The bishop—fortunately it was in Spanish—uttered something very like an oath. The bride blushed—some of the ladies looked shocked—the men shook hands with me, and the Prince, saluting Donna Maria with a most hearty embrace, begged to say, "that the lady would be very welcomely received in Paris, since it was the only drawback to my appointment as an ambassador—that I was unmarried."

Here I have done,—not that my Confessions are exhausted, but that I fear my reader's patience may be; I may, however add, that this was not the only "Spanish marriage" in which I had a share,—that my career in greatness was not less eventful than my life in obscurity, and that I draw up at this stage, leaving it for the traveller to say if he should ever care hereafter to journey further with me.

THE END.

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THE

MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

A NOVEL.

BY EUGENE SUE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY CHARLES H. TOWN, ESQ.

NEW-YORK:

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THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE TAPIS-FRANC.

A TAPIS-FRANC, in the slang of the murderers and thieves of Paris, means a smoking-house or inn of the very lowest class. A discharged convict, who in this foul language is called an Ogre, or a woman of the same class who is called an Ogresse, commonly keeps a tavern of this kind, resorted to by the refuse of the Parisian population: liberated galley-slaves, sharpers, robbers, and assassins congregate there. If a crime has been committed, the police casts its net in this receptacle of filth, and almost always the guilty one is caught.

This opening will inform the reader that he is about to be a spectator of sorrowful and dismal scenes. If he consents, we will penetrate into horrible, unknown regions; frightful and hideous figures swarm in these foul alleys, like reptiles in a swamp. Every one has read those admirable works, in which Cooper, the American Walter Scott, has described the savage habits of the Indians, their picturesque and poetic language, and the thousand artifices by which they fly from or pursue their enemies. We have often trembled for those colonists and inhabitants of cities, when thinking that so near them lived or roamed these barbarous tribes, whose sanguinary habits remove them so far from the pale of civilization. We are about to place before our readers some episodes of the lives of other barbarians, as far removed from civilization as the savage people so well described by Cooper; only the barbarians of whom we speak live among us, and around us; we can elbow them, if we venture into the dens where they assemble to plot murder and robbery, and to divide among themselves the spoils of their victims.

These men have their own customs, women, and language: a mysterious language, crowded with wretched imagery and disgusting metaphors of blood.

Like the savages, they generally have names common among themselves; given to them either for their energy, cruelty, or some physical deformity.

We venture to describe with great diffidence some of the scenes of this story. In the first place, we fear that we shall be accused of spreading out disgusting details; and even if this is allowed, that we shall be incompetent to the task of giving a faithful, vigorous, and bold description of the manners and customs of these people.

In describing these scenes, we have almost trembled, and have hardly escaped from a nervous trepidation; we will not say anxiety, for fear we may be accused of ridiculous affectation. In thinking that perhaps our readers might participate in these feelings, we have had some doubts whether we ought to persevere in our story; whether such descriptions should be placed before the public. We have had our doubts; and without the very imperious exigencies of the narrative, we should regret having placed in such a horrible quarter the commencement of our tale. We count a little, however, on that curiosity which a gloomy drama is apt to produce; and, besides, we believe in the efficacy of contrasts. In this view of the case, it is perhaps well to describe certain beings whose sombre, energetic, and perhaps crude characters, will serve as a set-off to those of a nature entirely different.

The reader, thus informed of the nature of the excursion we intend to make among the people of this infernal race, who fill our prisons and galleys, and whose blood stains our scaffolds, will perhaps follow us. Doubtless this investigation will be new for him, but we assure him that after he has put his foot on the first round of the ladder, as he mounts, and as the tale proceeds, the atmosphere will become clearer and more pure. * * * *

On the 13th of December, 1838, a cold and rainy evening, a man of athletic form, wearing a miserable *blouse* (frock), crossed the Pont au Change and plunged into the cité, a labyrinth of obscure, crooked, and narrow streets, which extend from the Palais de Justice to Nôtre Dame.

The quarter or district of the Palais de Justice, very circumscribed and well watered, is, nevertheless, the asylum or resort of the rogues of Paris. Is it not strange, or, rather, is there not a fatality, an irresistible attraction thus drawing these criminals around the formidable tribunal which condemns them to the prison the galleys, or the scaffold? On this night the wind blew in heavy gusts down the narrow streets of this gloomy district, and the pale light of the suspended lamps, shaken by the winds, was reflected in the dark stream of turgid water which flowed down the muddy streets. Wretched houses, with scarcely a window, and those of wormeaten frames, without any glass; dark, infectious-looking alleys led to still darker-looking staircases, so steep that they could only be ascended by the aid of ropes fastened to the damp walls by iron hooks; the lower stories of some of these houses were occupied by sellers of charcoal, tripe men, or venders of impure meat; and notwithstanding the little value of these commodities, the windows of the miserable shops were barred with iron, so much did the owners fear the bold robbers of this quarter.

The man of whom we have spoken, on entering the Rue aux Fèves, situated in the middle of the cité, slackened his pace considerably; he felt himself on his own ground. The night was dark, the rain fell in torrents, and sharp gusts of wind and rain beat against the walls; the clock of the Palais de Justice, in the distance, struck ten; some women, sheltered under the heavy-arched doorways (gloomy and obscure as caverns), were singing in a subdued tone some popular airs.

One of these creatures was without doubt known by the man of whom we have spoken, for he stopped suddenly before her, and seized her by the arm. The unfortunate creature drew back, and said, with a timid voice,

"Good-night, Chourineur" (in *Argot* this word means one who gives a blow with a knife).

This man had thus been called in the galleys.

"Is it thou, La Goualeuse (singer)?" said the man in the blouse; "thou must pay for my brandy, or I'll make thee dance without music."

"I have no money," said the trembling girl, for this man was much feared in the quarter.

"If thy *filoche* (purse) is *à jeun* (empty) the *Ogresse* of the *tapis-franc* will give thee credit for thy pretty face."

"Mon Dieu! I already owe her the rent of the clothes I have on my back." "Ah! thou makest difficulties?" cried the Chourineur, giving the unfortunate wretch a random blow with his fist in the dark, which made her utter a piercing cry.

"That is nothing, my girl—it is only a warning." Hardly had he said these words when he cried, with a horrible oath, "I am hit in my arms—thou hast scratched me with thy scissors!" and, foaming with rage, he rushed in pursuit of La Goualeuse down the dark alley.

"Come no nearer," she said, "or I'll dig thine eyes out with my scissors; I have done nothing to thee, why hast thou struck me?" "I am going to tell thee," cried the bandit, still groping down the alley. "Ah! I've got thee, and now I'll make thee dance," he added, seizing with his immense and powerful hands a delicate and slender arm. "It is thou who shalt dance!" said a hoarse voice. "A man! is it thou, *Bras-Rouge?* Answer me, and don't squeeze so hard. I am in the entrance of thy house, it must be thou." "It is not Bras-Rouge," said the voice. "Good! if it is not a friend, there's blood to be shed," cried the Chourineur; "but to whom belongs this little paw that I have hold of?"

"It is the fellow of this."

Under the soft and delicate skin of the hand that now seized him quickly by the throat, the Chourineur could feel nerves and muscles of steel.

La Goualeuse, who had fled to the bottom of the alley, and mounted a few steps of the staircase, stopped a moment, and cried out to her unknown defender, "Oh! thank you, sir, for having taken my part, Chourineur struck me because I would not pay for some brandy. I revenged myself, but I did not do him much harm with my scissors. Now I am in safety, take care of yourself. He is the *Chourineur.*"

The terror that this man caused was great. "But don't you hear me! I tell you it is the Chourineur!" repeated La Goualeuse, "and I am a *ferlampier* (bandit), who is not a *frileux* (coward)," said the unknown; then he was silent, but the noise of a deadly conflict was heard for some seconds. "Dost thou wish that I should kill thee?" cried the bandit, making a violent effort to get rid of his adversary, who he found possessed great strength. "Good, good, thou art going to pay for La Goualeuse and for thyself," he added, grinding his teeth. "Pay! in money of my fists? Yes," answered the unknown.

"If thou dost not let go my cravat, I'll bite thy nose," said the almost strangled Chourineur.

"I have too short a nose, my man, and thou doesn't see too clear."

"Come, then, under the lamp."

"Come," repeated the unknown, "and we'll look at the whites of each other's eyes;" and throwing himself on the Chourineur, whom he still held by the throat, he backed him to the entrance of the alley; then pushing him violently, he threw him into the street, hardly lighted by the wretched hanging lamp. The bandit fell, but recovering himself immediately, rushed with fury on the unknown, whose small and slender figure gave no indication of the great strength he had displayed.

The Chourineur, although of an athletic make, and very expert in that sort of pugilism which is vulgarly called *La Savatte*, found his master.

The unknown tripped up his heels, and with wonderful dexterity threw him twice.

Not yet willing to acknowledge himself conquered, the Chourineur returned to the charge foaming with rage; then the defender of La Goualeuse, changing quickly his mode of fighting, rained down on the head of the bandit a torrent of blows with his fists, which struck as if they were made of iron.

These blows with the fists, worthy the envy and admiration of Jack Turner, one of the most famous boxers of London, were so entirely out of all the rules of *La Savette*, that the Chourineur was doubly stunned, and, for the third time, fell upon the pavement like an ox, murmuring,

"Mon linge est lavé" (*Argot for*, I have enough).

"If he gives up, have pity on him; don't kill him," said La Goualeuse, who during this conflict had advanced to the doorway of the house of Bras Rouge; then she added, with astonishment, "But who are you, then? Except the *Maître d'Ecole* there is nobody, from the Rue Saint-Eloi to Nôtre Dame, capable of fighting the Chourineur. I thank you much, sir; alas! if it had not been for you, he would have cruelly beaten me." The unknown, instead of answering this woman, listened attentively to her voice.

Never had a sound more sweet, more silvery, more soft, reached his ears; he endeavoured to catch a glimpse of her face, but the night was too dark, the light from the lamp too feeble.

After having remained some minutes immovable, the Chourineur raised himself and sat up.

"Take care!" said La Goualeuse, retreating into the alley, and drawing her protector by the arm; "take care! perhaps he will try to revenge himself."

"Be quiet, my girl; if he wants any more, I am ready to serve him."

The brigand heard these words. "I have the *coloquinte en bringues*," said he; "for to-day I have enough; won't have any more; another time, I say nothing—if I meet you."

"Art thou not content? art thou complaining?" cried the unknown, with a menacing voice. "Is it that I have *macaroné?*" (fought in a foul manner).

"No, no, I don't complain; thou art an *atout*" (trump), said the brigand, in a peevish tone, but with that sort of respect which physical force always inspires in people of that class; "thou hast rinsed me, and except the *Maître d'Ecole*, who can eat three Herculeses for breakfast, no one to this hour has put his foot on my head."

"Well! what then?"

"What then? why, I have found my master, that's all: you will find yours one of these days; sooner or later every one finds his—if it is not man, why there is the *Meg des Megs* (God), as the *sangliers* (priests) say—that which is sure is, that now thou hast put the Chourineur under thy feet, thou canst do as thou pleasest in the cité. All the women will be thy slaves; Ogres and Ogresses will not dare to refuse to give thee credit." "Who art thou, then? thou *dévides la jars* (speakest Argot) like papa and mamma! If thou art *grinche* (a robber), I am not thy man." "I have *chouriné* (given blows with a knife), it is true, because when my blood rushes to my head I always see red, and I must strike. But I have paid for my *chourinades* in going fifteen years to the *pré* (galleys). I finished my time. I owe nothing to the *curieux* (judges), and I have never *grinchi;* thou mayest ask La Goualeuse!"

"It is true; he is not a robber," said the latter.

"Well, come and take a glass of brandy with me, and we shall become acquainted," said the unknown. "Come, let's have no ill feeling."

"Now that is genteel—thou art my master, I own it—thou knowest how to play with fists; those last blows came down like a hailstorm. Thunder! how they poured on my sconce—never have felt anything like it—just like a blacksmith's hammer—a new game, I guess—thou must teach me."

"I'll begin as soon as thou wilt."

"Not with me—not with me—I feel yet a little dizzy; but thou must know Bras-Rouge, as thou wast in the alley of his house."

"Bras-Rouge?" said the unknown, surprised at this question; "does nobody but Bras-Rouge live in this house?"

"Yes, my man. Bras-Rouge has his own reasons for not desiring neighbours," said the Chourineur, smiling in a significant manner.

"Well! so much the better for mine," said the unknown, who seemed desirous of putting a stop to the conversation. I don't know *Bras-Rouge* any more than I know Bras Noir; it rained hard, and I stepped into the alley for shelter: thou wast beating this poor girl, and I beat thee, that's all."

"Just so; besides, I don't want to know anything of thine affairs; those who stand in need of the services of Bras-Rouge don't tell it to all Rome: don't say any more about it:" then turning to La Goualeuse, he said, "On my faith, thou art a good girl. I gave thee a tap on the head, and thou gavest me a punch with scissors; it was only in fun: but what was really kind on your part, was that thou didst not wish that madman there to thrash me when I cried enough. Thou shalt come and drink with us; this gentleman pays! By-the-by, my man, instead of going to drink, suppose we go and sup at the Lapin Blanc: it is a tapis-franc." "Agreed; I'll pay for supper. Wilt thou come, La Goualeuse?" said the unknown.

"Oh! I was very hungry," she answered, "but this fight has made me heart-sick; I have no more appetite."

"Bah, bah! that 'll come when once at the table; besides, the cooking at the Lapin Blanc is first-rate." The three individuals, now on the most friendly footing, turned their steps towards the tavern.

During the whole time of the conflict between the unknown and the Chourineur, a coalman of gigantic stature, concealed in another alley, had watched with anxiety the chances of the combat, without having lent (as has been seen) the least assistance to either of the adversaries; and when the trio started for the tapis-franc, the coalman followed them.

The bandit and La Goualeuse entered first; the unknown was about following, when the coal-merchant approached, and whispered in a most respectful tone, in English, "My lord—take care!"

The unknown shrugged his shoulders and joined his companions. The coalman hovered near the door, listening with great attention, and from time to time peeping through a small hole of the wretched window, which, as is usual in these dens, was thickly incrusted with white paint on the inside.

CHAPTER II.

THE OGRESSE.

The tavern of the *Lapin Blanc* is situated about half way down the street aux Fèves; it occupies the lower story of a lofty house with two large windows, called *à guillotine*. Above the door of a dark vaulted alley was suspended an oblong, cracked lantern, on which was painted in red letters, "*Here lodgings can be had for the night.*"

Chourineur, Goualeuse, and the unknown, entered the tavern.

It was a long, low room, into which they entered, with smoky ceiling and black rafters, badly lighted by the murky rays of a miserable lamp. The whitewashed walls were covered with vulgar sketches, or with sentences in *Argot* (slang); the floor of beaten earth and salt was covered with mud; an armful of straw was placed at the foot of the counter or bar of the *Ogresse* instead of a carpet, and this was situated near the door, and under the lamp on each side of this room there was placed six tables, one end of each, as well as the benches, nailed to the wall; at the farther end of the room a door opened into the kitchen; on the right, near the bar, another gave an exit into the alley, which led to miserable appartments, where one can lodge for three sous the night—and now a few words about the *Ogresse* and her guests.

She was called the mother *Ponisse*, and her threefold employment was, to keep the tavern, take in lodgers by the night, and to rent out clothes to the miserable beings who swarm in these foul streets.

The Ogresse was about forty years of age, tall, robust, and corpulent, with a red face and something of a beard; her rough and masculine voice, her immense arms and large hands, all indicated no common strength; her hat was trimmed with a faded red and yellow riband; a tippet of rabbit skin was crossed on her bosom and tied behind her back; her dress of green woollen so short, that her black sabots (wooden shoes) were seen, half burned by her foot-stove; and, finally, her copper-coloured complexion, much inflamed by the abuse of strong drink.

The counter, lined with lead, was furnished with jugs with iron hoops, and different-sized measures of tin; on a small shelf could be seen many glass flacons, moulded in the form of the emperor: these bottles were filled with adulterated liquors of a rose and green colour, known by the name of *parfait amour* and *consolation*: finally, a large black cat, with yellow eyes, crouched near the Ogresse, seemed the familiar spirit of this place.

By a contrast that almost seems impossible, if we did not know that the human breast is an impenetrable abyss — a holy Easter branch, bought at the church by the Ogresse, was placed behind the box of an ancient cuckoo clock. Two men, with sinister looks, bristling beards, and clothed almost in rags, had hardly touched the jug of wine that had been served to them, but were whispering, evidently, in an unquiet and uneasy manner.

One of them especially, who was very pale, almost livid, kept continually drawing his wretched Greek cap over his eyes. He held his left hand concealed, never using it except when compelled by necessity. At a short distance was seated a young man of hardly sixteen years, with a drunken, pale, and livid look; his long, black hair floated on his shoulders, smoking a short white pipe; this youth was a fine specimen of juvenile precocity. He was leaning against the wall, with his hands in the pockets of his blouse, and he never took the pipe from his mouth except to drink of the brandy which stood before him. The other inmates of the tapis-franc, male or female, deserve no particular notice; their physiognomies were ferocious or dull, their gayety gross or licentious, their silence sombre or stupid: such were the guests of the tapis-franc, where the unknown, the Chourineur, and La Goualeuse entered. These three last personages play so important a part in our story, that we should not fail to place them in bold relief.

The Chourineur was a man of tall stature, athletic make, with flax-coloured hair, almost white, heavy dark eyebrows, and enormous whiskers of burning red. Poverty, the rude labour at the galleys in the scorching sun, had bronzed his skin to that dark olive, which may be said to be peculiar to galley-slaves; notwithstanding his terrible name, the features of this man intimated a more brutal audacity than ferocity, although the back part of his head, most singularly developed, announced the preponderance of carnal and murderous appetites. The Chourineur was dressed in a miserable blouse trousers of velveteen, which formerly had been green, but no colour could now be distinguished, from the heavy coating of mud.

By a strange anomaly, the face of La Goualeuse presented one of those angelic and lovely expressions which preserve their ideality even in the midst of depravity, as if the creature were unable to efface by its vices the noble stamp which God has placed on the forehead of some privileged beings.

The Goualeuse had passed her sixteenth year. Her round, white forehead, surmounted her visage of a most pefect oval; her long and almost curling eyelashes half concealed her large, blue eyes; her small, rosy mouth, and Grecian nose, her dimpled chin, and downy cheek, were lovely in the extreme; from each side of her lofty temples a tress of pale auburn hair descended low on her cheek, then passing behind the small ear of ivory, was fastened under a sort of blue checked handkerchief which she wore upon her head, tied, as is vulgarly called, á la Marmotte. A string of coral beads encircled her beautiful throat, of most dazzling whiteness; her dress, of blue stuff, was much too large, and scarcely concealed her round and elastic form; a miserable little orange shawl, with blue fringe, crossed on her bosom, completed her attire. The charming voice of La Goualeuse had attracted the attention of her unknown defender; in effect, this voice, so sweet and harmonious, had such an irresistible attraction, that the crowd of miserable wretches, in the midst of whom she lived, often begged her to sing, and in listening to her touching notes, had surnamed her La Goualeuse (singer).

She had also received another name, due, no doubt, to the innocent expression of her face; they called her Fleur de Marie, which in Argot (slang) means virgin.

We wish we could convey to the reader the singular impression made upon us when, in the midst of this vocabulary, redolent with words of blood, and murder, and theft, we came to this one so poetical, so metaphorical, so religious. Fleur de Marie—is it not like a lily rearing its snow-white head on a field of carnage? Singular contrast, strange chance! the inventors of this frightful language have dared to look up to a holy poesy—they have added another charm to the words which they wish to express.

These reflections, do they not lead us to believe, in thinking also of other contrasts, which break the horrible monotony of the most criminal existences, that certain principles of piety and morality, innate, as it were, cast here and there their sparkling light on some dark, gloomy mind? Malefactors all of one description are phenomena sufficiently rare.

The unknown defender of La Goualeuse (we shall call him Rodolphe) was about thirty years of age, and of a middling size; his slight and perfectly-proportioned figure gave no indication of the great strength which he had shown in his contest with the Chourineur. It had been difficult to assign any certain character to the physiognomy of Rodolphe—it united the strangest contrasts; his features were regularly handsome, too handsome for a man; his delicately-pale complexion, his large brown

eyes, almost always half closed, his lounging gait, his ironical smile, seemed to announce a dissipated man, whose constitution was, as yet, only weakened by the aristocratic excesses of opulent life. Yet, notwithstanding his white and delicate hands, Rodolphe had just knocked down one of the most robust and renowned bandits of this resort of robbers.

We say aristocratic excess, because the intoxication proceeding from, or caused by, generous wine, is very different from that caused by a miserable adulterated drink; because, in a word, to the eyes of an observer, an excess differs as much in symptoms as in kind and species.

Certain furrows on the brow of Rodolphe revealed profound thought, essentially a contemplative man; yet the firmness of the contour of his mouth, his carriage of the head, somewhat bold and imperious, betrayed the man of action, whose physical force and courage would always exercise on the multitude an irresistible ascendency. Often his look seemed charged with a melancholy sadness, and all that commiseration has the most helpful, all that pity has the most touching, was pictured on his countenance; at other times, on the contrary, the expression of Rodolphe became hard and wicked; his features expressed so much disdain and cruelty, that one could scarcely believe they could ever be susceptible of any gentle emotion. The continuation of this story will show what was capable of calling forth passions and feelings so opposite in their nature.

In his conflict with the Chourineur, Rodolphe had shown neither anger nor hatred against an adversary so unworthy. Confiding in his strength, in his address, in his agility, he had experienced no emotion but that of contempt for the sort of brute he threw on the ground. To finish the portrait of Rodolphe, we will say that his hair was of clear chestnut, as were his nobly-arched eyebrows; he wore a fine silken mustache, and his chin, a little prominent, was most carefully shaved; otherwise, the manners and language he used, or rather affected to use, with incredible ease, gave him a complete resemblance to the guests of the Ogresse. His symmetrical neck, modelled like an Indian Bacchus, was encompassed by a black cravat, negligently tied, with the ends falling on the bosom of his blouse, whose faded colour announced its antiquity; his shoes were nailed with a double row of nails, and, save his hands of dazzling whiteness, nothing in his dress distinguished him from the other inmates; while his air of resolution, and, if we may so express it, his audacious serenity, placed between him and them an immeasurable distance.

On entering the tapis-franc, the Chourineur, placing one of his large hairy hands on the shoulder of Rodolphe, cried,

"A greeting for the Chourineur's master."

"Yes, friends, this young man has just been sousing me; fair notice to those who have any desire to have their sculls cracked or backs broken, including also the Maitre d'Ecole, who this time will find his master, I'll answer for it. I'll bet."

At these words, from the Ogresse to the very least of the inmates of the tapis-franc, all eyes were turned towards the conqueror of the Chourineur with cowardly respect. Some of them drawing their jugs to the end of their tables, made room for Rodolphe if he might wish to seat himself, while others gathered around the Chourineur to learn some details of the unknown, who had just made such a victorious début into their society. Even the Ogresse herself smiled most graciously on Rodolphe; and, a thing unheard of in the annals of the tapis-franc, even raised herself from her place at the bar, and came to ask Rodolphe what she should serve to him and his company, an attention she had never paid even to the Maitre d'Ecole, that famous villain who had made even the Chourineur tremble.

One of the two men whom we have mentioned, he who kept his hand so carefully concealed, leaned over towards the Ogresse as she wiped the table for Rodolphe, and said, in a hoarse voice,

"Has the Maitre d'Ecole been here to-day?"

"No," said Mother Ponisse.

"Yesterday?" "Yes, he came." "With his new wife?" "Bah! do you take me for a spy, with your questionings? do you think I am going to denounce my guests?" said the Ogresse, in a brutal manner.

"I have a rendezvous with the Maitre d'Ecole this night; we have some business together."

"That must be something very nice, your affairs, assassins as you are!"

"Assassins!" said the irritated bandit; "it is from them you make your living!"

"Come, come, will you hold your tongue?" cried the Ogresse, "or I'll throw this jug at your head."

The cowardly wretch sat down, growling.

Fleur de Marie, as she came in, had exchanged a look of friendly intelligence with the young man we have mentioned.

The Chourieur said to him, "Ah! Barbillon, always drinking brandy?"

"Always. I'd rather fast and wear old shoes, than go without brandy in my throat and tobacco in my pipe," said the young man in a cracked voice, without changing his position, and passing out volumes of smoke.

"Good-evening, Mother Ponisse," said La Goualeuse.

"Good-evening, Fleur de Marie," answered the Ogresse, inspecting closely the vestments which covered the unfortunate; "ah, it is a pleasure to rent one's things to you. You are a neat little puss. I never would have let such a fine orange shawl to such creatures as La Tourneuse or the Tête de Mort. But I have taken good care of you since you came from prison, and I must confess you are the best creature in all the cité."

"Hollo, mother!" said Rodolphe, "I see you have got some holy wood on your clock," pointing with his finger to the Easter Bough, placed behind the cuckoo.

"Well, and would you have one live like heathen?" answered the horrible woman; and then speaking to La Goualeuse, "Come, won't you give us one of your songs?" "After supper, Mother Ponisse," said the Chourineur. "And what will you have, my good fellow?" said she to Rodolphe, desiring to make him welcome, so that she might count upon his assistance when required.

"Ask the Chourineur, mother; it is his feast, but I pay."

"Well, what do you want for supper?" said the Ogresse, turning to the bandit, "what do you want, wicked dog?"

"Two measures of wine at 12 sous, three small loaves of fresh bread, and a harlequin (a mixture of broken victuals)," cried the Chourineur, after having hesitated a while.

"I see that you are a famous drinker, and have a great passion for harlequins."

"Well, and are you hungry now?" said the Chourineur to La Goualeuse; "are you hungry?"

"Now! Chourineur."

"Do you like anything better than a harlequin, my girl?" said Rodolphe.

"Oh no! my hunger is all gone."

"But why don't you look at my master?" said the Chourineur, with a coarse laugh, and pointing at Rodolphe with his finger: "why don't you look at him?" The Goualeuse blushed, and cast down her eyes without answering.

After a short time, the Ogresse came herself, and placed on the table of Rodolphe a jug of wine, some bread, and the harlequin, which we shall not attempt to describe to our readers, but which the Chourineur seemed to find perfectly to his taste, for he cried,

"What a dish! ye gods! what a dish! it is like an omnibus! there is something for all tastes; for those who like fat and those who like lean; for those who like pepper and those who like sugar—chickens' legs and fishes' tails, cutlet's bones and pie crust, a fry, cheese, vegetables, birds' heads, crackers, and salad—now do eat, La Goualeuse, it is choice—have you been feasting to-day?" "Feasting! ah yes; I have eaten, as usual, this morning my penny's-worth of bread and milk."

The entrance of a new-comer into the tavern interrupted all conversation, and attracted all attention. He was a man of about middle age, strong and robust, wearing a jacket and cap, perfectly conversant with the usages of the tapis-franc, and speaking in Argot; he demanded some supper.

Although this stranger was not a regular lounger at the tapis-franc, he now attracted no more attention, for he was *known*. To recognise these fellows, robbers, like honest men, rarely fail.

The new-comer placed himself in such a position that he might observe the two men of whom we have spoken: he scarcely took his eyes from off them; but they were so placed, that they could not see that they were watched.

Notwithstanding his audacity, the Chourineur showed much deference to Rodolphe, and did not dare to *tutoyer* (address him familiarly). This man had no respect for the laws, but he respected physical strength. "On the faith of man," he said, "although you have made me dance, yet I am glad I have met you." "Because you find the harlequin to your taste?" "In the first place; and then I scorch to see you handle the Maitre d'Ecole; he has always rinsed me, and I want to see him washed in return; oh, that will do me good."

"Ah, ah! do you think I am going to jump on the Maitre d'Ecole like a bulldog, just to amuse you?" "No, but he will jump on you as soon as he hears that you are stronger than he," answered the Chourineur, rubbing his hands. "I have money enough left to give him his change," said Rodolphe, carelessly; "but what horrid weather; suppose we have some brandy and sugar; perhaps it will make La Goualeuse find her voice." "Agreed," said the Chourineur; "and to become acquainted, we'll just say who we are," added Rodolphe.

"White Hair, nicknamed the Chourineur, liberated galley-slave, workman among the floating woods at the *Quai Saint Paul*—frozen during the winter, roasted in summer—behold my character," said the guest of Rodolphe, making the military salute with his left hand. "And you, my master, this is the first time I have seen you in the cité. I don't mean to reproach you, but you have entered marching on my scull and beating the drum on my hide. Thunder and lightning, what music! above all, those last touches, just as you finished. I can't help thinking about it; I guess you tried to excel. But have you no other trade but that of rinsing the Chourineur?"

"I am a painter of fans, and I am called Rodolphe." "Painter of fans? ah! that is the reason your hands are so white," said the Chourineur. "Never mind, if all your workmen are like you, it appears that your trade requires a great deal of strength. But since you are a workman, and an honest one, I don't doubt, why do you come to a tapis-franc, where you will only meet thieves and robbers, or a liberated galley-slave like me, who can't go anywhere else?"

"I come here because I like good society."

"Hum! hum!" cried the Chourineur, shaking his head with an air of doubt. "I found you in the alley of Bras-Rouge; enough—sufficient. You say you don't know him?"

"I want to know if you are going to talk any more to me of your Bras-Rouge, whom the devil confound, that is, if his majesty pleases!"

"Hold, master; you are a little suspicious of me, and you are not wrong; but if you wish, I'll tell you my history, on condition that you will teach me how to strike those blows which made me smell brimstone."

"I consent, Chourineur; you shall tell me your story, and then La Goualeuse shall tell hers."

"Agreed," answered the Chourineur. "The weather is too bad even to put a constable out of doors—that'll amuse us. Are you agreed, La Goualeuse?"

"Oh yes! but it will not take me long," said Fleur de Marie. "And you will tell us yours, comrade Rodolphe?" added the Chourineur. "Yes, I'll begin." "Painter of fans!" said La Goualeuse; "it is a nice trade." "And how much do you gain at such a break-back calling as that?" said the Chourineur. "I'll begin my story," answered Rodolphe. "My best day's work brings me in four francs, sometimes five, during the long days of summer." "And do you stroll about much, *guesard?*" "Yes, as long as I have money. In the first place, I pay six sous for my bed."

"Pardon me, *my lord*—you pay six sous for your lodging!" said the Chourineur, touching his cap.

This word—*my lord*—ironically used by the

bandit, caused Rodolphe to smile imperceptibly. He continued: "Oh, I like to be comfortable and neat." "Here's a peer of France, a banker, a millionaire," cried the Chourineur; "he lodges for six sous!!" "Added to that," said Rodolphe, "four sous for tobacco, that makes ten; four sous for breakfast, fourteen; fifteen for dinner, one or two for brandy, makes about thirty sous a day. I have no need to work all the day; the rest of the time I frolic."

"And your family?" said La Goualeuse.

"Dead, during the cholera," answered Rodolphe. "What trade did they follow?" asked La Goualeuse. "Old clothes merchants, under the market, dealers in rags." "And how much did you get for their stock?" said the Chourineur.

"I was too young· my guardian sold it; when I came of age, he gave me thirty francs—my sole heritage."

"Who is your master at present?" asked the Chourineur.

"My master? he is called Borel, and lives in the Rue des Bourdonnais; a fool, but a brute; robber, but a miser; he'd rather lose an eye than pay his workmen; there's his description; if he should be lost let him be lost; don't bring him back to his shop. I have been bound to him since I was fifteen; I drew a lucky number at the Conscription; I live in the Rue de la Juiverie, No. 4, first floor in front; I am called Rodolphe Durand; so now you have my history."

"Now your turn, La Goualeuse," said the Chourineur; "I'll reserve my story for the dessert (la bonne bouche)."

CHAPTER III.

HISTORY OF LA GOUALEUSE.

"Let us begin at the beginning," said the Chourineur. "Yes; your parents?" added Rodolphe. "I never knew them," said Fleur de Marie. "Ah, bah!" observed the Chourineur; "neither seen nor known; born under a cabbage, as we say to children; quite droll, I declare, La Goualeuse! we belong to the same family." "You also, Chourineur?" "Yes, a foundling of the streets of Paris, just like you, my dear." "And who brought you up, La Goualeuse?" asked Rodolphe. "I don't know. The farthest back I can recollect was when I was about seven years old; I was with an old borgnesse (one-eyed woman) who was nicknamed *La Chouette* (owl), because she had a hooked nose, one round green eye, and because she resembled an owl with one eye torn out."

"Ha! ha! ha! I can see her now, La Chouette!" cried the Chourineur, laughing. "La Borgnesse," continued Fleur de Marie, made me sell barley-sugar, every evening, on the Pont Neuf; it was a way to ask alms: if, on returning, I did not bring with me ten sous at least, La Chouette always beat me, instead of giving me my supper." "I understand, my dear," said the Chourineur, "a kick instead of bread, with a box on the ear for butter." "Oh! mon Dieu, yes." "Are you sure that this woman was not your mother?" asked Rodolphe.

"I am very sure, for La Chouette often reproached me for having neither father nor mother: she said she had picked me up in the street." "Thus," said the Chourineur, "you danced for your supper, when you came home without ten sous?" "Add a glass of water, and then I was sent shivering to rest on a heap of straw—mon Dieu! straw is commonly thought to be very warm: oh! it is a mistake." "Straw!!" cried the Chourineur, "you are right, my dear; I'd as soon sleep on ice; a manure heap is ten times better! but the world turns up its nose at this, and says its too low and vulgar—only fit for the *canaille*." This pleasantry caused Fleur de Marie to smile, as she continued, "The next morning the Borgnesse gave me the same food for breakfast as she did for supper, and then sent me to Montfaucon, to dig for worms; for during the day she kept a shop for fishing-lines, under the Pont Neuf. For a child of seven years, half dead with cold and hunger, it is a long way, I tell you, from the Rue de la Mortellerie to Montfaucon." "The exercise has made you as straignt as an arrow; mustn't complain of that," said the Chourineur, striking a light for his pipe. "At length I'd return, almost backbroken, with my basket filled with worms: then, at noon, La Chouette gave me a good piece of bread, and I did not leave a crumb, I assure you." "Not to have eaten would have made your shape like a wasp," said the Chourineur; "mustn't complain of that, my dear" (puffing out volumes of smoke). "But what's the matter, comrade? no, I mean to say Master Rodolphe? you look sad: is it because this poor girl has lived in misery? hold, we all of us have had enough of it!" "Oh! you have never been as miserable and wretched as I was, Chourineur," said Fleur de Marie.

"I, Goualeuse! you were like a queen compared to me, my dear; when you were young, you had at least straw and bread; while I slept in the plaster-kilns of Clichy, like a vagabond, and refreshed myself with cabbage-leaves. I picked from the gutters; but often, when I found it too far to go to the kilns, I slept on the big stones of the Louvre. In winter, I had white sheets, when it snowed."

"Ah! but a man is more hardy than a poor child," said Fleur de Marie; "a poor little child, with no more strength than a bird." "You remember that, then?"

"I think so; for when La Chouette struck me, I always fell at the first blow; then she would trample on me, crying, 'This little *gneuse* has no more strength than a cat; she can't stand a single cuff;' then she called me *La Pegriote*—I had no other name—it was my baptism." "Just like me; I have always been called like a stray dog, whose name is not known, 'Halloo!' 'Thing!' 'Whitehead!' It is quite astonishing how much our stories are alike," said the Chourineur.

"True," cried Fleur de Marie, addressing herself always to this man; seeming to feel a kind of shame in the presence of Rodolphe, to whom she hardly dared to lift her eyes, although he appeared to belong to the class of persons with whom she habitually associated. "And after you brought the worms, what did you then?" asked the Chourineur.

"La Borgnesse sent me to beg in the neighbourhood until night, when she went to sell fritures (a sort of fry) on the Pont-Nuef. Marry! at that hour my piece of bread was far enough off; and if I complained of hunger to La Chouette, she'd beat me, saying, 'Go and make your ten sous, Pegriotte, and then you shall have supper;' then, as I was very hungry, and she hurt me, I would cry bitterly. Placing me on the Pont-Neuf, with my little stand of barley-sugar, La Borgnesse left me. Oh! how I wept and shivered with cold and hunger!"

"Always just like me, my dear," said the Chourineur, interrupting La Goualeuse; "it can hardly be believed, yet hunger makes one shake as much as cold." "Thus I remained on the Pont-Neuf until eleven o'clock at night, always weeping; often the passers-by, seeing me weep, would give me as much as ten, sometimes fifteen sous, which I gave to La Chouette."

"A fine night's work for a little bird!"

"Yes; but the Borgnesse, seeing this—"

"With one eye?" said the Chourineur, laughing.

"With one eye, as you say, since she only had one; seeing this, she always took good care to give me a beating before she placed me on the Pont-Neuf, that I might excite compassion by my tears, and thus augment my receipts." "That wasn't so stupid!"

"Yes, you think so, Chourineur. I became accustomed to the blows; and, seeing that La Chouette was always enraged when I did not weep, to revenge myself, the more she beat me, the more I laughed; and in the evening, instead of sobbing when I sold my barley-sugar, I sung like a lark, although I hardly had the heart to sing." "But tell me—barley-sugar; had you never any desire to taste them, my poor Goualeuse?"

"Oh, I guess so, Chourineur! but I had never tasted them; it was my great desire. And it was this desire that ruined me; you shall know how. One day, returning with my worms, some boys beat me, and stole my basket. I returned—I knew what I had to expect: I received my beating, and no bread. At night, the Borgnesse, before we went to the bridge, furious at my conduct the night before, and to put me in the way of weeping, tore my hair out by handfuls just about the temples, where it is most painful."

"Thunder and lightning! that was too much!" cried the bandit, striking his fist on the table, and knitting his brows; "whip a child, well enough! but to tear out hair! too much! too much!"

Rodolphe, who had attentively listened to the tale of Fleur de Marie, looked at the Chourineur with astonishment; this burst of sensibility surprised him. "What is the matter, Chourineur?" said he. "What is the matter? what is the matter? how! are you not horrified at this story? that monster of a Chouette, who so ill treated this poor child? You are, then, as hard-hearted as your fists!" "Continue, my girl," said Rodolphe, without replying to the interpolation of the Chourineur.

"As I told you, La Chouette tortured me to make me weep; it only gave me resolution to make her mad; I began to laugh, and I went off to the bridge with my barley-sugar. La Borgnesse was at her store, and from time to time she shook her fist at me. Then, instead of weeping, I sang louder and louder; but oh! I was very hungry, so hungry! for six months that I had sold barley-sugar, I had never tasted one; but that night, as much to enrage her as for my hunger, I tasted one."

"Bravo! my dear!" "I tasted two." "Bravo! Vive la charte!!!" "Marry! I found it very good when an orange woman cried out to La Borgnesse, 'I say, La Chouette, look! look! Pegriotte is eating your stock!'"

"Oh thunder! we are going to have warm work," said the Chourineur, singularly interested. "Poor little mouse, how it must have trembled when La Chouette saw it, eh!"

"How did you get out of the scrape, my poor Goualeuse?" said Rodolphe, as much interested as the Chourineur.

"Ah, marry! that was rather difficult; only what was very droll," added Fleur de Marie, laughing, "was, that La Borgnesse, notwithstanding her rage, could not leave her store; for la fiture was frying famously."

"Ha! ha! ha! true; rather a difficult position," said the Chourineur, shouting with laughter. After having partaken of the hilarity of the bandit, Fleur de Marie continued:

"Ma foi! thinking of the blows I should receive, I thought I might as well be whipped for three as for one; so I took a third, and, as La Chouette shook her iron fork at me, as true as you see that plate, I took the barley-sugar and sucked it under her nose." "Bravo! my dear! I can now explain the blow you gave me with your scissors. You are a trump—but La Chouette must have slaughtered you after that." "Her cooking finished, she came to me. I had received three sous for alms, and I had eaten the value of six. When she took me by the hand, I thought I should have fallen to the ground, I was so frightened; I remember it as well as if it were yesterday, for it was just about the holydays. You know there are always shops of toys on the Pont-Neuf; all the evening I had had glimpses of them; nothing else to do but to look at all the pretty dolls and playthings. You may think for a child—" "Ah! had you ever any toys, Goualeuse?" said the Chourineur. "I—are you foolish? go along! who would have given them to me? However to proceed, although in the dead of winter, I had nothing on but a miserable, ragged frock of muslin, with neither shoes nor stockings, and sabots on my feet! One was not likely to be smothered in that attire, eh? Well, when La Borgnesse took me by the hand, I became all in a perspiration. That which alarmed me the most was, that, instead of cursing and swearing, La Chouette did nothing but mutter all the way home. She never let go her clutch, but walked so fast that I was obliged to run to keep up with her. In running I lost one of my sabots, and I dared not to tell her, so that when we arrived my foot was covered with blood."

"The whelp of a Borgnesse!" cried the Chourineur, in a rage, striking anew on the table. "That gives me a strange sensation, to think of this poor child, running after the old she-devil, with her little bloody foot." "We roosted in a granary of the Rue de la Mortellene; near the entrance of the alley there was a tavern;

La Chouette stepped in, still holding me by the hand, and drank a pint of brandy."

"Morbleu! I could not drink it myself without being as drunk as an owl."

"It was the usual potion of La Borgnesse; thus she always went to bed drunk; on this account, perhaps, she beat me so much; however, we clambered up to our loft; I wasn't at a merry-making, I promise you; La Chouette shut the door, and double locked it; I fell upon my knees, and begged her pardon for having stolen the barley-sugar. She made no answer, but marching up and down the room, muttered between her teeth, 'What shall I do to her to-night—this Pegriotte, this thief of barley-sugar? come, what shall I do with her?' and then she would stop and look at me with her green eye, as I remained always on my knees. Suddenly she went to a shelf, and took thence a pair of pincers—" "Pincers!" cried the Chourineur. "Yes! pincers." "For what use? to strike thee?" said Rodolphe. "To pinch you?" said the Chourineur. "Ah! yes." "To tear out your hair?" "Can't you guess? will you give up?" "Yes, yes." "Well, then, it was to draw one of my teeth."

The Chourineur uttered such a dreadful imprecation, that all the inmates of the tapis-franc regarded him with astonishment. "Well, what ails you?" said La Goualeuse. "What ails me? why, I'd assassinate her, if I had her! La Borgnesse! Where is she? tell me! where is she? if I find her, I'll murder her!" The eyes of the bandit were as red as blood. Rodolphe had partaken of the horror of the Chourineur at the cruelty of the Borgnesse; but he could not help wondering how an assassin could work himself into such a fury, merely at the recital of an old woman's taking out a tooth from a young girl. We believe this sentiment of pity very probable and possible even in a being however ferocious and wicked. "And she drew out a tooth? this miserable old wretch," said Rodolphe. "I guess so, and not at the first trial either—mon Dieu! how she laboured, holding my head between her knees, as in a vice. At length, half with her pincers, and half with her fingers, she succeeded in drawing one of my teeth, which she held up before me, saying, no doubt to frighten me, 'Now take care, Pegriotte, or I'll pull one out every day, and when you have none left, I'll throw you into the river, where the fishes shall eat you, out of revenge for the worms you have furnished to take them.' I remember that, because I thought it unjust—just as if I went to get the worms for my amusement!" "Ah! the hussey! to take out a tooth from a poor child," said the Chourineur, with renewed rage. "Well, it has come again," said Fleur de Marie, opening her beautiful rosy lips, and showing two rows of small teeth, as white as pearls. Was this indifference, forgetfulness, or instinctive generosity on the part of this young creature? Rodolphe had remarked that during the whole recital of her wrongs, she had never expressed any feeling of hatred against the atrocious woman who had so cruelly treated her. "Well, what did you do after this?" asked the Chourineur. "Ma foi! I had quite enough; the next day, instead of going after worms, I was away in the direction of the Pantheon I walked during the whole day—I would have gone to the end of the world rather than fall into the clutches of La Chouette. As I found myself in an unknown quarter, I had met no one from whom I could ask charity, and, besides, I should not have dared to do so. During the night I slept in a wood-yard, under a pile of boards. I was small as a mouse, and slipping under an old door, I made my nest in a heap of bark. I was almost starved; I tried to chew some shavings, to cheat my hunger, but I could not. I could only bite a little birch bark; it was more tender; thereupon I fell asleep; at daylight, hearing a noise, I drew closer under the pile of boards; it was really quite warm, like a cave; if I had had only something to eat, I should not have been as comfortable all winter." "Just so with me, when in a lime-kiln."

"I did not dare to go out of the board yard, for I imagined that La Chouette was looking for me to pull out my teeth and throw me to the fishes, and that she would be sure to catch me if I stirred from there."

"Stop; don't speak any more of that old she wolf—it makes my blood rush to my eyes!"

"To proceed: on the second day, I had eaten again of the birch, and had fallen almost asleep, when I heard the hoarse barking of a dog. I started up and listened; the dog kept barking, and evidently approaching my retreat; fortunately—why, I know not, he dared not come nearer—but you laugh! Chourineur."

"With you, there is always something to laugh about; but never mind, you are a good girl—and, hold! foi d'homme! I am sorry I struck you."

"Because, if you beat me, I have no one to defend me." "And I," said Rodolphe.

"You are very kind, Mr. Rodolphe; but the Chourineur did not know that you were there, nor I either."

"Never mind, I hold to what I said. I am sorry I struck you," continued the Chourineur.

"Go on with your story, my child," said Rodolphe.

"I was under the pile of boards when I heard the dog bark; and while he continued to bark I heard a voice say, 'My dog barks; there's some one concealed in the yard—kss! kss! kss! shake him, catch him.' The dog sprang upon me, and I, fearing he would bite me, commenced screaming with all my strength. 'Hold,' said the voice; 'that is the cry of a child.' They called off the dog, and brought a lantern. I came out of my hole, and found myself face to face with a great fat man and a boy in a blouse: 'What are you doing in my yard, you little thief?' said the fat man to me, in a savage manner. My good sir, I have not eaten for two days; I have run away from La Chouette, who has pulled out one of my teeth, and wants to throw me to the fishes; not knowing where to sleep, I crept under your gateway; I have slept all night on the shavings under the boards; I meant no harm. Then the wood-merchant said to his boy, 'Oh! I am not to be duped; she is a little thief; she came to steal my logs.'"

"Ah! the old hog! the old beast!" cried the Chourineur. "Steal his logs! and you eight years old!"

"It was foolish; for his boy answered and

said, 'Steal your logs, master? how could she do it? Why, she isn't as big as the smallest of your logs.' 'You are right,' said the fat man; 'but if she doesn't come on her own account, she has been sent as a spy, to open the door for others—we must take her to the police.'"

"Ah! the pitiful beast of a merchant!"

"I am brought before a magistrate; I am accused of being a vagabond; I am sent to prison; condemned always as a vagabond, to remain, until sixteen years old, in the house of correction. I thank the judges for their kindness. Marry! only think, that in prison I had something to eat; I was never beaten—mon Dieu! it was a paradise in comparison with the granary of La Chouette. Besides, in prison I was taught to sew; but here was the misfortune, I was idle and lazy; I preferred to sing rather than work, especially when I saw the sun. Oh! when it was fair and bright in the court of the jail, I could not keep from singing; and then—oh! it is so droll!—as I sung I forgot I was a prisoner."

"That is to say, my girl, you are a real nightingale, by birth," said Rodolphe, smiling.

"You are very kind, Mr. Rodolphe; it is since that time that they have called me La Goualeuse, instead of La Pegriotte. At length I reached my sixteenth year—I came out of prison. Just at the door, I found the Ogresse, and two or three old women, who had sometimes come to see some of the prisoners, and who had always said she would have some work for me, when I should be discharged. "Ah—good! good! I understand," said the Chourineur. "My dolphin, my angel, little darling," said the Ogresse, and the old woman, will you come and lodge with us? we will give you fine dresses, and you shall have nothing to do but to amuse yourself. You know well, Chourineur, one could hardly live eight years in prison, without understanding these creatures." "I sent them off—I said to myself, 'I know how to sew:' I have three hundred francs—I have youth."

"And very pretty youth, too," my dear, said the Chourineur.

"I said to myself, I have passed eight years in prison, now I mean to enjoy life a little; for that will hurt no one, and I can work when my money is gone; so I danced as long as my money lasted. That was my great fault," added Fleur de Marie, with a sigh; "I ought, first of all, to have procured work, but I had no one to counsel me; 'enfin'—what is done, is done. So I spent my money; in the first place, I bought flowers, which I placed all around my chamber; 'I love flowers so dearly;' then I bought a dress, a fine shawl, and then I went to take a ride on a donkey, in the Bois de Boulogne, and at St. Germain's also."

"With a sweetheart, my dear?" asked the Chourineur.

"Ma foi, no! I wanted to be my own master. I made these excursions with one of my companions, who came from the foundling hospital; a good little girl; she was called Rigolette, because she was always laughing."

"Rigolette? Rigolette? I don't know her," said the Chourineur, meditating.

"Oh, I believe you dont; she is a fine girl, is Rigolette, a very good workwoman, and gains at least twenty-five sous a day; she has a nice little room of her own, but I can never visit her more. At length, I had but forty-three francs left."

"You ought to have bought some trinkets with that," said the Chourineur. "Ma foi! 'I did better than that. I had for washerwoman a woman called "La Lorraine,' a good creature; she was 'enceinte;' not being able to work longer, she had applied for admission into 'La Bourbe;' there was no more room, she was refused, she earned nothing; there she was without a sous to pay for a lodging Fortunately, she met by chance, one evening, at the corner of the Pont-Neuf, the wife of Goubin, who had concealed herself for four days in the cellar of a house they were pulling down, back of the Hotel Dieu." "And why did Goubin's wife hide in this cellar?" "To escape from her husband, who wished to kill her! She only came out at night, to buy some bread; in that manner she met with poor Lorraine, who did not know where to lay her head, expecting every moment her 'accouchement,' seeing this, she took her to the cellar, where she concealed herself. It was, at least, a place of shelter." "Stop! stop!" said the Chourineur: the wife of Goubin is Helmina, is it not?" "Yes! a good soul," answered the Goualeuse. "A seamstress who had worked for me and Rigolette. Marry: she did all she could in giving half of her cellar, her straw, and her bread, to poor Lorraine—in this place the poor little stranger came into the world! ah me! no covering, nothing but straw! Helmina, pitying her destitute condition, came to seek me, in broad day, even at the risk of being murdered, for her husband was seeking her everywhere. She knew I yet had a little money, and that I was not hard-hearted; just at that moment I was stepping in a cabriolet with Rigolette; we were going to the ount.y to finish my forty-three francs. Oh! I do so love the country—the fields, and meadows, and trees. But, ah! when Helmina told me the situation of Lorraine, I sent away the carriage, I ran to my chamber, took what linen I had, my blanket, my mattress, put them on the shoulders of a porter, and sent them to the cellar. I followed with Helmina—ah! you should have seen how happy she was! poor Lorraine, we nursed her, Helmina and myself; and, with the aid of my money, we got her along, until she was able to go to her washing again. Now she is able to gain her living—but I never can get her to give an account of how much I owe her for washing! I see plain enough, she wants to pay me in washing; however, if she don't give me her bill, I'll change my washerwoman," said La Goualeuse, with an important air.

"And Goubin's wife?" said the Chourineur.

"How! Don't you know?"

"No: what is it?" "Ah! the unfortunate Goubin found her out; some one told him that she was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Hôtel Dieu; and one night, as she came out of the cellar to get some milk for Lorraine, he killed her—three blows of the knife between the shoulders!"

"It is for that, then, that he has been condemned to death, and will be executed in three days?" said the Chourineur. "Exactly," said

La Goualeuse. "When you gave all your money to Lorraine, what did you do then, my girl?" said Rodolphe.

"Marry! then I sought for work. I knew how to sew very well, I was of good courage, was not embarrassed, so I went into a linen store of the Rue St. Martin. Not to deceive any one, I said I was but two months out of prison, and that I was desirous of getting work; they showed me the door. I asked for work to take home, if it was only a shirt. They laughed at me; so I returned very sad. I met the Ogresse and one of the old women, who were always after me. They took me home, they made me drink brandy, and that's all."

"I understand," said the Chourineur. "I know you just as well now as if I was your father and mother, and you had never left my lap. Well! that's what I call a confession."

"You look sad, my girl," said Rodolphe, "after your story." "The truth is, it makes me feel sad to look back; since my infancy it is the first time that it has ever happened that I have recalled to my memory all these things at the same time; it is not pleasant, is it, Chourineur?"

"Just so," said he, in an ironical manner; "you regret that you were not a scullion in an eating-house, or servant-maid to some old devils and their imps?" "Never mind; it must be pleasant to be good," said Fleur de Marie, with a sigh.

"Good! oh, the devil!" cried the bandit, with a burst of laughter. "Good! and why not a nun at once, for the honour of your father and mother, whom you never knew?" The face of the young girl lost for a moment its usual expression of indifference. "Stop," said the Chourineur; "I am not a Pleurnicheuse.* My parents threw me into the street, like a little dog that one has 'de trop.' I don't blame them for it, for perhaps they had not enough to eat themselves! But that is no reason for saying, Chourineur, that there are no situations better than mine."

"You! but what do you want? you are as flambanté as a Venus; you are not yet seventeen; you sing like a nightingale; you are called Fleur de Maria (virgin), yet you complain! What will you say when you have a stone under your feet, and a chinchilla wig, like the Ogresse?" "I shall never live to that age." "Perhaps you have a patent to prevent your growing old." "No; but I am not strong, and already I have a bad cough!" "Ha! ha! good; I already think I see you in a hearse. Go along! you are foolish!"

"Have you these gloomy thoughts often, La Goualeuse?" said Rodolphe. "Sometimes. Listen, Mr. Rodolphe; perhaps *you* can comprehend me; in the morning, when I go to buy my pennysworth of milk from the milkwoman at the corner of the Rue de la Vielle-Draperie, and I see her about returning home, with her little horse and wagon, I feel very envious; I say to myself, 'There she goes to the country fine air, to her own house, her own family, while I return to the den of the Ogresse, dark and gloomy, even at mid-day.'" "Well! well! be 'honnête,' my dear; play a farce—be 'honnête!'" said the Chourineur.

"'Honnête!' mon Dieu! and how would you have me be honnête? The clothes I wear belong to the Ogresse; I owe her for my board and lodging. I dare not stir from here. She would have me arrested. I belong to her. *I must pay my debt.*" As she pronounced these horrible words, the unfortunate creature shuddered.

"Then remain as you are, and think no more of a country life," said the Chourineur. "Are you a fool? Only think how you will shine in the city, while the milkwoman makes a pottage for her children, milks her cows, collects herbs for her rabbits, and gets a blow from her husband when he comes from the tavern."

"Some drink, Chourineur," said Fleur de Marie, hastily, after a short silence, as she held out her glass. "No, no! not wine—brandy: it is stronger," said she, in her sweet voice, as she put back the jug of wine the Chourineur held to her glass.

"Brandy! good; ah! now I love you, my dear; you are a madcap!" said this man, not understanding the movement of the young girl, and without remarking a tear which stood trembling in the soft eyes of La Goualeuse.

"It is a pity that brandy is so disagreeable to drink, for it hardens one so," said Fleur de Marie, placing her glass on the table, after having drank with as much repugnance as disgust.

Rodolphe had listened to this artless narrative with a growing interest. Misery and poverty, but not crime, had been the ruin of this poor young girl.

CHAPTER IV.

HISTORY OF THE CHOURINEUR.

The reader has not forgotten that two of the guests of the tapis-franc were attentively watched by a third person, whose arrival we have recorded. One of these two men, we have remarked, wore a Greek cap, and kept his hand concealed, and had asked the Ogresse if the Maitre d'Ecole had not yet come.

During the story of the Goualeuse, which they could not hear, these two men had conversed in a low tone, regarding the door from time to time with great anxiety. He who wore the Greek cap said to his companion, "The Maître d'Ecole does not come; I hope that the *zig* (comrade) may not have been *escarpé à la capahut* (assassinated, to steal his part of the booty)." "That would be flaming for us who arranged the burglary," answered the other.

The new-comer, who was seated at too great a distance to hear what these men said, after having consulted a paper which he held concealed in his cap, appeared to be satisfied with the result, for he came from the table, and said to the Ogresse, who was nodding at her counter, with her feet on the stove, and the black cat on her knees, "I say, Mother Pomisse, just keep an eye on my glass and plate. I'll be back in a moment; and one must look out for freebooters." "Be easy, my good man," said Mother Pomisse; "if your plate and glass are empty, no one will touch them." The man laughed at the pleasantry of the Ogresse, and disappeared without any one noticing his departure.

* *Pleurnicheuse*, one who cries.

As the door opened when the man went out, Rodolphe perceived in the street the coalman of whom we have spoken; and before the door was closed, he had time to make an impatient gesture, to show how much he was annoyed at being thus watched; but this latter paid no attention to the contrariety of Rodolphe, and did not quit the precints of the tapis-franc.

Notwithstanding the glass of brandy she had taken, La Goualeuse did not recover her gayety: under its influence, her expression, on the contrary, became more sad: her back against the wall, her head hanging on her breast, her large blue eyes gazing vacantly around, the unfortunate creature seemed overwhelmed with the most gloomy thoughts. Two or three times, seeing the fixed regards of Rodolphe, she had turned away in confusion, and could not account for the impression caused by this unknown. Restrained, oppressed by his presence, she reproached herself for not showing more gratitude to one who had saved her from the Chourineur; she almost regretted having so plainly related her life. The Chourineur, on the contrary, was very gay; he alone devoured the "*harlequin.*" The wine and brandy had made him very talkative; the shame of having found his master, as he said, was effaced by the generous treatment of Rodolphe; and, besides, he acknowledged such a vast physical superiority, that his humiliation gave way to a mixed sentiment of admiration, fear, and respect.

This entire absence of revenge, the savage frankness with which he had acknowledged that he killed, and had been justly punished, the ferocious pride with which he had denied that he had ever stolen, proved at least that, notwithstanding his crimes, the Chourineur was not completely callous: this had not escaped the observation of Rodolphe, and he waited, somewhat curious to hear his story. The ambition of man is so insatiable, so bizarre in its pretensions, that Rodolphe actually wished for the arrival of the Maître d'Ecole, that terrible brigand, whose throne he had almost overturned. To allay his impatience, he requested the Chourineur to go on with his story. "Come, mon garçon," said he to him, "we listen." The Chourineur emptied his glass, and thus began: "You, my poor Goualeuse, you have at least been taken care of by 'La Chonette,' whom the devil confound. You have had at least a shelter until you were sent to prison as a vagabond. I cannot remember ever to have slept in what you call a bed, before I was nineteen, 'bel âge,' when I became a trooper." "You have been in the service, Chourineur?" said Rodolphe. "Three years; but we will come to that presently. The pavement of the Louvre, the plaster-kilns of Clichy, and the quarries of Montrouge, these were the hotels of my youth—you see I had town house and country house." "Ha! ha! what trade did you follow?" "Ma foi! my master! I have an indistinct recollection of having lived in my childhood with an old '*Chiffonier*,' who knocked me down with his iron hook: this must be so, for I never meet one of these cupids, with their rag baskets, that I do not feel the greatest desire to pounce on them; proof enough that they beat me when I was a child. My first occupation was to help the *équarrisseurs* (horse killers) cut the throats of horses at Montfaucon. I was about ten or twelve years old when I first began to '*chourîner*' the poor beasts. At first I felt badly, but at the end of a month that was all gone; and then, on the contrary, I liked the business. There was no one who had such sharp knives as I had, so I was always in demand. After I had 'égorge' the beasts, they threw me a piece of the rump of a horse, which had died from some complaint, for my pay; for those which we killed were sold to the 'fricoteurs' of the quarter of the 'Ecole de Médecine', who made beef, lamb, veal, or game of it, just to suit any one's taste. Ah! when I got my piece of horse-flesh, the king was not my master; I flew to my kiln, like a wolf to his den, and there, with the permission of the lime burners, I roasted my meat on the coals. When the workmen were not there, I went and gathered some sticks at Romainville, struck fire, and made my roast by the walls of the slaughter-house. '*Dame!*' it was raw and bloody: but for all that, I did not eat the less." "And your name? what did they call you?" said Rodolphe.

"My hair was still more the colour of flax then than it is now, and the blood was always rushing to my eyes; on that account they called me Albino—(the albinoes are the white rabbits —lupin-blanc—among men, and they have red eyes)," added the Chourineur gravely, speaking by way of physiological parenthesis. "And your parents? your family?" "My family? Oh! they lodged at the same number as those of La Goualeuse. The place of my birth? The first corner of no matter what street, the curb-stone at the right or left as you go down to the gutter." "You cursed your father and mother, then, for having abandoned you?" "Oh! that would have done me a great deal of good. However, they did play a poor farce in bringing me into the world. I would not complain, if I had been made as '*le bon Dieu*' ought to make poor folks; that is to say, without feeling hunger and thirst; then it would not cost them so much to be honest." "You have been hungry and cold, and yet you have not stolen, Chourineur?" "No, no; yet I have seen much misery—much misery. I have fasted sometimes more than two days, more than my turn; but! I have never stolen." "For fear of the prison?" "Oh! what a farce!" said the Chourineur. "I would not then have stolen bread, for fear of getting bread! Honest, I was starving. Thief, they would have fed me in prison. No! no! I did not steal because—because—because it is not in my nature to steal." This truly great answer, of which the Chourineur himself did not comprehend the bearing, profoundly astonished Rodolphe. He felt that a poor wretch who could thus remain honest amid the most cruel privations, was doubly to be respected, since the punishment of the crime would have offered him a certain refuge; and he extended his hand to this unfortunate, whom misery had not completely lost. The Chourineur regarded him with astonishment and respect; hardly dared he to touch the hand offered to him; he felt that between the two there was an impenetrable abyss.

"Well, well," said Rodolphe, "you have yet a heart and honour."

"Ma foi! I know nothing about it," said the

Chourineur, much affected; "what do you say—now see—I never felt so before; what is sure is this: no matter for the blows of the fist, which you might have repeated until to-morrow; instead of which you give me to eat and drink, and say such things to me—no matter, in life or death I am yours; you can always count on the Chourineur."

Rodolphe answered coldly, not wishing him to see his emotion: "And did you a long time remain an *équarisseur?*" "I guess so. At first it made me sick to kill these poor old creatures; afterward it amused me; but when I became sixteen it became a rage, a perfect passion to *chouriner*. I forgot to eat and drink—I only thought of that. You ought to have seen me in the midst of my work—except an old cotton pantaloon, I was entirely naked—when, with my knife, well sharpened, in my hand, I had around me (I don't magnify) from fifteen to twenty horses all waiting their turn. Thunder!! when I began to cut their throats, I don't know what got into me; it was like madness: I had a buzzing in my ears—my head went round—the blood was in my eyes, and I saw all red—red; and I stabbed, and I stabbed, and I stabbed until the knife would fall from my hands. Thunder! it was an enjoyment! If I had been a millionaire I would have paid to work at that trade."

"It was this, then, that gave you the habit to chouriner?" said Rodolphe. "Yes, that may be; but when I was sixteen this madness became so strong, that one day, while I was at work, I became crazy, and I spoiled my work. Yes! I injured the skins, by sticking in the knife to the right and left; so they put me out of doors. Then I wished to get employment among the butchers; they turned up their noses, as a bootmaker does at a cobbler. Seeing this, and my rage to 'chouriner' passing away with my sixteenth year, I began to look for my bread in another manner. I did not find it very soon, and then I fasted. Finally, I got employment in the quarries of Mont Rouge; but at the end of two years, I was almost used up in playing the squirrel in the large wheel by which we drew up the stones, at twenty sous a day. I was tall and strong, and I enlisted in a regiment: they asked me my name, my age, and for my papers. My name? Albino; my age? see my beard; my papers? here is the certificate of my master quarry-man. As I made a first-rate grenadier, I was enrolled." "With your strength, your courage, and your mania 'to chouriner,' if there had been a war in those times, you might have become an officer," said Rodolphe. "Thunder! to whom do you say it? To 'chouriner' an Englishman or a Prussian would have given a different kind of pleasure than to 'chouriner' an old horse. But there was the difficulty; there was no war, and there was no discipline. An apprentice may fetch a blow to his master very well: if he is the weakest, he takes it; if he is the strongest, he gives it; they turn him out of doors, or send him to jail—nothing more. But in the service it is quite another thing. One day, my sergeant gave me a 'bouscule' to make me obey more quickly; he was right, for I was playing the 'clampire:' that made me mad, and I kicked him; he pushed and I pushed; he took me by the throat, and I gave him a blow with my fist. They fell upon me: then my madness took possession of me, my blood flew to my eyes, and I saw red. I had my knife in my hand, for I was in the kitchen, and—and—I began to 'chouriner' as at the slaughter-house. I killed the sergeant, I wounded two soldiers; real butchery! eleven blows of the knife to the three—yes, eleven—blood—blood as in the slaughter-house!!!"

The brigand let his head fall on his breast, and remained for some time with a fixed and haggard look. "What are you thinking about, Chourineur?" asked Rodolphe, with an air of interest.

"Nothing, nothing," he answered, roughly, and then went on with his usual indifference. "I was seized, judged, and condemned to death." "You escaped?" "No; but I was sent for fifteen years to the galleys instead of being executed. I had forgotten to tell you, that while I belonged to the regiment we were in garrison at Melun, where I saved two comrades from drowning in the Marne. Another time—you will laugh, and say I am amphibious both for fire and water; a preserver of men and women—another time, being in garrison at Rouen, a fire broke out among houses all of wood; it burned like a box of matches. I belonged to the fire service; we arrived at the fire; they told me that there was an old woman who could not get out, and would be burned. I ran thither. Thunder! how hot it was! It made me remember the lime-kiln of my early days; finally, I saved the old creature. My lawyer twisted his tongue so much, and made such a talk, that my punishment was changed, so that, instead of going to the scaffold, I had fifteen years at the galleys. When I found that I should not be killed, my first idea was to jump at the throat of my 'avocat' and choke him! Can you understand that, my master?"

"Did you regret that your sentence was commuted?" "Yes! to those who play with a knife, let the knife be given; it is just. To those who steal, irons on their legs. Each one his lot: but to make you live after you have assassinated? hold! The judges don't know what an effect that has at first."

"You have felt remorse, then, Chourineur?"

"Remorse? no; for I served my time," said the savage. "But formerly there was hardly a night that I did not see the sergeant and soldier whom I 'chouriné' pass before me in a kind of night-mare: that is to say, not alone, not one, two, or three, but by tens, hundreds, thousands, waiting their turn in a kind of slaughter-house, like the horses that I had 'égorge' at Montfaucon. Then I would see red, and begin to 'chouriner,' to 'chouriner' these men, like the horses formerly; but the more I stabbed the soldiers, the more they came back, and in dying they looked at me with eyes so soft—so soft, that I cursed myself for killing them: but I could not stop myself. And this was not all. I never had a brother, yet it seemed that all these people that I assassinated were my brothers; brothers whom I could have gone through fire to save. At length, when I could stand it no longer, I awoke, drenched with a cold sweat—a sweat as cold as frozen snow."

"That was an ugly dream, Chourineur!"

"Oh! yes. Well, when I first went to the galleys, every night I had it—that dream! It was enough to make one mad, so I tried to kill myself; once by swallowing verdegris, and another time I endeavoured to hang myself in my chains. But I am as strong as a bull: the verdegris made me thirsty, that's all; and as for the chain which I passed round my neck, that only made a mark, a sort of natural blue cravat. After that, the habit of living conquered; my nightmare became more rare, and I did just as every one else did."

"You were in a good school to learn to steal."

"Yes; but it wasn't to my taste. The other criminals laughed at me, but I beat them with my chain. That is the way I became acquainted with the Maître d'Ecole. As for him, look out for fists! He gave me my pay just like you gave me yours, a short time since."

"He is, then, a liberated criminal?" "No; he was condemned for life, but he made his escape." "He escaped? and yet he is not denounced?" "It is not I who will denounce him; besides, that would look as if I was afraid of him." "But how comes it that the police can't find him? Haven't they a description of his person?" "Oh yes! but it is a long time since; he has so altered his appearance that hardly the devil himself would know him." "In what manner has he done it?" "He began by cutting off a piece of his nose, which was half a yard long; and then he washed his face in vitriol." "You are joking?" "If he comes to-night you will see; he had a large nose like a parrot; now it is as flat as your hand: his lips are as large as your fist, and his olive face as much seamed as the coat of a *chiffonier*." "And now he is so altered that he cannot be recognised?" "It is six months since he escaped from Rochefort, and the officers have met him a hundred times without knowing him." "Why was he sent to the galleys?" "For counterfeiting, robbery, and assasination. They call him Maître d'Ecole, because he writes a superb hand, and is quite learned." "Is he very much feared?" "He will be no longer, when you have rinsed him as you have rinsed me. Thunder! I am very curious to see that." "What does he for a living?" "They say that he boasts of having killed and rifled a cattle merchant, about three weeks since, on the Poissy road." "He will, sooner or later, be arrested." "It will take more than two to do that, for he always carries, concealed under his blouse, two loaded pistols and a poniard; he will never be cut down but once; *allez*. He will kill any one and every one to escape; he does not conceal it; and as he is twice as strong as you and me, they had better let him alone." "When you left the galleys what did you then, Chourineur?" "I went and offered my services to the master workman at the Quai St. Paul, where I earn my living." "But, since you are not a robber, why do you live in the cité?" "Where would you have me live? Who wants to associate with a criminal? And since it is very 'ennuyant' to be alone, and I like company, I come here to associate with my fellows. They fear me like the devil in the cité, and the officers have nothing to say to me, except sometimes I am sent to the jug for twenty-four hours, for assault and battery." "How much do you earn each day?" "Thirty-five sous; that I'll do as long as I have arms. When my strength is gone I'll take a hook and a basket, like the old chiffonnier, that I recollect in my childhood." "So, with all this you are not unhappy?" "There are many worse off than I am certainly, and if it was not for my dreams of the sergeant and the soldiers, dreams which I yet have, I could die tranquilly at the corner of the street or in the hospital; but this dream—hold—mon de nom! I don't like to think about it," said the Chourineur, and he struck the ashes from his pipe on the corner of the table. The Goualeuse had listened to the story with an absent air; she seemed plunged in a painful revery. Rodolphe himself remained thoughtful; the two stories he had just heard had awakened new ideas; but a tragical incident recalled to his mind in what place he was.

CHAPTER V.

AN ARREST.

The man who went out for a moment, after having requested the Ogresse to look after his plate and cup, now returned, accompanied by another person, with broad shoulders and powerful frame. He said to him, "A lucky chance to meet you in this way, Borel. Come in, and take a drink."

The Chourineur whispered to Rodolphe, pointing to the new-comer, "There is going to be a storm: he is a constable: look out!" The two bandits of whom we have spoken exchanged a rapid glance, raised themselves simultaneously from the table, and made a rush for the door; the two agents sprang on them, making a peculiar cry. A terrible conflict ensued; but the door of the tavern opened, and other officers entered, and outside could be seen a troop of gendarmes. Profiting by the tumult, the coalman heretofore mentioned advanced in the doorway, and, catching a look from Rodolphe, he placed on his lips the fore-finger of his right hand. Rodolphe, with a rapid and imperious gesture, commanded him to retire, and then turned to observe what was passing before him. The man with the Greek cap uttered cries of rage; half extended on the table, three men could hardly restrain him. Annihilated, melancholy, with livid face, blanched lips, the lower jaw fallen, and convulsively agitated, his companion made no resistance, but held out his hands to be manacled.

The Ogresse, accustomed to such scenes, remained seated in her bar, with her hands in the pockets of her apron. "What have these men been doing, my good Mr. Borel?" she asked of one of the officers, whom she knew. "They have murdered an old woman who lived in the Rue St. Christophe, that they might rob her house. Before she died, the poor creature said she had bitten one of them in the hand. We have had our eye upon these scoundrels, and my comrade was here a little while since to be assured of their identity: now we've nabbed them." "Fortunately, they paid me for their liquor in advance," said the Ogresse. "Won't you take something, Mr. Borel? a glass of perfect love? or some consolation?"

"Thank you, Mother Ponisse; I must take care of these brigands; there's one of them kick-

ing yet." In effect, one of them began to struggle again; and when they were about to lead him to the truck which stood at the door, he resisted so violently that they were obliged to carry him. His accomplice, seized with a nervous shuddering, could hardly support himself; his violet lips shook as if he were speaking, and they were obliged to cast him into the vehicle more dead than alive."

"Ah! look here, Mother Ponisse!" said one of the officers; "you had better look out for Bras-Rouge; he is mischievous, and may compromise you." "Bras-Rouge! oh, he hasn't been in this quarter for weeks, Mr. Borel." "Oh! he is always after something when he is not seen; you know that well enough; but don't you receive any package from him on deposite, or in any other manner, that would be—" "Oh, be quite easy, Mr. Borel; I am as afraid of Bras-Rouge as I am of the devil. No one knows where he comes from, or whither he goes. The last time I saw him, he told me he had just come from Germany." "Very well; I warn you; pay attention."

Before quitting the "tapis-franc," the agent cast a scrutinizing glance on the other drinkers, and then said to the Chourineur, in a tone almost affectionate, "Ah, here you are, 'mavuais sujet!' It is a long time since I have heard of you; have you no more fights? have you become a good boy?" "Good as an image, Mr. Borel; you know I only break the heads of those who request it; but, nevertheless, here is my master," said the Chourineur, placing his hand on the shoulder of Rodolphe. "Hold! I don't know him," said the agent, looking at Rodolphe. "And we will not make acquaintance, my comrade," said the latter.

"I hope not, on your account, 'mon garçon,'" said the agent; and then addressing himself to the Ogresse, "Bon soir, Mother Ponisse; your tapis-franc is like a real mousetrap; this is the third assassin I have caught in it." "I really hope it will not be the last, Monsieur Borel; it is very much at your service," said the Ogresse, graciously, making a profound reverence.

After the departure of the police agent, the young man who was smoking and drinking brandy, as we have before mentioned, refilled his pipe, and said to the Chourineur, in a hoarse voice, "Don't you recognise the Greek cap? Why, it is the man 'à la boulotte;' it is Velu. When I saw the agent come in, I thought something was the matter, as he kept his hand always concealed under the table." "It is quite lucky for the Maître d'Ecole that he wasn't here," said the Ogresse. "The Greek cap asked for him several times; he said they had business together. But I don't eat my customers; don't bite off my own head. When they are arrested, good—every one to his trade—but I don't sell them. Hold! when one speaks of the wolf, you see his tail," added the Ogresse, at the moment that a man and woman entered the tavern: "here are the Maître d'Ecole and his wife." A sort of shuddering appeared to spread among the guests of the tapis-franc; and Rodolphe himself, notwithstanding his natural intrepidity, could not repress a slight emotion at the sight of this redoubtable brigand, whom he regarded, for some moments, with a curiosity mixed with horror.

The Chourineur had told the truth, for he had horribly mutilated himself. It is impossible to imagine anything more frightful than the visage of this brigand. His face was furrowed in every direction with deep livid scars; the corrosive action of the vitriol had swollen his lips; the cartilage of the nose having been cut, two immense holes replaced the nostrils; his clear gray eyes, very small and very round, sparkled with ferocity; his forehead, flat, like that of a tiger, was half covered by a cap of long, red fur; it might have been called the monster's mane. The Maître d'Ecole was not less than six feet two or three inches in height; his head, too large for his body, was sunk down between his immense shoulders; he had long, muscular arms, with short, fat hands, hairy, even to the ends of his fingers; his legs were short and slightly bent, but the enormous calves announced a force "athletique." As for the expression of ferocity which shone out of this hideous mask—as for the restless, suspicious, burning looks, like those of a savage beast, we cannot describe them. The woman who accompanied him was old; she was decently clad in a red and black tartan plaid, and wore a white hat. Rodolphe, seeing her profile, her green and round eye, her crooked nose, her thin lips, her extending chin, her wicked and cunning physiognomy, thought of the description of La Chouette. He was about to mention this to La Goualeuse, when he saw her suddenly turn pale; she seemed to look with intense interest at the companion of the Maître d'Ecole. At length, seizing the arm of Rodolphe with a trembling hand, she said to him, in a low voice, "'La Chouette'—'mon Dieu'—'La Chouette—"La Borgnesse!'" At this moment the Maître d'Ecole, exchanging some words in a low tone with one of the habitués of the tapis-franc, advanced slowly to the table where Rodolphe was seated with La Goualeuse and the Chourineur, and, addressing Fleur de Marie in a deep and hoarse voice, like the growlings of a tiger, said, "Ah, say, now, my 'belle blonde,' you must leave these two jockeys and come with me." The Goualeuse made no answer, but moved closer to Rodolphe; her teeth were chattering with fear. "As for me, I shall not be jealous," said the horrible Chouette, laughing. She had not yet recognised in La Goualeuse the poor little "Pegriotte," her victim.

"Ah! ah! now, petite, don't you understand me?" said the monster, advancing. "If you don't come, I'll put out one of your eyes, and make you look like La Chouette; as for you, man with mustaches," addressing Rodolphe, "if you don't throw me that little blonde over the table, I'll tear—" "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! defend me!" cried La Goualeuse to Rodolphe, joining her hands; then, reflecting that perhaps she was going to expose him to great danger, she said to him in a low voice, "No, no, don't stir, Monsieur Rodolphe; if he approaches, I'll cry for help; and, for fear of a noise that will attract the police, the Ogresse will take my part." "Be tranquil, my girl," said Rodolphe, looking boldly at the Maître d'Ecole: "you are at my side; you shall not stir; and, as that hideous animal there makes you sick as well as myself, I am going to throw him into the street—" "You!" said the Maître d'Ecole. "I!" answered Rodolphe; and, notwithstanding the efforts of La Goualeuse, he rose from the table. The Maître d'Ecole retreated one step at the terrible aspect of the physiognomy of Rodolphe. Fleur de Marie and the Chourineur were also struck by the wicked and hardened expression of diabolical rage which at this moment contracted the noble traits of their companion; he

became unrecognizable. In his contest with the Chourineur, he had shown his contempt and scorn; but, face to face with the Maître d'Ecole, he seemed possessed with a hatred the most ferocious; the pupils of his eyes, strongly dilated, sparkled with a vivacity most savage. Certain expressions have an irresistible magnetic power, which terrifies those under their influence, and which they cannot avoid. Rodolphe was endowed with this faculty, and the Maître d'Ecole, trembling, made another retreating step; he no longer seemed to rely upon his vaunted strength, but sought, under his blouse, for the handle of his poniard. A bloody murder might thus have stained the floor of the tapis-franc, if La Chouette had not seized him by the arm, crying, "Stop! stop! 'fourline' (assassin), let me say a word. You shall eat those two cocks by-and-by — they sha'n't escape." For some time La Chouette had been regarding Fleur de Marie with attention; she appeared as if endeavouring to recall something to her recollection. At length she no longer had any doubt; she had recognised La Goualeuse. "Is it possible?" said La Borgnesse, clasping her hands with astonishment; "this is La Pegriotte, the thief of my barley-sugar; where in the world do you come from? does the devil send you here?" added she, shaking her fist at the young girl. "Ah! you shall come again under my clutches; don't be afraid, I shan't pull any more teeth, but I'll draw every tear out of you. 'Ah! vas-tu rager!' You don't know, then, that I have found out your parents? The Maître d'Ecole saw, at the galleys, the man who gave you to me when you were a child. He told him the name of your mother. Oh! they are rich people—your parents."

"My parents! You know them?" cried Fleur de Marie. "Yes! my man knows the name of your mother, but I'll tear out his tongue before he shall tell you! Why, it was only yesterday that he saw the man who brought you to me, because they would not pay his wife any more, who had nursed you. Your mother cared no more about you—she would like to have heard that you were dead, be assured. But, no matter, if you knew her name you could make her pay nicely, my little voleuse. The man I spoke of has papers—yes, Pegriotte, he has letters from your mother, of which he can make no use, because he has his own reasons. 'Heire!' you cry, Pegriotte. Well, no! you shall not know your mother; you shall not know her!" "I would rather she should think me dead," said Fleur de Marie, wiping her eyes.

Rodolphe, forgetting the Maître d'Ecole, had attentively listened to the recital of La Chouette, and appeared much interested. During this time, the brigand, being no longer under the influence of the eye of Rodolphe, had taken courage; he could not imagine that this young man of so slight a frame, could stand against him; sure of his own Herculean strength, he drew nearer to the defender of La Goualeuse, and said to la Chouette, in an authoritative manner, "Enough of this talk. I want to spoil the beauty of this jockey and pick out his feathers; so that 'la belle blonde' will find me more 'gentil' than he is." With one bound, Rodolphe jumped on the table. "Take care of my plates!" said the Ogresse: the Maitre d'Ecole put himself in an attitude of defence, but at the moment that Rodolphe was about to jump at him, the door of the tapis-franc was opened violently; the coalman, of whom we have spoken, and who was full six feet in height, rushed into the room, pushed the Maître d'Ecole rudely on one side, and approaching Rodolphe, whispered in English, "My lord, Tom and Sarah—they are at the end of the street." At these mysterious words, Rodolphe made an angry movement, cast a Louis on the counter of the Ogresse, and ran towards the door. The Maître d'Ecole endeavoured to obstruct the passage, but the latter turned for a moment, and gave him two such blows with his fist, that the bully staggered, and fell heavily across one of the tables. "Vive la Charte! there I recognise some of my blows at the end," cried the Chourineur. "One or two more lessons like that, and I will know how to give them." Coming to himself after a few seconds, the Maître d'Ecole started in pursuit of Rodolphe, who had disappeared with the coalman among the dark labyrinths of the cité; it was impossible to rejoin them. At the moment that the Maître d'Ecole re-entered, foaming with rage, two men, running from the side opposite to that by which Rodolphe had disappeared, rushed into the tapis-franc out of breath, as if they had been running a race. Their first movement was to look closely around the tavern. "How unfortunate!" said one: "he has escaped us again!" "Patience! the days have twenty-four hours, and life is long," answered the other. These new-comers spoke in English.

CHAPTER VI.

TOM AND SARAH.

The two persons who just entered the tapis-franc evidently belonged to a class much more elevated than the usual "habitués" of this tavern. The one, tall and thin, had hair almost white, while his eyebrows and whiskers were quite black; a bony and dark face, and a severe and hardened aspect. His black hat was tied around with crape, his long black riding-coat was buttoned to his throat, and he wore over his pantaloons of gray cloth large military boots, formerly called "Suwarrows." His companion, of very small stature, was also dressed in mourning, and was pale and handsome. His long black hair and eyelashes, and his brilliant dark eyes, made a striking contrast to the whiteness of his complexion: by the carriage, size, and the delicacy of features, it was easy to be perceived that this was a woman disguised. "Tom, ask for something to drink, and question these people about him," said Sarah, always speaking in English. "Yes! Sarah," answered the man with white hair, seating himself at one of the tables, while Sarah wiped her forehead; and then speaking to the Ogresse, in good French, almost without accent, he said, "Madam, give us something to drink, if you please."

The entrance of these individuals had excited a lively attention; their dress, their manners, indicated they were no frequenters of such taverns, while their restless, busy movements, announced that no common business had brought them in that quarter. The Chourineur, the Maître d'Ecole, and La Chouette regarded them with great curiosity. The Goualeuse, alarmed at her "rencontre" with La Borgnesse, and fearing the threats of the Maître d'Ecole, had profited by the inattention of the two wretches, and slipped out by the half-open door, which led to the street.

The Chourineur and Maître d'Ecole, in their respective positions, had no interest in renewing the quarrel; surprised at the appearance of these people, the Ogresse partook of the general curiosity. Tom said to her a second time, rather impatiently, "Madame, we have asked for some drink; have the goodness to serve us." The Mother Ponisse, flattered by this courtesy, came and leaned graciously on the table, and said, "Will you have some wine on draught, or will you have a sealed bottle?" "Give us a bottle of wine, some glasses, and water." It was brought by the Ogresse. Tom threw her five francs, and refused the change. "Keep that, landlady, and take a glass of wine with us." "You are very polite, sir," said Mother Ponisse, looking at Tom with more astonishment than gratitude. "But tell me," continued he; "we have agreed to meet one of our comrades at a tavern in this street; perhaps we are mistaken in the place." "This is the 'Lapin-Blanc,' at your service, sir." "That's the name," said Tom, making a sign to Sarah. "Oh yes! it was at the 'Lapin-Blanc' we were to wait."

"I guess there are not two 'Lapins-Blancs' in this street," said the Ogresse, proudly; "but what kind of a man was your comrade?" "Tall and slender, hair and mustache, bright chestnut," said Tom. "Hold! hold! he was here just now—a coalman came to seek him, and they went away together." "It is they," said Tom. "And were they alone here?" asked Sarah. "That is to say, the coalman only came for a moment; your comrade supped here with La Goualeuse and the Chourineur," said the Ogresse, as she looked towards the Chourineur, the only remaining companion of Rodolphe. Tom and Sarah turned towards the Chourineur, and after a few moments' examination, Sarah said to Tom, in English, "Do you know this man?" "No; Karl lost sight of Rodolphe at the entrance of these alleys; seeing Murphy, disguised as a coalman, hovering around this tavern, and peeping through the windows, he suspected something, and came and advised me."

During this conversation, in a low tone of voice, and in a strange tongue, the Maître d'Ecole said to La Chouette, in a whisper, looking at Tom and Sarah, "The tall, thin fellow, gave five francs to the Ogresse: it is almost midnight; it blows and rains like the devil; when they go out I'll stun the big one, and take his money: he has a woman with him; he won't dare to make a noise. If the little dear cries, I have my vitriol in my pocket, and I'll break the bottle on her face," said the Borgnesse; "you must always give something to children when they cry." Then she added, "Say now, 'Fourline,' the first time we meet with Pegriotte, we must take her by authority: when I once have her, we'll wash her muzzle with my vitriol; that will prevent her from being so proud with her fine beau." "Stop! 'La Chouette,' it will end by my marrying you," said the Maître d'Ecole; "your match for address and courage is not to be found—that night with the beef-merchant—I watched you—I said to myself, there is my wife! she works better than a man." After having reflected for a moment, Sarah said to Tom, looking at the Chourineur, "If we interrogate this man about Rodolphe, we can perhaps find out what brought him here?" "We will try," said Tom; and, addressing the Chourineur, "Comrade," said he, "we expected to meet a friend here; he has supped with you: can you tell us where he has gone to?" "I only know him, because he rinsed me two hours ago, in defending La Goualeuse."

"And you never saw him before?" "Never! we met in the alley of the house of Bras-Rouge."

"Landlady! another bottle, if you please; and of the best!" said Tom. Sarah and he had hardly wet their lips with glasses yet almost full; but the Mother Ponisse, to do honour, no doubt, to her own cellar, had several times emptied hers. "You will serve us, if you please, at the table of this gentleman, if he will permit it," added Tom, as he and Sarah took a seat alongside of the Chourineur, as much astonished as flattered at this politeness. The Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette still kept whispering about their sinister project. The fresh bottle served, and Tom and Sarah seated at the table with the Chourineur and the Ogresse, who seemed to regard a second invitation as superfluous, the conversation continued: "You said, then, 'mon brave,' that you met our comrade Rodolphe in the house of Bras-Rouge?" said Tom, touching glasses with the Chourineur. "Yes! mon brave," answered he, slowly emptying his glass. "Now that's a singular name—Bras-Rouge? who is Bras-Rouge?" "Il pastique la maltouze," said the Chourineur, negligently: "capital wine, Mother Ponisse!"

"On that account you shouldn't leave your tumbler empty, mon brave," said Tom, filling his glass. "To your good health," said he, "and to that of your little friend—who—enough—If my aunt was a man, she'd be my uncle, as the proverb says." "Go along, 'farceur!' I understand."

Sarah blushed imperceptibly. Tom continued: "I did not understand what you said about Bras-Rouge? Rodolphe came out of his house, doubtless? I told you that Bras-Rouge 'pastiquait la maltouze.'" Tom looked at the Chourineur with surprise. "What is that, which Bras-Rouge 'pastiquer la mal—' how do you call it?" "'Pastiquer la maltouze!' a smuggler. It appears that you do not 'devidez pas le jars'" (speak Argot). "My good fellow, I can't understand you." "Ah! then you don't speak 'Argot' like Mr. Rodolphe?" "'Argot?'" said Tom, regarding Sarah with surprise. "Come! come, you are but simple folks; but Rodolphe is a famous fellow, notwithstanding he is a painter of fans; why, he comes up to me in speaking 'Argot'; and since you can't speak this fine language, I'll tell you in good French that Bras-Rouge is a smuggler; and I say it without betraying him, for he does not conceal it, but boasts of it under the very noses of the officers. However, look for him, and catch him if you can." "Bras-Rouge is an evil spirit—take care!" "And what did Rodolphe want with this man?" asked Sarah. "'Ma foi,' monsieur or madame, at your choice, I know nothing about it, as true as I drink this wine. This evening, I wanted to beat La Gonalouse; I was wrong, for she is a good girl; she hid herself in the alley of Bras-Rouge's house. I pursued her; it was dark as the devil, and instead of falling upon La Goualeuse, I ran against the fists of Master Rodolphe, who gave me my pay in his own coin. Oh yes! well strung up! he has promised to show me 'ce coup la.'"

"And Bras-Rouge, what sort of a man is he?" asked Tom; "and what kind of goods does he sell?"

"Bras-Rouge? forsooth! he sells everything that is forbidden to be sold, and does everything

that is forbidden to be done: that's his occupation, an't it, Mother Ponisse?" "Oh! he is sharp as a needle," said the Ogresse.

"And he does cheat the custom-house officers finely," answered the Chourineur. "They have pounced more than twenty times into his den, but they never found anything; and, notwithstanding, he often comes out with his little packages."

"It is malicious!" said the Ogresse. "They say that there is a secret passage in his house which leads to the catacombs." "And what is the number of the house?"

"No. 13, Rue aux Fèves: Bras-Rouge—any sort of a merchant—well known in 'la citié,'" said the Chourineur. "I will write his name and address in my note-book. If we cannot find Rodolphe, we will endeavour to get some information concerning him from Monsieur Bras-Rouge," said Tom, writing, as he spoke, in his memorandum-book. "Well, you may pride yourself on having in Monsieur Rodolphe a good friend," said the Chourineur. "Yes, a good fellow; if it had not been for the coalman, he was just about combing the hair of the Maître d'Ecole, whom you see in the corner there with La Chouette. Thunder! I ought to be bound hand and foot, to keep me from exterminating her, the old she-wolf, when I think of what she did to La Goualeuse; but patience, a blow of the fist is never lost, as is said."

"Rodolphe has beaten you? You must hate him," said Sarah. "I hate a man who acted as he did! almost always! Yes, it is droll. Hold! There is the Maître d'Ecole, who has beaten me, and I should rejoice to see him strangled. M. Rodolphe has also beaten me—even harder; but it is just the contrary, I only wish him well. I believe I would go through fire to serve him, and yet I never saw him before to-night." "You say that because we are his friends, 'mon brave.'" "No, thunder! no, 'foi d'homme.' Do you see, he makes the finest blows with his fists; and he does not pride himself on it no more than a child. There's no use of talking—he is a finished master; and when he talks to you so—says such words, that make your heart jump into your throat; and then, when he looks at you—such a look—hold! I have been a trooper—with such a commander—do you see—one would eat the moon and the stars."

Tom and Sarah looked at each other in silence.

"This incredible power of domination will follow him, then, everywhere, and forever," said Sarah, bitterly.

"Yes, until we break the charm," answered Tom.

"Yes; and, whatever may happen, it must be, it must be," said Sarah, passing her hand over her face, as if to conceal some painful emotion.

Midnight struck at the Hôtel de Ville, and the lamp of the tavern shed no longer but a doubtful light. With the exception of the Chourineur and his two companions, the Maître d'Ecole, and La Chouette, all the "habitues" of the tapis-franc had one by one retired. The Maître d'Ecole whispered to Chouette, "Let us go and hide ourselves in the alley opposite; we shall see when our friends come out, and can follow them. If they go to the left, we will wait them at the corner of the 'Rue St. Eloi;' if they turn to the right, we will wait for them at the ruins, near the 'triperie:' there is a large hole there, I have an idea." So saying, they advanced towards the door. "You don't take anything to-night?" said the Ogresse. "No, Mother Ponisse, we only came in for shelter," said the Maître d'Ecole, as he went out with La Chouette.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUR PURSE OR YOUR LIFE.

At the noise made by the door in closing, Tom and Sarah aroused themselves from their revery; they thanked the Chourineur for the information he had given, but he inspired them with much less confidence since he had so sincerely but vulgarly expressed such boundless admiration for Rodolphe. As he went out, the wind blew with increased violence, and the rain poured in torrents.

The Maître d'Ecole and Chouette, hidden in the alley opposite, saw the Chourineur when he came out; he turned towards that part of the street where there was a house in process of demolition: soon his footsteps, a little heavy by his frequent libations during the evening, were lost amid the howlings of the wind and the noise of the rain splashing against the walls.

Tom and Sarah left the tavern, notwithstanding the tempest, and took an opposite direction from that of the Chourineur. "They are lost," said the Maître, quietly, to his companion. "Uncork your vitriol—attention!" "Let us take off our shoes, so they can't hear us behind them," said La Chouette. "You are right, La Chouette, always right; I should not have thought of that: let us tread as if on velvet." The horrible couple took off their shoes, gliding along in the shade close to the houses. By this stratagem, the noise of their footsteps was so deadened, that they followed close behind Tom and Sarah without being perceived. "Fortunately, our hack is at the corner of the street, or we should be drenched," said Tom. "Are you cold, Sarah?"

"Perhaps we might learn something from this smuggler—this Bras-Rouge," answered Sarah, without replying to his question. Suddenly he stopped; he was not far from the place designated by "Le Maître d'Ecole." "I have mistaken the street," said Tom; "we ought to have turned to the left in coming out of the tavern. I remember a house in ruins that we must pass to find our way: let us go back." The Maître d'Ecole and Chouette sprang in a doorway, to escape recognition; they were so near that Tom and Sarah, in turning, almost elbowed them. "Upon the whole, I'd rather they'd go that way," said the Maître d'Ecole. "If the gentleman kicks—I have another idea."

Tom and Sarah, after having repassed the tapis-franc, drew near a house in ruins; this building being about half demolished, its open vault formed a sort of gulf, extending along the street. The Maître d'Ecole sprang upon his victim with the bound of a tiger, and seizing Tom by the throat, he cried, "Your money, or I'll throw you in this hole." The brigand, pushing him backward, held him, as it were, suspended over the vault, while with the other hand he seized the arm of Sarah as with a vice. In the meanwhile, La Chouette emptied his pockets with marvellous dexterity. Sarah uttered no cry, but said in a calm tone, "Give them your purse, Tom;" and then, addressing the brigand, said, "We will make no noise—do us no harm" The Chouette, after having scrupulously examined the pockets of both the victims, said to Sarah,

"Let me look at your hands, to see if you have any rings. No," said the old woman, grumbling; "then you have no one to give you rings: what misery!" The "sang froid" of Tom did not desert him during this unlooked-for scene.

"Will you make a bargain?" said he. "My portfolio contains papers that will be useless to you; bring them to me to-morrow, and I will give you twenty-five Louis." "Yes, to catch me in a trap," answered the brigand. "Come! clear out, and don't look behind you; you are fortunate in getting off thus." "A moment," said La Chouette; "if he means what he says, there is a way; he shall have his papers." Then addressing Tom, he said, "Do you know the plain of St. Denis?" "Yes." "Do you know where is Saint Ouen?" "Yes." "Well, opposite Saint Ouen, at the end of the road of the 'Révolte,' the country is level, and over the fields one can see for a great distance; do you come there to-morrow alone; bring your money, and you'll find me there with the portfolio—touch and take—I will give it to you."

"But he will mob you, La Chouette!"

"Not such a fool! no he won't; I can see so far. I have only one eye, but it is a good one; if the gentleman brings any one with him, he'll not find any one—I'll be off."

Sarah appeared to be struck with a sudden idea, for she said to the brigand, "Do you want to earn some money?" "Yes." "Did you see in the tavern from whence we have just come—for now I recognise you—did you see the man, the coalman, called out?"

"A slender young man, with mustaches? Yes; I was just going to eat a morsel of that bird, but he didn't give me time, for he stunned me with two such heavy blows; they overturned me on the table—first time it has happened. Oh! I will have revenge!"

"Well! it is concerning him I speak," said Sarah. "Of him?" cried the Maître d'Ecole. "Give me one thousand francs, and I will kill him for you."

"Sarah!" cried Tom, in alarm. "Wretch! I have no idea of having him murdered," said Sarah to the Maître d'Ecole. "What do you want, then?" "Come to-morrow to the plain of St. Denis; you will find my companion there," continued she; "you will find him alone, and he will tell you what I want you to do. It is not one, but two thousand francs I will give you, if you succeed!"

"Fourline," whispered La Chouette, "there is money to be made; these are rich folks, who want something to be done to an enemy; and this enemy is the young cock who wanted to fight you—must go. I'll go in your place. Two thousand balls! my man, that's worth the trouble." "Well, my wife shall go," said the bandit. "You can tell her what is to be done, and I'll see."

"Very well! to-morrow at one o'clock, at the plain of Saint Denis, between Saint Ouen and the road of the Révolte—you understand?" "Yes! you have said it—I'll bring your portfolio." "And you shall have the promised five hundred francs, and something on account of the other business, if you are reasonable." "Now, do you go to the right, we to the left, and don't follow us, unless—" and the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette ran off rapidly. "The devil has come to our assistance," said Sarah. "This bandit may be of use to us." "Sarah, now I am afraid," said Tom. "As for me, I have no fear; on the contrary, I hope—but come, come now; I know where we are: the carriage cannot be far off."

The two persons directed their rapid steps towards the square of Nôtre Dame; but an invisible witness had been present at this scene: it was the Chourineur, who had crouched among the ruins to shelter himself from the fury of the storm. The proposition made by Sarah to the brigand relative to Rodolphe interested the Chourineur very much; alarmed at the dangers which menaced his new friend, he regretted that he did not know how to warn him; his hatred for the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouelle had, perhaps, something to do with this sentiment. He resolved to advise Rodolphe of the perils which threatened him; but how to do it? He had forgotten the address of the "soi-disant" fan painer, and perhaps he would never revisit the tapis-franc; how should he find him? In making these reflections, the Chourineur had mechanically followed Tom and Sarah, and saw them get into the hack which waited for them at the square of Nôtre Dame.

The carriage was driven off. A bright idea struck the Chourineur; he sprang behind the vehicle. At one o'clock in the morning the carriage stopped on the boulevard of the "Observatoire," and Tom and Sarah disappeared in one of the small streets which terminate at this place. The night was dark, and the Chourineur could not see anything by which he might recognise the place the next day; so, with the sagacity of an Indian, he drew his knife, and made a profound gash in one of the trees near which the carriage stopped, and then regained his lodging-place, from which he had wandered a considerable distance.

For the first time in a long while the Chourineur enjoyed a sound sleep, which was not interrupted by the vision of the sergeant and the soldiers' "égorgées."

CHAPTER VIII.

PROMENADE.

The next morning the storm had ceased, and a bright autumnal sun shone out from a cloudless sky, although always gloomy from the height of the houses; the hideous quarter which we have described seemed less horrible when seen by the light of a fine day. Whether Rodolphe feared no longer to meet the two persons whom he had avoided the evening before, or whether he braved them, towards eleven o'clock in the morning he entered the Rue aux Fèves, and turned towards the tavern of the Ogresse. He was still dressed as a workman, yet there was to be remarked in his clothing a certain "recherché;" his new blouse opened on the breast, leaving visible his shirt of red wool, fastened by many silver buttons; the collar of another shirt, of white linen, was turned negligently over his black cravat, carelessly knotted around his neck; from his light blue velvet cap escaped some curls of chestnut hair; boots perfectly varnished replaced the heavy nailed shoes of the night previous, showing a charming foot, which appeared still smaller as it was half concealed by broad trousers of olive velveteen. This costume rather set off the elegant figure of Rodolphe, a rare mixture of grace, activity, and strength.

The Ogresse was strutting up and down before the tapis-franc when Rodolphe appeared.

"Your servant, young man! You have, no doubt, come for your change of the twenty francs?" said she, with a kind of deference, not daring to forget that the conqueror of the Chourineur had thrown upon her counter a "Louis." "There's just seventeen livres ten sous due you; that is not all—some one came to ask after you: a large man well wrapped up; he had on his legs immense boots, like a drum major in citizen's clothes, and on his arm there was a little woman disguised like a man. They drank some of my sealed wine with the Chourineur." "Ah! they drank with the Chourineur; and what did he say to them?" "When I say they drank, I am mistaken; they only wet their lips in their glasses, and—" "I ask you what they said to the Chourineur?" "Oh! they spoke to him about one thing and another—Bras-Rouge, the rain, and fine weather." "Did they know Bras-Rouge?" "On the contrary, the Chourineur explained to them who he was, and how you came to have a fight." "Never mind, I don't care about that." "You want your change?" "Yes; and I intend to take La Goualeuse to pass the day in the country." "Oh! impossible, 'mon garçon.'"

"Why?" "She'd never come back. Her clothes belong to me, without reckoning that she owes me two hundred and twenty francs for board and lodgings since she has been with me. If she was not just as honest as she is, I would never let her go out of my sight, unless—"

"The Goualouse owes you two hundred and twenty francs?" "Two hundred and twenty francs and ten sous; but what are you going to do, 'mon garçon?' you don't say you are going to pay it? playing, my lord!" "Hold!" said Rodolphe, throwing eleven "Louis" on the counter. "Now how much do you ask for the clothing you hire her?"

The amazed old woman scrutinized the "Louis" closely, one after the other. "Come, come! do you think I would give you bad money? send and get it changed, and let us finish. How much do you ask for the clothing?" The Ogresse, divided between the desire of making a good bargain, the astonishment at seeing a workman with so much money, and the fear of being duped, remained silent for a moment, when she cried,

"Her dress is worth at least—a hundred francs." "Such rags? Come, come! you shall keep the change you owe me from yesterday, and I will add a Louis, nothing more. To ransom anything from you is to steal from the poor who have a right to alms."

"Very well! mon garçon, I'll keep my clothes; out of this La Goualouse shall not stir; I am free to do with my effects as I please." "May Lucifer burn you one of these days, according to your deserts! here is your money; go and call La Goualeuse.'

The Ogresse pocketed the money, thinking that the workman had stolen or inherited it; she said to him with an ignoble smirk, "Why don't you go and call her yourself, my son? that will give her pleasure; for, on the faith of Mother Ponisse, she looked sweetly on you yesterday!"

"Go and seek her, and say that I will take her to the country; not a word more. Above all, I do not wish her to know that I have paid her debt." "Why not?" "What is it your business?" "Very well. I'd rather she should think that she is still under my clutches." "Will you be silent? will you seek her?" "Oh! what a wicked look! I pity those you command—allons—I go, I go."

The Ogresse went up, and in a few minutes descended. "The Goualeuse will not believe me; she became as red as crimson when I told her you were here; but when I told her that I would allow her to pass the day in the country, I thought she would have become mad; for the first time in her life, she seemed about to throw her arms around my neck." "It was for joy at leaving you."

At this moment Fleur de Marie entered, dressed as she was the evening previous; she blushed on seeing Rodolphe, and cast her eyes down in a confused manner. "Will you come and pass the day with me in the country, my child?" said Rodolphe. "Willingly, Mr. Rodolphe, since madame allows it." "I allow it, my little kitten, on account of your good conduct; come and embrace me," said the old wretch, holding out her pimpled face.

The unfortunate girl, surmounting her repugnance, approached her forehead to the lips of the Ogresse, but with a violent blow with his elbow, Rodolphe pushed the old woman into her bar, and taking the arm of Fleur de Marie, he went out of the tapis-franc amid the curses of Mother Ponisse. "Take care, Monsieur Rodolphe," said La Goualeuse; "the Ogresse is going to throw something at your head; she is wicked enough." "Oh, never mind, my child; but what is the matter with you? you seem embarrassed—sad? are you sorry to come with me?" "On the contrary; but you give me your arm." "Well!" "You are a workman; some one may say to your master that he met you with me; that may do you harm: they don't approve of such company," said she, gently disengaging her arm from that of Rodolphe. "Go on alone; I will follow you to the 'Varrière;' when once in the country, I will join you." "Fear nothing," said Rodolphe, touched by this delicacy, and retaking the arm of Fleur de Marie. "My master does not reside in this quarter; and, besides, I am going to find a carriage on the 'Quai aux Fleurs.'" "As you please, Monsieur Rodolphe; I only said that to prevent you getting in trouble." "I believe you, and I thank you; but answer me frankly: Is it equally agreeable to what part of the country we go?" "Oh! it is all the same to me, Monsieur Rodolphe, as long as it is the country—it is so pleasant—the pure air is so good to breathe! Do you know that for five months I have been no farther than the flower-market? and if the Ogresse allowed me to go out of the cité, it was because she had confidence in me."

"And when you came to this market, was it to buy flowers?" "Oh no; I had no money; I only came to see them, to inhale their rich perfume; for the half hour that the Ogresse allowed me to pass on the 'Quai' during market-days, I was so happy that I forgot all." "And when you returned to the Ogresse, to those horrid streets?" "I came back more sorrowful than when I set out. I choked down my tears to prevent a beating. I'll tell you what it was at the market that made me very envious, oh! very envious. It was to see the little 'ouvrières,' so neatly clad, going off so gayly with a fine pot of flowers in their arms." "I am sure, if you had only had some flowers in your window, they would have been companions for you." "It is very true, what you say, Monsieur Rodolphe. Imagine; one day, the Ogresse, at her 'fête,'

knowing my taste, gave me a little rosebush: if you could only know how happy I was! I was no longer lonesome! I could not keep from looking at my rosebush. I amused myself in counting its leaves, its flowers. But the air is so bad in 'la cite,' that at the end of two days it began to fade; but you'll laugh at me, Mr. Rodolphe." "No, no; go on."

"Well, then, I asked permission from the Ogresse to take my bush out for an airing; yes, as I would have taken out a child. I brought it to the 'quai'; I thought to myself, that being in company with other flowers, in this fine and balmy air, would do it good; I moistened its poor withered leaves with the pure water of the fountain, and then I warmed it awhile in the sun; dear little rose-tree, it never saw the sun in 'la cité,' for in our street it comes no lower than the roof. At length I returned; and I assure you, Monsieur Rodolphe, that my rosebush lived, perhaps, ten days longer than it would have done without the airings." "I believe it; but when it died, that must have been a great loss for you?"

"I wept for it—I was very sorry. Besides, Monsieur Rodolphe, since you understand how one can love flowers, I can tell it to you; well! I felt grateful to it—ah! now, this time you are laughing at me." "No, no! I love, I adore flowers; thus I can comprehend all the 'folies' they cause one to do, or that they inspire."

"Eh bien! I felt grateful to this poor rosebush for having flowered so prettily for me—such a one as me." The Goualeuse held down her head, and became purple with shame. "Poor child, with this consciousness of your horrible position, you must have often—" "Had a wish to put an end to it; is it not, Monsieur Rodolphe?" said La Goualeuse, interrupting her companion. "Oh! yes, more than once I have looked at the Seine from the parapet; but then I turned to the flowers, the sun; I said to myself, the river will always be there—I am only sixteen—who knows?" "When you said, who knows? you had a hope?" "Yes." "And what did you hope for?" "I do not know—I hoped—yes, I hoped 'malgré moi.' At those moments it seemed to me that my fate was not merited; that there was some good left in me. I said to myself, I have been very much troubled, but at least I have never harmed any one. If I had only had some one to counsel me, I should not be where I am. That dissipated my sorrow a little. After all, I must confess that these thoughts occurred oftener after the loss of my rosebush," added La Goualeuse in a sole an manner, which made Rodolphe smile. "This great grief always—yes, look here;" and the Goualeuse drew from her pocket a little wooden packet, carefully made, and tied with a pink favor. "You have preserved it?" "I think so; it is all that I possess in the world." "How? have you nothing you can call your own?" "Nothing." "But this coral necklace?" "It belongs to the Ogresse." "How? do you not own a rag, a hat, a handkerchief?" "No, nothing, nothing but the dry leaves of my withered rose-bush. It is on this account I prize it so much."

At each word, the astonishment of Rodolphe was redoubled; he could not comprehend this frightful slavery, this horrible sale of soul and body for a wretched shelter, some tattered clothes, and a nourishment impure.

They arrived at the "Quai aux Fleurs;" a carriage was waiting; Rodolphe assisted his companion to get in, and, after placing himself by her side, said to the coachman, "To St. Denis; I will tell you directly which road to take."

The horses started; the sun was radiant, the sky without a cloud, but the cold was a little sharp, and the air circulated briskly through the open windows of the carriage. "Hold, a woman's cloak?" said La Goualeuse, remarking that she was seated on such a garment, which she had not before perceived. "Yes, it is for you, my child; I brought it along, fearing you might be cold; wrap yourself up well." Unaccustomed to any such care, the poor girl looked at Rodolphe with astonishment. The species of intimidation this latter had caused her increased each moment, as also a vague sadness she could not account for.

"Mon Dieu! Monsieur Rodolphe, how kind you are! you make me quite ashamed."

"Because I am kind?" "No; but—it seems to me that you no longer speak as you did yesterday—that you are some other—"

"Come, Fleur de Marie, would you rather I should be the Rodolphe of yesterday or the Rodolphe of to-day?" "I like you more as you are to-day; yet yesterday I seemed to be more your equal." Then, fearing she had mortified Rodolphe, she added, "When I say your equal, Monsieur Rodolphe, I know that that cannot be." "There is one thing in you that surprises me, Fleur de Marie." "What is that, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "You seem to forget that La Chouette told you yesterday she knew your parents—that she knew your mother." "Oh! I have not forgotten that; I thought of it all night, and I have wept bitterly; but I am sure it is not true. The Borgnesse invented this story to give me pain." "It may be that La Chouette knows more than you imagine; if it is so, would you not be happy to find your mother?" "Alas! Monsieur Rodolphe, if my mother never loved me, what good would it be to find her? She would not only not see me—what a disgrace it would be to her! it would perhaps kill her."

"If your mother loved you, Fleur de Marie, she would pity you, she would pardon you, she would love you again. If she has forsaken you, in seeing to what a horrible fate her actions have reduced you, her shame would be your revenge." "And why should I be revenged? If I were revenged, it seems to me that I should no longer have the right to consider myself unfortunate; this often consoles me." "Perhaps you are right; let us speak no more about it."

At this moment the carriage arrived near "St. Ouen," at the junction of the road to St. Denis and the "Chemin de la Révolte."

Notwithstanding the monotonous appearance of the country, Fleur de Marie was so delighted at seeing the fields, as she said, that, forgetting the sad thoughts which the recollections of Chouette had awakened in her mind, her charming face brightened up; she leaned out of the windows, and clapping her hands, cried, "Monsieur Rodolphe, what delight—fields! and thickets! If you would only let me alight—the weather is so fine! I would like so much to run in the meadows!"

"We will take a run, my child. Coachman, stop!"

"How! you also, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"I also? yes, we will make it a holyday."

"What happiness, Monsieur Rodolphe!"

And Rodolphe and Fleur de Marie, hand in hand, ran over the new-mown field until they were out of breath.

To attempt to describe the gambols, the little joyous shouts, the delight of Fleur de Marie, would be impossible. Poor Gazelle! for so long time a prisoner. She breathed the pure air with intoxication; she came, she went, she ran, she stopped, always with fresh transports. At the sight of several tufts of daisies, and some marigolds, spared by the first frost of approaching winter, she could not refrain from new exclamations of delight; she did not leave one of the flowers, but gleaned the whole meadow. After having thus ran over the fields, soon tired, being unaccustomed to so much exercise, the young girl, stopping to take breath, went and seated herself on the trunk of a tree, overturned near a deep ditch.

The fair and transparent complexion of Fleur de Marie, ordinarily too pale, was now heightened with the most lively colour. Her large blue eyes shone sweetly, her rosy mouth half open, disclosed her pearl-like teeth, and her heart throbbed under the little orange shawl; she kept one hand on her bosom, as if to compress its pulsations, while with the other she extended to Rodolphe the flowers she had gathered. Nothing could be more charming than the innocent, joyous expression which shone on this lovely face. As soon as she could speak, she said to Rodolphe, with touching "naïveté,"

"How good is the 'Bon Dieu' for having given us such a fine day!" A tear came to the eyes of Rodolphe at hearing this poor, abandoned, despised, lost creature, without home, without bread, offering thus a cry of joy and thanks to the Creator, because she enjoyed a ray of sunshine and the sight of a meadow.

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Rodolphe was aroused from his meditations by an unlooked-for incident.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SURPRISE.

The Goualeuse was seated, as we have said, on the trunk of a tree, which had been overturned near a deep ditch. Suddenly a man, shaking off the straw with which he was covered, rose out of this excavation, with a terrible shout of laughter. Fleur de Marie, turning around, screamed with affright. It was the Chourineur. "Don't be afraid, my dear," said the Chourineur, seeing the terror of the young girl, who had immediately flown to the side of her companion. "Here is a lucky meeting, heiu! Master Rodolphe, you did'nt expect it? nor I neither;" then adding, in a serious tone, "Look here, master, do you see, people may say what they please, but there is something in the air—above—over our heads—'le bon Dieu' is a 'malin'—it seems as if he says to man, Go, I order you; for he has ordered you here, which is most wonderfully astonishing!" "What are you doing there?" said Rodolphe, very much surprised. "I was watching the corn for you, my master; but thunder! what a farce that you should come, just in the very environs of my country-house—hold! there is something—decidedly there is something in it." "But once more, I ask you, what are you doing there?" "Directly you shall know all about it; just give time to take an observation from your observatory 'à cheval.'" He ran towards the carriage, then stopped, and took a rapid glance over the immense plains, and quietly returned to Rodolphe.

"Will you explain to me what all this means?" "Patience! patience! master—one word; what o'clock is it?" "Half past twelve," said Rodolphe, looking at his watch. "Good—we have time; La Chouette will not be here for a half hour." "La Chouette!" cried Rodolphe and the young girl at the same time. "Yes, La Chouette. In two words, master, here is my story: yesterday, after you left the tapis-franc, there came—"

"A large man, accompanied by a woman disguised as a man; they asked for me; I know all that. Afterward?" "They asked me to drink, and wanted to talk about you. I was'nt willing to say anything—as you had not told me anything, except the 'rinsing' you had the politeness to give me. I knew none of your secrets; and even if I had known anything, it would have been the same—it is between us, you know, Master Rodolphe—thine till death. May the devil burn me if I can tell why I feel for you the same attachment that a bulldog has for his master; but it is all the same—so it is—it is too much for me—I can't understand it—I leave it to you."

"I thank you, 'mon garçon;' but continue."

"The large man and the little woman, finding they could get nothing out of me, went out from the Ogresse, and so did I—they towards the 'Palais de Justice, I towards 'Nôtre Dame.' Arrived at the end of the street, I began to perceive that it was raining pitchforks—a perfect deluge! There was quite near an old, half-torn-down house; I said to myself, If the shower continues, I can sleep as well there as at my lodgings; so I crept into a sort of cellar, where I was sheltered. I made my bed on a beam, my pillow of some old plaster, and there I was lodged like a king." "Afterward—afterward?" "We had drank together, Master Rodolphe, and then I had drank with the large man and the little woman; I mean to tell you that I had my head a little heavy; and, besides, there is nothing that rocks me to sleep like the dropping of rain. I began to doze; I had not been long asleep, when a voice suddenly awoke me: it was the Maître d'Ecole, who was closely talking with some one. I listened—thunder!—what do I recognise? the voice of the large man, who had come to the tapis-franc, with the little woman disguised."

"They were talking with the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette?" said Rodolphe, stupified. "Yes! and they agreed to meet again to-day." "To-day!" said Rodolphe. "At one o'clock." "It will be in a minute?" "At the branching off of the Route St. Denis and La Révolte." "This very spot!" "As you say, Master Rodolphe—it is here!" "The Maître d'Ecole! take care, Monsieur Rodolphe," cried Fleur de Marie. "Be calm, my dear—he is not coming—only La Chouette." "How did this man become acquainted with these two wretches?" asked Rodolphe. "Ma foi! I know nothing about that; besides, I must have got awake

just at the end of matters; for the large man spoke of ransoming his portfolio, which La Chouette was to bring here, in exchange for five hundred francs; I rather think that the Maître d'Ecole must have began by robbing, and ended by making friends." "That is strange." "Mon Dieu! that frightens me for you, Monsieur Rodolphe," said Fleur de Marie. "Master Rodolphe is not a child, my dear, but, as you say, it may be something disagreeable for him—so here am I."

"Continue, 'mon garçon.'" "The large man and the small woman promised two thousand francs to the Maître d'Ecole—to do to you—I don't know what; it is La Chouette who is to come here, to bring back the portfolio, and to know what they want; and then she is to go back to the Maître d'Ecole, who will do the rest."

Fleur de Marie trembled; but Rodolphe smiled disdainfully. "Two thousand francs for doing something to you, Master Rodolphe; that made me think (no comparisons) that when I see a reward of five hundred francs offered for a lost dog, I say modestly to myself, Oh, you are a lost animal, for they would not give even five francs to get you. Two thousand francs for doing something to you! Who are you, then?" "I will tell you by-and-by." "Enough, master. When I heard this proposition made to La Chouette, I said to myself, I must find out where these rich folks, who want to set the Maître d'Ecole on the tracks of M. Rodolphe, roost; it may serve him. When they went off, I crept out of the ruins and followed them like a wolf. At Notre Dame they got into a carriage; I clambered up behind, and thus we drove to the 'Boulevard de l'Observatoire.' It was as black as a furnace; I could see nothing, so I made a notch in one of the trees, that I could recognise it in the daytime." "Very well! mon garçon."

"This morning I returned there. At ten steps from my tree I saw a small lane shut by a gate; in the mud of the lane I saw large steps and small ones; at the end of the lane a house: the nest of our birds must be there."

"Thank you, 'mon brave;' you render me, without suspecting it, a great service." "Pardon me, Master Rodolphe, but I did suspect—it was for this I did it." "I know it, 'mon garçon,' and I wish I could recompense your services otherwise than by thanks; unfortunately, I am only a poor devil of a workman, although they will give, as you say, two thousand francs to do something to me. I will explain that to you." "Good, if it pleases you; if not, all the same; they threaten you with some harm, I oppose it: the rest is none of my business."

"I imagine what they want: listen; I have a secret for cutting the iron for my fans by machinery; but this secret does not belong to me alone; I await my partner to put this in operation, and it certainly must be the model that I have at home that they wish to get hold of, at any price; for there is much money to be made by this discovery." "The tall man and his companion are, then—" "The people for whom I work, and to whom I would not sell my secret." This explanation appeared satisfactory to the Chourineur, whose intelligence was not singularly developed, and he continued:

"I understand now—only see what cowards! they have not the courage to do their dirty work themselves. But to put an end to my story, I said to myself this morning, I know the 'rendezvous' of these people; I'll go and see what they are going to do. My employer will wait for me—no matter. I arrived here—I saw this hole—I took an armful of straw from yonder, and I covered myself to the end of my nose, to wait for La Chouette; but, behold, you make your appearance on the plain, and this poor Goualeuse comes and takes a seat just on the border of my park; 'ma foi,' I wanted to have some fun, so I cried like a 'brûle,' and rose up from my litter."

"Well! and now what is your intention?"

"Wait for La Chouette, who will certainly arrive first, and try to hear what she will say to the large man, because perhaps it may serve you. There is no other tree overturned in the whole field; from this place one can see all around; it is as if it were made expressly that one might take a seat. The 'rendezvous' of La Chouette is only four steps from this, at the branching of the roads; I'd bet that they would come and sit here; if they don't, and I can't hear what they have to say, when they separate I'll fall upon La Chouette, and I'll pay her what is her due for taking out the tooth of the poor Goualeuse, and I'll squeeze her throat until she tell me the name of the parents of the poor girl. What do you think of my plan, Master Rodolphe?" "There are some good ideas, 'mon garçon;' but I will suggest some alterations."

"Oh! in the first place, Chourineur, you must not quarrel on my account. If you strike La Chouette, the Maître d'Ecole—"

"Stop, my dear. La Chouette must pass through my hands. Thunder! it is just because she has the Maître d'Ecole to defend her that I'll double the dose."

"Listen, 'mon garçon' I have a better plan to revenge La Goualeuse for the cruel treatment of La Chouette. I will tell you what this is later. As for the present," said Rodolphe, retreating a few steps from the side of La Goualeuse, and lowering his voice, "as for the present, do you wish to render me a real service?" "Speak, Master Rodolphe."

"The Chouette does not know you?"

"I saw her yesterday at the tapis-franc for the first time."

"Now this is what you must do: you will conceal yourself at first; but when you see her arrive here, you must come out of you retreat."

"To wring her neck?"

"No, no, not now! I only wish you to prevent her speaking with this man; seeing some one with her, he will not dare to approach. If he does, do not leave her for a moment; he cannot make his propositions before you."

"If the man finds me too inquisitive, I'll do his business; he is neither a Maître d'Ecole nor a Master Rodolphe."

"I know the citizen; he will not meddle with you."

"Well, well! I'll stick to La Chouette like a shadow. The man shan't say a word that I don't hear, and he'll have to make tracks."

"If they agree upon another place of meeting, you will know it, or your presence will suffice to send off the gentleman."

"Good, good. Afterward I shall give a small twist to La Chouette? I hold to that bet."

"Not yet. La Borgnesse does not know whether you are a robber or not?"

"No, unless the Maître d'Ecole may have told her that it was not according to my ideas."

"If he has told her so, you must pretend to have changed your principles."

"I!" "You!"

"Thunder! Master Rodolphe; but say—hum! hum! I don't like that play."

"You shall do as you like; you shall see if I propose anything infamous to you."

"Oh! as for that, I am quite easy."

"You are right."

"Speak, master; I'll obey."

"As soon as the man is gone, you must try to coax La Chouette."

"I! the old she-devil? I'd much rather fight the Maître d'Ecole. I hardly know whether I shall be able to keep from clawing right hold of her hide."

"Then you will spoil all."

"Well, what is it, then, that I must do?"

"The 'Chouette' will be outrageous at the windfall that has escaped her; you must try to soothe her, by saying that you know of some good business to be done; that you are there waiting for your accomplice; and that, if the Maître d'Ecole has a mind to join, there is a good deal of gold to be gained."

"I listen; go on, master."

"After waiting about an hour, you must say, 'My comrade does not come, it is put off;' then you must agree upon a 'rendezvous' for to-morrow at an early hour with La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole. Do you understand?" "I comprehend."

"And this night you will be at the corner of the Champs Elysées and the Allée des Veuves; I will meet you there, and I will then tell you the rest."

"If it is a snare, take care! The Maître d'Ecole is an evil spirit; you have struck him: there is no doubt he is capable of killing you."

"Be not alarmed."

"Thunder! it is a farce; but you do with me just as you please; there is no difficulty, and something seems to tell me that there is some nice broth to be cooked for the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette; yet, one word more, Master Rodolphe." "Speak."

"It is not that I think you capable of setting a trap for the Maître d'Ecole, to have him caught by the police; he is a finished scoundrel, who has merited death a hundred times—but to have him arrested—it is not my business."

"Nor mine, 'mon garçon;' but I have an account to settle with him and La Chouette, since they are plotting with people against me; and with your assistance, we'll have a settlement."

"Oh! well, since the male is no better than the female, I consent."

"And if we succeed," said Rodolphe, in a serious, almost solemn manner, which startled the Chourineur, "you will be as proud as when you saved from the fire and water the man and woman who owe you their life!"

"How you say that, Master Rodolphe! I never saw you look so before; but quick, quick, I see a white spot; it must be the cap of La Chouette. Go; I'll creep into my hole."

"To-night at ten o'clock."

"At the corner of the 'Allée des Veuves' and the Champ Elysées; understood."

Fleur de Marie had not heard this last conversation of the Chourineur and Rodolphe; she got into the carriage with her companion."

CHAPTER X.

THE FARM.

After his conversation with the Chourineur, Rodolphe remained for some moments preoccupied and thoughtful.

Fleur de Marie, not daring to interrupt the silence of her companion, looked at him sorrowfully.

Rodolphe, raising his head, said to her, smiling kindly, "What were you thinking about, my child? The meeting with the Chourineur has been disagreeable to you, has it not? We were so merry."

"It is, on the contrary, fortunate for us, Monsieur Rodolphe, since the Chourineur can be useful to you" "Does this man pass among the 'habitués' of the tapis-franc as being any better than the rest, having any good qualities?" "I am ignorant, Monsieur Rodolphe; before the scene of yesterday, I have often seen him, but have rarely spoken to him. I thought him as wicked as the rest."

"Let us think no more about all this, my little Fleur de Marie. I should be very sorry if you became sad—I, who thought to make you pass a pleasant day."

"Oh! I am very happy! it is such a long time since I have been out of Paris!"

"Not since your parties with La Rigolette?"

"Mon Dieu! no, Monsieur Rodolphe. Then it was spring; but although we are almost now into winter, it gives me just as much pleasure. What a fine sunny day! Only look at those little rosy clouds there—and that hill! with its pretty white houses in the midst of the trees. How many leaves remain! it is astonishing in the month of November, is it not, Monsieur Rodolphe? But in Paris the leaves fall so soon; and down there—that flight of pigeons—look! look! they are settling down on the roof of the mill. In the country one is never tired of looking; everything is amusing."

"It is a pleasure to see how you are delighted with these nothings, which make the charm of the country, Fleur de Marie."

And, in effect, as the young girl contemplated the peaceful and smiling landscape which was spread around her, once more her face resumed its soft expression.

"And there, that fire from the stubble in the field, see how the beautiful white smoke ascends to heaven! and this cart, with its two fat grays. If I were a man, I would like to be a farmer! to be in the midst of a large field, following the plough, and seeing at a great distance immense woods. Just such a day as to-day, for instance! enough to make one sing songs, rather melancholy songs, to bring tears into the eyes—like 'Genevieve de Brabant.' Did you ever hear the song of 'Genevieve de Brabant,' Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"No, my child; but if you are kind you will sing it for me when we get to the farm."

"What happiness! Are we going to a farm, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "'Tis to a farm belonging to my nurse, a good and worthy woman, who has educated me."

"And shall we have some milk?" cried La Goualeuse, clasping her hands.

"Fy, then! milk—excellent cream, if you please, and some butter that shall be made before us, and fresh eggs."

"That we shall take from the nests ourselves?"

"Certainly." "And we will go and see the cows in the stable?" "I guess so." "And we will go into the dairy?" "Yes, in the dairy." "And to the pigeon-house?" "And to the pigeon-house."

"Ah! stop, Monsieur Rodolphe; it is not to be believed: how I am going to be amused! What a delightful day! what a delightful day I am going to pass!" cried the young girl, joyously.

Then, by a sudden change of thought, the unfortunate girl, thinking that, after these hours of liberty passed in the country, she must return to her horrid dwelling-place, concealed her face in her hands and burst into tears.

Rodolphe, much surprised, said to her,

"What is the matter, Fleur de Marie? what causes your grief?"

"Nothing — nothing, Monsieur Rodolphe," said she, wiping her eyes, and trying to smile. "Pardon me if I become sad—pay no attention, there is nothing the matter; it was only a thought. I am going to be gay."

"But you were so joyous just now!"

"It was on that account," naïvely answered Fleur de Marie, lifting her eyes to Rodolphe, yet moistened with tears.

These words enlightened Rodolphe; he guessed all, and willing to drive away the gloomy thought of the young girl, he said, smiling,

"I bet you are thinking about your rose-bush? You are sorry that you could not take it with you to the farm for an airing Poor rosebush; no doubt you would have wished to make it eat some cream!"

La Goualeuse laughed at this pleasantry, and soon every trace of sorrow vanished from her brow.

As the carriage approached Saint Denis the tall spire of the church became visible.

"Oh! the beautiful steeple!" cried La Goualeuse.

"It is the steeple of the Church of Saint Denis—a superb church: do you want to see it? I will stop the carriage." She cast down her eyes, and said, "Since I have lived with the Ogresse I have not been within the walls of a church; I have not dared. In the prison, on the contrary, I loved so dearly to sing at mass! and at the Fête Dieu we always made such beautiful bouquets for the altar!"

"But God is good and merciful: why do you fear to enter and pray in a church?"

"Oh no, no, Monsieur Rodolphe, it would be impious; it is enough to have offended the 'bon Dieu' otherwise."

After a moment of silence, Rodolphe said,

"To the present, have you ever loved?"

"Never, Monsieur Rodolphe." "How comes that?"

"You have seen what kind of people frequented the tapis-franc; besides, to love, one must be honnête." "What do you mean by that?"

"To depend on one's self—to be able—but, indeed, Monsieur Rodolphe, if you please, let us not talk about this." "Well! come, let us talk of something else, Fleur de Marie; but why do you look at me thus? now see, your beautiful eyes are filled again with tears: have I vexed you?" "No! on the contrary; but you are so good to me, that makes me feel like crying; and then, one would think that you had only brought me to the country just to please me, so contented you appear with my delight. Not content with having defended me yesterday, you make me pass such a delightful day with you."

"Truly, you are happy?"

"For a long time, I shall never forget this pleasure."

"Pleasure is so seldom found!" "Oh! yes, very seldom." "'Ma foi,' in default of that which I have not, I often amuse myself in thinking what I should like to have; I say to myself, there, that's what I should like—that's what I want; and you, Fleur de Marie, have you such dreams sometimes? do you build castles in the air?" "Formerly, yes, in prison; before I went to the Ogresse, I passed my life in that and singing; but now, not so often. And you, Monsieur Rodolphe, what is it you wish for?"

"I? oh! I want to be very rich—to have servants, horses, carriages, a fine house, and to go into society—every day to the play. And you, Fleur de Marie?" "I should not be so difficult: enough to pay my debt to the Ogresse, some money to support me until I could find work, and a nice little clean room, where I could see the trees when I worked."

"And plenty of flowers in your window?"

"Oh! certainly. To dwell in the country, if I could, and that is all."

"A small room for work is a necessity; but when one has only to wish, one can allow some superfluities. Have you never wished for carriages, diamonds, fine dresses?"

"Oh no! I never had any such wishes—to be free, live in the country, and to be sure that I should not die in a hospital. Oh this last—above all, not to die there. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, this thought often comes to me—it is frightful!" "Alas! we poor folks" "It is not on account of misery that I say this; but after—when one is dead—"

"Well?" "Do you not know what is done with you after death, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "No." "There was a young girl that I knew in prison—she died at the hospital, and they gave her body to the surgeons," whispered the young girl, shuddering. "Oh! this is horrible! And have you often had such gloomy thoughts, poor child?"

"It astonishes you, does it not, Monsieur Rodolphe, that I should feel any shame? for, after my death—Alas! mon Dieu! it is all they have left me."

These sad and bitter words affected Rodolphe; he concealed his face in his hands, and thought of the fatality which had pressed on Fleur de Marie; he thought of the mother of the poor creature—her mother—was she rich, happy, perhaps honoured?

Honoured—rich—happy; and her child, whom she had doubtless sacrificed to shame, had left the hovel of La Chouette for the prison, the prison for the den of the Ogresse; and from this she might go to die in a hospital; and after her death— It was frightful.

The poor Goualeuse, seeing the gloomy air of her companion, said to him, sorrowfully, "Pardon me, Monsieur Rodolphe; I ought not to have such ideas. You take me with you to make me joyful, and yet I am always telling you such sad things—so sad! Mon Dieu! I do not know how it happens; it is in spite of myself. I have never been happier than I have to-day, yet the tears are constantly coming to my eyes. You don't like it, Monsieur Rodolphe? besides, you see, this sadness goes away as it comes—very quick. Now see, already I think no more about it. I will be reasonable—there, Monsieur Rodolphe, look at my eyes."

And Fleur de Marie, after having shut her eyes two or three times, to chase away a rebel tear, opened them wide, and looked at Rodolphe with charming naïveté. "Fleur de Marie, I beg you not to restrain yourself. Be gay if you wish to be gay—sorrowful if you wish to be sorrowful. Mon Dieu! I who speak to you sometimes have gloomy thoughts. I should indeed be very unhappy to feign a joy I do not feel."

"Truly, Monsieur Rodolphe, are you sad sometimes?"

"Without doubt; the future appears no clearer for me than for you. I have no father nor mother; were I to fall sick to-morrow, how should I live? I spend that which I gain as fast as it is earned."

"You are wrong, do you see, very wrong, Monsieur Rodolphe," said the Goualeuse, in a tone of grave remonstrance, which made Rodolphe smile; "you ought to put something in the Saving's Bank; for all my troubles came from not economizing my money. With two hundred francs before him, a workman would never be an expense to any one—never embarrassed; and it is often these embarrassments which give you bad counsels." "All this is very wise, very sensible, my little monitress. But two hundred francs? how is one to earn two hundred francs?"

"Oh! Monsieur Rodolphe, it is very simple; let us reckon a little; you shall see. You gain sometimes five francs a day?" "Yes, when I work."

"But you must work every day. Are you to be pitied? such fine work as yours—fan painter; why it ought to be a pleasure. Come, you are not reasonable, Monsieur Rodolphe," added La Goualeuse, in a solemn manner. "A workman ought to live, nay, can live, very well on three francs; then you would have two francs left—at the end of the month sixty—sixty francs a month—quite an amount!"

"Yes; but it is so agreeable to walk about, to do nothing!"

"Monsieur Rodolphe, once more, you have no more reason than a child." "Well! I will be reasonable, you little scold; you have given me some new ideas. I never thought of it."

"Truly!" cried the young girl, clapping her hands with joy; "if you only knew how happy you make me! You, will then, economize the two francs a day, surely?" "Come, I will do it," said Rodolphe, smiling in spite of himself.

"You'll see how proud you'll be at your first savings; and, besides, this is not all; if you promise you will not be angry—"

"Do I look as if I could be angry?"

"No, certainly not; but I do not know if I ought to—"

"You ought to say everything to me, Fleur de Marie."

"Well! then, you, who, it is plain to be seen, are above your condition—how is it that you can frequent a tavern like that of the Ogresse?"

"If I had not been to the tapis-franc, I should not have the pleasure of taking you to the country to-day."

"It is true; but never mind, Monsieur Rodolphe. I am as happy as possible with my excursion. Well, I would renounce, with all my heart, passing such another, if it can do you any harm."

"Just the contrary, for you have given me such excellent advice about my affairs."

"And you will follow it?"

"I have promised you on my word of honour; I will economize at least forty sous a day."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WISHES.

At this moment, Rodolphe said to the coachman, who had passed the village of Sarcelles, "Take the first road to the right, pass through Villiers-le-Bel, and then to the left; keep straight on." Then addressing La Goualeuse, he said, "Now that you are satisfied with me, Fleur de Marie, we can amuse ourselves, as we said just now, by building castles in the air; it won't cost much, so you can't scold me for being extravagant."

"Oh no. You begin—you build your castle first."

"On the contrary, I must have you commence."

"Let me see if you can guess what my choice would be, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"I'll try. I will suppose that this road—I say this road, because we are on it."

"Oh yes! that is right; there's no use in looking farther."

"I'll suppose, then, that this road will lead us to a charming village, some distance from the main road."

"Yes, it will be more quiet and tranquil."

"It is built on a rising ground, and surrounded by trees."

"And there's a little streamlet close by?"

"Exactly so—a streamlet. At the end of the village there is a beautiful farm; on one side of the house is an orchard; on the other a pretty garden filled with flowers."

"I can almost see it, Monsieur Rodolphe!"

"On the ground floor, there is a large kitchen for the labourers on the farm, and an eating-room for the mistress." "The house must have green blinds; they look so cheerful, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"Green blinds—I am of your opinion; there is nothing so lively as green blinds. Naturally, the mistress of the farm would be your aunt."

"Oh! naturally. And she would be a kind, good woman."

"Excellent woman, who would love you as a mother."

"Good aunt! that must be so delightful, to be loved by some one!" "And you would love her also?"

"Oh!" cried Fleur de Marie, joining her hands, and lifting her eyes towards heaven with an expression of happiness impossible to describe. "Oh! yes. I would love her, and, besides, I would aid her with her work—to sew, wash, bleach—to dry fruits for the winter, enough for the whole household. She should not complain of my idleness, I assure you. The morning—"

"Stop, stop! Fleur de Marie; how impatient you are. Let me finish describing the house."

"Come, come, Monsieur Painter, it is easy to perceive that you are accustomed to make pretty landscapes on your fans," said the Goualeuse, laughing.

"Little prattler, let me, then, finish my house."

"It is true that I do prattle; but it is so amusing! Monsieur Rodolphe, I will listen: pray finish your house." "Your room shall be on the first floor." "My room! oh, delightful. Come, let us see my room." And the young girl leaned against Rodolphe, with her large eyes wide open, very curious.

"Your chamber shall have two windows, which look upon the flower-garden and on the meadow through which the little river flows. On the other side of this river will be seen a little hill, all planted with chestnut-trees, from the midst of which peeps the spire of a church." "Oh! how pretty—how pretty, Monsieur Rodolphe; it makes one desire to be there!"

"Three or four fine cows are grazing in the meadow, which is separated from the garden by a hedge of hawthorn." "And do I see the cows from my window?" "Perfectly." "Then there shall be one which shall be my favourite, Monsieur Rodolphe. I'll make her a fine collar with a bell, and I'll accustom her to come and eat from my hands."

"She won't fail. She is very young, and pure white, and we'll call her Musette."

"Ah! what a pretty name; poor Musette! I love her already." "Let us finish your chamber, Fleur de Marie: it is hung with a pretty Persian chints, with curtains to match. A honeysuckle and rosebush cover the walls of the house on this side, and hang over your windows, so that in the morning you have only to stretch out your hands and gather the fragrant blossoms." "Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, what a painter you are!" "Now we'll see how you will pass the day. Your good aunt will come and awaken you in the morning by a gentle kiss on the forehead; she will bring you a bowl of warm milk, because your chest is weak, poor child! Then you'll get up; you'll go and see the farm, Musette, the chickens, your friends the pigeons, and the flowers in the garden. At nine o'clock your writing-master will arrive."

"My master?"

"You know you must learn to read, write, and keep accounts, so that you can help your aunt with the books of the farm."

"True, Monsieur Rodolphe; I never think of anything. I must learn to read and write to help my aunt," said the poor girl, seriously, so much absorbed by the charming picture of this peaceable life, that she believed in its realities. "After your lessons, you will work at the linen of the house, or you will make yourself a pretty peasant bonnet. At two o'clock you will go to your writing, and then you will take a long walk with your aunt, see the haymakers in summer, and the labourers in the fall: you will return quite fatigued, bringing with you a handful of sweet herbs that you have culled in the meadows for Musette."

"For we will return by the meadow, won't we, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "Without doubt: there is a wooden bridge over the river. At your return, bless me, it is six or seven o'clock, and a fine brisk fire is blazing in the large kitchen of the farm; you go there and warm yourself, and have a talk with the good folks just returned from the work of the farm; then you dine with your aunt. Sometimes the curate, or some old friend of the house, sits down to talk with you. After that, you read or work, while your aunt has her game of cards. At ten o'clock she kisses you, and you retire to your chamber. The next morning you begin again."

"I could live for a hundred years in that manner, and never be tired, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"But all that is nothing to the Sundays and holydays."

"And those days, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"You will make yourself look very fine; you will put on your pretty peasant's dress, and the little round cap that becomes you so well; then you will get in the basket-wagon with your aunt and James, the farmboy, to go to grand mass at the village; after that, during the summer, you will not fail to go with your aunt to all the fêtes of the surrounding parishes. You are so kind, so good, such a nice housekeeper, your aunt loves you so much, the curate will give such a good account of you, that all the young farmers of the environs will wish to dance with you, because that is the way all marriages begin. Thus, by-and-by you will perceive one—and—"

Rodolphe, astonished at the silence of the young girl, turned to look at her: the poor girl could hardly restrain her sobs; for a moment deceived by the words of Rodolphe, she had forgotten the present, and the contrast of this present with a dream, a picture so charming and delightful, recalled the horrors of her position.

"Fleur de Marie, what is the matter?"

"Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, without intending it, you have caused me much chagrin. For a moment I believed in this paradise." "But, poor child, this paradise exists—look, look—stop, coachman!" The carriage stopped. La Goualeuse mechanically raised her head. She found herself on the top of a hill: what was her astonishment, her amazement! The pretty village built on the hillside, the farm, the meadow, the cows, the little river, the chestnut-trees, the church in the distance—the picture was before her eyes; nothing was wanting, even to Musette, a beautiful white heifer, the future fa-

vourite of La Goualeuse. This charming landscape was lighted up by a fine November sun. The yellow and purple leaves still covered the noble chestnut-trees, standing out in bold relief from the blue and smiling sky.

"Well! Fleur de Marie, what say you? Am I a good painter?" said Rodolphe, gayly.

The Goualeuse looked at him with surprise and inquietude: it seemed to her almost supernatural.

"How is this, Monsieur Rodolphe? but, mon Dieu! is this a dream? it almost makes me afraid. How! what you have told me is—"

"Nothing is more simple, my child. The 'fermière' is my nurse; I was brought up here. I wrote her this morning that I should come to-day to see her; I only painted after nature."

"Ah! it is true, Monsieur Rodolphe!" said La Goualeuse, with a profound sigh.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FARM.

The farm whither Rodolphe had conducted Fleur de Marie was situated without the village of Boqueval, a little solitary and unknown parish, distant about two leagues from Ecouen. The carriage, following the instructions of Rodolphe, was driven down a steep hill into a long avenue, bordered on either side with apple and cherry trees; the wheels rolled without noise on a carpet of short green turf, with which the by-roads are usually covered. Fleur de Marie, silent and sad, remained, notwithstanding her efforts, under the sad impressions, which Rodolphe reproached himself for having caused. At the end of a few moments the vehicle passed the large door of the court of the farm, and continuing along a thick hedge, stopped before a little rustic door of wood half concealed by a thick grape-vine, with its autumn purple leaves.

"Here we are arrived, Fleur de Marie," said Rodolphe. "Are you content?"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; yet I feel as if I am ashamed to appear before the 'fermière: I shall not dare to look at her." "And why not, my child?"

"You are right, Monsieur Rodolphe; she does not know me," said she, choking down a sigh.

They had, no doubt, been watching for the arrival of Rodolphe; for, as the coachman opened the gate, a woman, of about fifty years of age, clothed as are generally the rich "fermières" of the environs of Paris, with a face at once of a sweet and sad expression, appeared on the porch, and came to meet Rodolphe eagerly, but with much respect.

The Goualeuse became purple with shame, and descended from the carriage after a moment's hesitation.

"Good-day, my good Madame Georges," said Rodolphe; "you see I am punctual;" then turning to the coachman, and putting some money in his hands, he said, "You can return to Paris."

The coachman, a little squat man, with his hat pulled over his eyes, and his face almost entirely concealed by the fur collar of his coat, pocketed the money, made no answer, but mounting his seat, whipped up his horses, and soon disappeared down the green lane.

"After so long a drive, this dumb coachman appears in a great hurry to return," at first thought Rodolphe. "Bah! it is only two o'clock; no doubt he wants to get back as soon as he can, to make the most of the rest of the day;" so he attached no importance to his first observation. Fleur de Marie approached with a troubled and alarm d air, and whispered to him, so as not to be heard by Madame Georges, "Mon Dieu! Monsieur Rodolphe, pardon me. You have sent away the carriage—but the Ogresse? alas! I must return to her to-night, otherwise she will think me a thief; my clothes belong to her, and I owe—" "Be comforted, my child; it is for me to ask your pardon." "My pardon, and for what?" "For not having told you sooner that you can take off these miserable clothes for others that Madame Georges will furnish you. She has some that will about suit you, and she will no doubt lend them to you: thus, you see, she already commences her part of aunt."

Fleur de Marie thought she was in a dream, she looked alternately at Rodolphe and Madame Georges, and could not believe what she had heard.

"How," said she, her voice trembling with emotion, "I shall return no more to Paris? I shall remain here? Madame will allow it? Can it be possible! this castle in the air already?"

"It was this farm—you see it realized."

"No, no, it is too much—too much happiness."

"One can never have too much happiness, Fleur de Marie."

"Ah! for pity's sake, Monsieur Rodolphe, do not deceive me—it would kill me."

"My dear child, believe me," said Rodolphe, in a voice always affectionate, but with an accent of dignity, which Fleur de Marie had never yet heard. "Yes, you can from this day, if you wish, pass with Madame Georges, that peaceful life, of which the picture just now so much enchanted you. Although Madame Georges is not your aunt, yet she will have for you, when you know her, the most tender interest; you will pass for her niece with the people of the farm; this little deception will render your situation more agreeable. So I repeat once more, if it pleases you, Fleur de Marie, you can realize your dream of this morning. As soon as you are dressed as a little country girl," he added, smiling, "we will take you to see your future favourite, Musette, the pretty white heifer who is waiting for the fine collar you have promised her; then we will go and take a glance at your friends, the pigeons, and then to the dairy. We will afterward take a walk over the farm; I hold to fulfil my promise."

Fleur de Marie clasped her hands with force; surprise, joy, gratitude, and respect were expressed on her beautiful face; with her eyes bathed in tears, she cried,

"Monsieur Rodolphe, are you, then, an angel from heaven, that you do so much good to the unfortunate without knowing them, and deliver them from shame and misery?" "My poor child," answered Rodolphe, with a smile of profound melancholy and ineffable goodness, "although young, I have in my life already suffered much; that will explain to you my compassion

for those who suffer. Fleur de Marie, or, rather, Marie, go with Madame Georges. Yes, Marie, take henceforth this name, a name as sweet and pretty as you are! Before I leave, I must have some conversation with you, and I shall depart very happy, in knowing that you are happy."

Fleur de Marie answered not a word, but she approached Rodolphe, and bending her knees, took his hand, which she carried respectfully to her lips, with a movement filled with modesty and grace; then she followed Madame Georges, who appeared to regard her with great interest.

CHAPTER XIII.

MURPHY AND RODOLPHE.

Rodolphe turned his steps towards the court of the farm, where he found the tall man, who, disguised as a coalman, had advised him of the arrival of Tom and Sarah.

Murphy—such is the name of this person—was about fifty years of age; some white locks silvered the two little tufts of flaxen hair which curled on each side of his head, the top of which was quite bald; his face, large and rubicund, was completely shaved, except the whiskers, of deep red, which were suffered to grow on his fat cheeks. Notwithstanding his age and corpulency, Murphy was active and robust. His expression, although phlegmatic, was at the same time benevolent and resolute. He wore a white cravat, a large waistcoat, and a black coat with long skirts; his smallclothes, of a greenish drab, were of the same material as his gaiters, with their pearl buttons; these were rather short, leaving his stockings visible, of unbleached wool.

The dress and manly bearing of Murphy were a perfect picture of what the English call a gentleman farmer. However, we hasten to say that Murphy was an English gentleman, and not a farmer.

At the moment that Rodolphe entered the court, Murphy put into the pocket of a small travelling-carriage a pair of pistols, which he had just carefully cleaned.

"Ah! what the devil are you doing with your pistols?" said Rodolphe to him. "That is my affair, my lord," said Murphy, getting down from the steps; "attend to your business—I'll attend to mine."

"At what hour did you order the horses?"

"According to your orders, just at nightfall."

"You arrived this morning?" "At eight o'clock. Madame Georges had ample time to get all things ready."

"You appear to be out of humour; have you any fault to find with me?" "I have but too much, my lord—too much—one day with another—finally—the danger—it is your life." "You do very well to talk! If I were to let you alone, you would run all the risks." "And when you can do good without risking your life, where is the great harm, my lord?" "Where would be the great pleasure, Murphy?" "You," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "you! in such taverns!" "Oh! there you are, you John Bulls, with your aristocratic scruples! believing your great lords superior beings to yourselves, poor lambs—proud of your butchers!"

"If you were English you would comprehend this, my lord—'on honore qui honore.' Besides, I should be a Turk, Chinese, or American, not to find that you are wrong in thus exposing yourself. Last night, in that abominable street of 'la ciét,' in going to dig out that infernal Bras-Rouge, whom the devil confound—it was only the fear of offending you that kept me from giving you my aid in your conflict with the ruffian you met in that horrid alley." "That is to say Mr. Murphy, that you had some doubts of my strength and my courage!" "Unquestionably, you have given me reason a hundred times to doubt neither the one nor the other. Grace à Dieu, Crabb of Ramsgate taught you to box, and Lacour of Paris the use of the cane and the foot, and for curiosity 'Argot;' the famous Bertrand has instructed you in fencing, and in your trials with these professors you have often had the advantage; you can kill a swallow on the wing with your pistol; you have muscles like steel; although slender and puny, you can beat me as easily as a race-horse can a dray-horse—that is true."

Rodolphe had complaisantly listened to this enumeration of his gladiatorial qualities; he answered, smiling, "Well, and what do you fear, then?"

"I maintain, my lord, that it is not suitable that you take by the collar the first blackguard you meet; I do not say this on account of the inconvenience it puts a certain honourable gentleman of my acquaintance to in blacking his face with charcoal, and looking like the devil. Notwithstanding my gray hairs, my 'embonpoint,' and my gravity, I'll disguise myself like a rope-dancer, if it will serve you; but yet I must say—"

"Oh! I know it well, old Murphy! when an idea is graven on your iron scull, when affection is planted in your brave and excellent heart, the devil must use his teeth and nails to draw them out."

"You flatter me, my lord; you meditate some—"

"Don't alarm yourself." "Some folly, my lord."

"My poor Murphy, you choose a poor time to lecture me!"

"Why?" "I am now in one of my moments of pride and happiness. I am here—" "In a place where you have done good?" "It is a place of refuge from your homilies—it is my Temple Bar."

"If it is, where the devil do you wish I should take you, my lord?" "Master Murphy, you flatter me; you wish to prevent some new folly." "My lord, there are some for which I am very indulgent."

"Those of money?" "Yes; for, after all, with two millions of revenue—" "One is often in want, my poor Murphy." "To whom do you say thus, my lord?"

"Yes! there are so many pleasures, so pure, so profound, which cost so little! What is there comparable to that which I enjoyed just now, when this unfortunate creature found herself in security here, and in her gratitude she kissed my hand? This is not all; my happiness has a long future; to-morrow, after to-morrow, I can still think with delight of the joys of this poor child, in this tranquil retreat, awakening each morning near Madame Georges, who will love her tenderly; for misfortune has sympathy with misfortune."

"Oh! as for Madame Georges, never were benefits better bestowed. Noble, courageous woman! an angel of virtue—an angel. I am rarely moved, but I am touched with the suffer-

ings of Madame Georges. But as for your new protégée—hold, we won't talk about her, my lord." "Why not, Murphy?" "My lord, you do what seems to you to be good." "I do what is just," said Rodolphe, with a shade of impatience. "That which is just, according to your opinion."

"That which is just before God and my conscience," answered Rodolphe, severely. "Stop, my lord; we will talk no more about it—we shall not agree."

"No; I command you to speak," said Rodolphe, haughtily. "I have never so exposed myself that my lord has commanded me to be silent. I hope he will not command me to speak," answered Murphy, proudly.

"Monsieur Murphy!" cried Rodolphe, with a tone of increasing irritation. "My lord!" "You know, sir, I like no concealments." "It is convenient for me to have concealment!" said Murphy, roughly.

"Learn, sir, that if I descend to familiarity with you, it is on condition that you raise yourself to equal me in candour!" It is impossible to describe the sovereign "hauteur" with which Rodolphe pronounced these last words. "My lord! I am fifty years of age; I am a gentleman; you ought not to speak thus to me." "Be quiet!" "My lord!" "Be quiet!" "My lord, it is unworthy of you to force a man of sensibility to recall the services he has rendered."

"Your services? and have I not paid them in every way?"

We must say, in justice to Rodolphe, that he had not attached that importance to these cruel words, which placed Murphy in the light of a mercenary; unfortunately, he interpreted them in this manner. He became purple with shame, struck his contracted fists on his bald head with an expression of mournful indignation, then suddenly casting his regards on Rodolphe, whose whole frame shook with passion, Murphy suppressed a sigh, and said, with a voice of tender commiseration, "My lord, return to yourself; you are no longer reasonable!"

These words gave the finishing stroke to the rage of Rodolphe; his eyes sparkled with savage brightness; his lips became white, and advancing towards Murphy with a threatening gesture, he cried, "And do you dare!" Murphy retreated a step, and said, as if in spite of himself, "My lord, my lord! remember the 13th January!" These words produced a magical effect on Rodolphe: his face, contracted by passion, became relaxed; he looked fixedly at Murphy, cast down his head, and then, after a moments' silence, he said, or murmured, in a touching voice, "Ah! sir, you are cruel—I thought otherwise—and you again—you—" Rodolphe could not finish; his voice died away, and he fell, half sitting, on a seat of stone, and concealed his face in his hands.

"My lord," cried Murphy, "my good lord, pardon me; pardon your old faithful Murphy. It was only pushed to extremity; and fearing, alas! not for myself, but for you, the consequences of your passion, that I said it: I said it without anger, without reproach; I have said it in spite of myself, and with compassion. Mon Dieu! who ought to know your character if I don't, who have not left you since your infancy! In pity say that you forgive me for having recalled to your mind that fatal day—alas! what expiations have you not—"

Rodolphe raised his head; he was very pale; he said to his companion, with a soft and sad voice,

"Enough, enough, my old friend; I thank you for having stopped, with one word, this foolish quarrel. I will make no excuses for what I have said; you know, as we say at home, it is a long way from the heart to the lips. I was crazy—let us say no more about it."

"Alas! now I see you for a long time sad. How unfortunate I am! I desire nothing so much as to see you shake off this melancholy temperament, and by my foolish susceptibility I plunge you into it again! 'Mort Dieu!' what is the use of being an honest man, and of having gray hairs, if it is not to endure the reproaches that one does not merit! But no," continued Murphy, with an exultation quite comic from its contrast with his habitual calmness of mind; "but no, I must be flattered all the day long; they must say to me, 'Monsieur Murphy, you are the model of attendants; there is no fidelity like yours; Monsieur Murphy, you are an admirable man; Monsieur Murphy, the devil—"peste," how good he is—oh! oh! Monsieur Murphy, brave Murphy!! Get along, old parrot; come, now, scratch your old gray head!!'" Then, recollecting the affectionate words that Rodolphe had addressed to him at the commencement of their conversation, he cried out with renewed violence, "But didn't he call me his good, faithful, kind Murphy—and I, to go on like a clown at an involuntary whim! at my age—'Mort Dieu!' it is enough to make me tear out my hair;" and the poor man seized his head with both hands.

These words and this gesture were a sign that the paroxysm had arrived at its climax. Fortunately or unfortunately for Murphy, he was quite bald, which rendered his threat of no avail, no doubt to his great regret; for when the action succeeded the words, that is to say, when his fingers only come in contact with the surface of his scull, shining and polished like marble, the worthy man was confused, and ashamed with his presumption; he accused himself of being a boaster, a romancer; we must say, however, to exculpate poor Murphy from this charge, that he formerly possessed as fine a head of hair as had ever ornamented the "cranium" of any gentleman of Yorkshire.

Ordinarily, the disappointment of Murphy respecting his hair would have amused Rodolphe; but his thoughts were now too grave, too sad. However, wishing not to augment the regret of his companion, he said to him, with a gentle smile, "Listen, good Murphy. You appear to praise without reserve the good that I have done for Madame Georges." "My lord—" "And to be astonished at the interest I have expressed for this poor girl?" "My lord, pardon me; I have been wrong; I have been wrong." "No; I conceive, appearances have deceived you. Yet, as you assist me with as much fidelity as courage in the enterprise I have undertaken, it is my duty, or, if you prefer it, my grateful feelings, which makes me try to convince you that I have not acted lightly." "I know it, my lord."

"You know my ideas on the subject of what good a man can do. To assist honourable unfortunates who ask assistance, is well. To search after those who struggle with honour, with energy, and come to their aid, sometimes without their knowledge—to prevent in time want or temptation which might lead to crime—is better. To reinstate them in their own eyes, to render honest and good those who have preserved some good qualities amid all the misery

that surrounded them, all the want that threatened them, all the scorn and contempt that withered them, is better still. To pursue with a vigorous hatred, an implacable vengeance, vice, infamy, crime, whether it wallows in the mud or reposes on velvet, is justice; but to blindly succour merited misery, but to degrade charity and pity, but to prostitute these chaste and pious consolations of my wounded heart—to prostitute them to unworthy, infamous beings, would be horrible, impious, sacrilegious. It would be doubting a God; and he who gives ought to believe!" "My lord, I did not intend to say that the objects of your benefactions were unworthy."

"One word more, my old friend; Madame Georges, and the poor young girl I have confided to her, have set out from two extremes, to fall into one common abyss—misfortune. The one, happy, rich, loved, honoured, endowed with every virtue, has seen her life withered, broken, annihilated by the wicked hypocrite to whom blind parents had married her. I say it with joy, but for me, the poor woman would have expired with misery and want; for shame prevented her from applying to any one."

"Ah! my lord, when we arrived at that wretched hovel, what frightful poverty! horrible, horrible! And when, after her long illness, she awoke, as it were, in this house, so calm, so quiet, what surprise! what gratitude! You are right, my lord, to see such unfortunate ones succoured; it makes one believe in God."

"It is by assisting them we honour God; I acknowledge nothing more celestial than virtue, calm and holy; nothing is more respectable than a woman like Madame Georges, who, educated by a pious and good mother in an intelligent observance of every duty, has never failed in them—never! and has valiantly passed through the most frightful trials. But is it not also honouring God, in that which is most holy, by dragging from the mire one of those rare beings which he is pleased to endow? does she not also merit our pity, our interest, our respect? Yes, respect the poor child who, left to her own instinct; who, tortured, imprisoned, degraded, defiled, has in a holy manner preserved at the bottom of her heart the noble germes that God himself has planted! If you had heard her, this poor creature, at the first word of interest that I expressed for her, at the first honest and friendly word she had ever heard, how the most charming instinct, tastes the most pure, thought the most delicate, the most poetic, are awakened in her ingenuous mind, just like in Spring, when the thousand wild flowers of the meadows unfold their blossoms at the least ray of the sun, without knowing why! During this hour's conversation that I had with this workman, I discovered in Fleur de Marie treasures of goodness, grace, and wisdom—yes, wisdom, my old Murphy. A smile came to my lip and a tear started to my eyes when, with her little prattling, filled with reason, she proved to me that I must economize forty sous each day to keep from want and from temptation. Poor little thing, she said all this with such a serious tone, so touching—she felt such satisfaction at giving me good advice, such sweet delight at hearing me promise that I would follow it—I was affected—oh! affected to tears, as I have told you; and I am accused of being 'blase,' hard, inflexible. Oh! no, no, thank God! sometimes I yet can feel my heart beat warm, and— But you, my friend, you are softened. Come, come, Fleur de Marie shall not be jealous of Madame Georges; you will interest yourself also in her fate."

"It is true, my lord—this wishing you to economize forty sous, believing you to be a workman, instead of asking you to spend it for her."

"And, when I think that this child has a rich and honoured mother, as they say, who has shamefully abandoned her! oh! if this is so, I will know it, I hope—and I will tell you how. Oh! if it is so! wo, wo to that woman! she will have a terrible expiation to make. Murphy, Murphy, never have I felt such sensations of hatred as I feel when I think of this woman, whom I know not. You know, Murphy, you know, there are certain vengeances dear to me—certain sufferings most precious—I have a thirst for certain tears!" "Alas! my lord," said Murphy, much afflicted at the diabolical expression of Rodolphe's countenance as he spoke these words, "I know it; those who merit your compassion and interest often say of you, 'He is, then, an angel from heaven!' while those who deserve your contempt and hatred, cursing you in their despair, 'He is the devil!'"

"Hush! here is Madame Georges and Marie. Prepare everything for our departure; we must be at Paris early."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PARTING.

Marie (henceforth we shall give this name to La Goualeuse), thanks to the cares of Madame Georges, was no longer recognisable. A pretty little round peasant's hat, with two thick braids of new blonde hair, half concealed her heavenly face; a kerchief of white muslin was crossed on her breast, and disappeared under the boddice of her apron of changeable silk, whose lively colours formed a pleasing contrast to the Carmelite dress of fine wool, which appeared as if it had been made for her.

The expression of Marie was profoundly contemplative; there are certain joys which cause emotions of ineffable sadness, of melancholy the most holy.

Rodolphe was not surprised at the gravity of Marie; he expected it. Joyous and lively, he would have had a less exalted opinion of her. With perfect tact, he made her no compliments on her beauty, but he felt that there was something solemn, something holy, in this redemption of a being snatched from vice. On the serious and resigned countenance of Madame Georges could be seen the traces of long suffering, of profound grief; she looked at Marie with compassion, a benevolence almost maternal, so much were the sweetness and grace of the young girl sympathetic. "Here is my child," said she, presenting Marie to Rodolphe, "who comes to thank you for your goodness." At these words, "my child," La Goualeuse slowly turned her large eyes towards her protectress, and looked at her for some moments with an expression of gratitude quite indescribable. "I thank you for Marie, my dear Madame Georges; she is worthy of this tender interest. She will merit it always."

"Monsieur Rodolphe," said Marie, in a voice trembling with emotion, "you understand, do you not, that I can find nothing to say to you?" "your emotion tells me all, Marie." "Oh! she

feels how much her happiness is providential," said Madame Georges, much affected. "Her first movement, on entering my chamber, was to bend her knees before my crucifix."

"It was because—now, thanks to you, Monsieur Rodolphe, I dare to pray," said Marie, looking at her friend.

Murphy turned suddenly away; his English stoicism would not allow them to see how much he was touched by the simple words of Marie.

Rodolphe said, "My child, I have something to say to Madame Georges. My friend Murphy will conduct you over the farm, and will make you acquainted with your future protégées. We will join you directly. Well! well, Murphy, don't you hear me?"

The good man turned his back, and pretended to blow his nose with a most formidable noise; he then put his handkerchief into his pocket, pulled his hat over his eyes, and half turning round, offered his arm to Marie.

He had so skilfully manœuvred, that neither Rodolphe nor Madame Georges had perceived his face. Taking the arm of the young girl, he moved rapidly towards the buildings of the farm, walking so fast that, to keep up with him, Marie was obliged to run, as she had run in her infancy after La Chouette.

"Well! Madame Georges, what do you think of Marie?" said Rodolphe. "Monsieur Rodolphe, I have already told you, that hardly had she entered into my chamber, when, seeing my 'Christ,' she threw herself on her knees with a movement so spontaneous, so naturally religious, I cannot describe it; I saw in a moment that her mind was not degraded; and, besides, Monsieur Rodolphe, in her expressions of gratitude to you, there is nothing exaggerated—all is sincere. One word more will prove to you how much this religious instinct is all-dominant. I said to her, 'You must have been very much astonished, very happy, when Monsieur Rodolphe told you that you should remain here? what a profound impression it must have made!' 'Oh! yes,' she answered; 'when Monsieur Rodolphe told me that, I do not know what passed through my mind at once; but I experienced that kind of religious content, that holy respect that I feel when I enter a church—when I could enter,' she added; 'for you know, Madame—' I did not let her finish, seeing her face covered with shame. 'I know, my child—and I will always call you my child, if you will permit me—I know you have suffered much; but God blesses those who love and those who fear him—those who have been unfortunate and those who repent.'"

"Well, Madame Georges, now I am doubly content with what I have done. This poor girl interests you. You will only have to sow and reap; you have divined well; her instincts are excellent."

"That which has touched me the most is, that she never allowed herself to ask me one question concerning you, for naturally her curiosity must be much excited. Struck with this delicacy, and wishing to try her, I said, 'You must be quite anxious to know who your benefactor is?' 'I know it, she answered, with a charming naïveté; 'he is called My Benefactor.'"

"Thus, then, you will love her? Excellent woman, her company will be a solace for you; she will occupy at least a small corner of your heart."

"Yes, I will interest myself for her, as I would have interested myself for him," said Madame Georges, in a heart-rending tone. Rodolphe took her hand: "Come, come, do not be discouraged yet; if your researches have been in vain, perhaps some day—" "Madame Georges bowed her head sadly, and said, with bitterness, "My poor son would have been now twenty years old." "Say that he *is* twenty years old." "May God hear you and grant it!" murmured Rodolphe. "He will grant it, I really hope, for the best. Yesterday I went (but in vain) to look for a certain man called Bras-Rouge, who, I had been told, could possibly give me some account of your son. Coming from his nurse after a fight, I met this poor unfortunate child." "Alas! so much the better! your kindness for me put you in the way to succour another unfortunate."

"Besides, I have wished for a long time to explore these miserable regions, almost sure that there are some souls to be saved from old Satan, whom I amuse myself by thwarting often," added Rodolphe, smiling, "and from whom I sometimes snatch his best morsels. Then," he added, in a serious tone, "have you no news from Rochefort?" "None," said Madame Georges, in a low voice, and shuddering.

"So much the better! this monster has met death in the mud-banks, in endeavouring to escape. His description is published, and he is too formidable a villain that they should not have used every exertion to recover him; and as it is six months since he has disappeared from the gal—" Rodolphe stopped just as he was about to pronounce the word.

"From the galleys! oh! say it—from the galleys," cried the unhappy woman, in a voice almost wild. "The father of my son! Ah! if this unfortunate child lives yet—if, like me, he has not changed his name, what shame—what shame—and this is nothing yet. His father has perhaps kept his humble promise. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, pardon me; but, notwithstanding your benefactions, I am yet very unhappy!"

"Poor woman, calm yourself."

"Sometimes I have horrible alarms; I imagine that my husband has escaped safe and sound from Rochefort; that he seeks me to kill me, as perhaps he has killed my child; for what has he done with him—what has he done with him?" "This is, indeed, an unfathomable mystery," said Rodolphe, gravely. "What interest could this wretch have in taking away your son? Some fifteen years ago he endeavoured to escape to some foreign country; so young a child would only embarrass his flight." "Alas! Monsieur Rodolphe, when my husband" (the poor woman shuddered in pronouncing these words) "was arrested on the frontiers and brought back to Paris, they permitted me to visit him in prison, he said to me these horrible words: 'I have carried off your child because you love him, and because, through him, I can force you to send me money, of which he shall profit or not, as it suits me; that is my business. Whether alive or dead, don't concern yourself; but if he lives, he shall be in good hands: you shall drink of the cup of shame for the son, as you have for the father.' Alas! a short time after my husband was condemned for life. Since that time, all the entreaties, the prayers, with which my letters were filled, have been in vain; I have learned nothing of the fate of my son. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, my son! where is he at present? Those frightful words are constantly recurring to me: 'You shall drink of the cup of shame for the son, as you have for the father.'"

"But this would be atrocious, inexplicable; why try to corrupt the poor child? above all, why take him from you?" "I have told you, Monsieur Rodolphe, to force me to send him money; although he had ruined me, I still had some resources left, but these were soon exhausted. Notwithstanding his baseness, I could not but think that he would employ at least a part of this money for this poor child." "And has your son no mark—nothing by which he may be recognised?"

"None other than that which I have spoken of, Monsieur Rodolphe; a small 'Saint Esprit' sculptured in lapislazuli, fastened to his neck by a silver chain; this relic, blessed by the holy father, was a gift from my mother, who had worn it from her childhood, and regarded it with great veneration. I had also worn it, and fastened it myself around the neck of my child. Alas! this talisman has lost its virtue."

"Who knows, good mother? God is all-powerful."

"It was Providence who sent you to me!"

"Too late, my good Madame Georges, too late. I might have saved you from years of sorrow."

"Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, have you not loaded me with—"

"What? I have bought this farm; you have consented to serve me as agent, and, thanks to your excellent management, it produces me—"

"Produces you, my lord?" said Madame Georges, interrupting Rodolphe; "do I not pay over the proceeds to our good Abbé Laporte? And this sum, is it not, according to your orders, distributed as alms?"

"And is it not an excellent produce? But you have advised the excellent abbé of my arrival, have you not? I want to recommend my protegée to him. Has he received my letter?" "Monsieur Murphy carried it to him when he arrived this morning."

"In this letter I related to our good curé the history of this poor child. I was not certain that I could come myself to-day: in this case, Murphy would have brought Marie to you." One of the boys of the farm interrupted this conversation, which took place in the garden. "Madame," he said, "'Monsieur le Curé' awaits you." "Have the posthorses arrived, my boy?" asked Rodolphe. "Ye , Monsieur Rodolphe; they are putting them to the carriage." Madame Georges, the curate, and the people at the farm, only knew the protector of Fleur de Marie by the name of Rodolphe. The discretion of Murphy was impenetrable; as much as he made it a point, when they were alone, to "my son" Rodolphe, so much had he care when before strangers never to call him by any other name than that of Monsieur Rodolphe.

"I forgot to inform you, my dear Madame Georges," said Rodolphe, as they walked towards the house, "that Marie has, I think, a weak chest; misery and privations have injured her health. This morning, in the strong light, I was struck with her extreme paleness; although her cheeks were rosy, her eyes appeared to shine with a feverish expression. She will need great care." "Count upon me, Monsieur Rodolphe. But, praised be God! there is nothing serious; at this age, country air, with quiet repose—she will soon improve."

"I think so myself. But never mind. I don't put great confidence in your country doctors. I will tell Murphy to bring here a skilful physician, who will prescribe the proper regimen. You will send me word from time to time how she gets on. When she becomes more quiet and composed, we will think of the future. Perhaps it will be better for her to remain always with you, if her conduct and character are agreeable to you." "It will be my wish, Monsieur Rodolphe. She will take the place of the child that I regret each day."

"Well, let us hope for you, let us hope for her."

At the moment when they approached the house from the farm, Murphy and Marie came up from the other side. Marie was all delighted with her walk. Rodolphe called the attention of Madame Georges to the round red spots on the cheeks of the young girl, which formed such a striking contrast to the delicate whiteness of her skin. The worthy man, leaving the arm of Marie, came and whispered to Rodolphe, "This little girl has enchanted me; I do not know, now, which interests me the most, she or Madame Georges. I was a fool and a madman."

"Don't tear out your hair for that, old Murphy," said Rodolphe, smiling, and squeezing his arm.

Madame Georges, leaning on the arm of Marie, entered with her into the little saloon, on the ground floor, where the Abbé Laporte awaited them.

Murphy went to make arrangements for their departure, and Madame Georges, Marie, Rodolphe, and the curé remained alone. Plain, but very comfortable, this little room was hung and furnished with chints, like the rest of the house, exactly as Rodolphe had described it. A thick carpet covered the floor, a good fire blazed in the chimney, and two bouquets of "*reines-marguerites*," placed in glass vases, spread their perfume throughout the apartment. Through the green blinds, half closed, could be seen the meadow, the little river, and, on the other side, the hill planted with chestnut-trees.

The Abbé Laporte, seated alongside of the fire, was more than eighty years old; since the last days of the Revolution he had officiated in this parish.

It is impossible to imagine anything more venerable than his appearance, more sweetly imposing than his withered countenance, pale, thin, and shaded by his long white hair, which fell from the collar of his cassock, which was patched in many places, the abbé preferring, as he said, to clothe two or three poor children with good warm clothing than to play the gallant, that is to say, than to wear one cassock less than two or three years.

The good abbé was so old that his hands trembled always; and there was something so touching in this movement, that when he raised them sometimes in speaking, one would have said he was giving his blessing. Rodolphe looked at Marie with interest; if he had known her less, or, rather, not imagined her thoughts, he would have been astonished to see her approach the abbé with a serenity quite religious.

The admirable instinct of Marie had taught her that shame ceased where expiation and repentance commenced.

"Monsieur l'Abbe," said Rodolphe, respectfully, "Madame Georges has consented to take charge of this young girl, for whom I demand your kindness and cares."

"She has the right, monsieur, as all those have who come to us. The mercy of God is in-

exhaustible, my dear child; he has proved it, in not forsaking you in such sad trials. I know all," and he took the hand of Marie within his own trembling and venerable hands. "The generous man who has saved you, has realized these words of the Holy Scriptures: 'The Lord is near those who cry unto him; he will fulfil the desires of those who fear him: he will listen to their petitions, he will save them.' Now, merit his goodness, by your conduct; you will always find me to encourage you, to sustain you, in the good way you have entered. You will have in Madame Georges an example every day—in me a faithful counsellor. The Lord will finish his work."

"And I will pray for those who had pity on me, who brought me here, father," said Marie, and by a movement quite involuntary, she threw herself at his feet; her emotion was deep, her sobs almost choaked her. Madame Georges, Rodolphe, the abbé, all were profoundly affected.

"Raise yourself, my child," said the curé; "you will soon merit absolution from the great fault of which you have rather been the victim than culpable; to speak again with the prophet, 'The Lord sustains all those who are ready to fall, and raises all those who are cast down.'"

"Farewell, Marie," said Rodolphe, giving to her a small gold cross, fastened to a black velvet riband; "farewell, keep this cross as a remembrance of me; I have had engraved on it this morning the date of your deliverance—of your redemption. I will soon return to see you." Marie pressed the cross to her lips. At this moment Murphy opened the door of the saloon: "Monsieur Rodolphe, the horses are ready."

"Adieu, father; adieu, my good Madame Georges. I recommend your child. Once more, farewell, Marie." The venerable priest, leaning on the arm of Marie and Madame Georges, who sustained his tottering steps, went to the porch to see Rodolphe depart. The last rays of the setting sun shone out upon this interesting and melancholy group.

An old priest, a symbol of charity, pardon, and nope eternal;

A woman, tried by all griefs which could afflict a wife, a mother;

A young girl, just emerging from infancy, already plunged into the abyss of vice by misery, and by the besetting infamy of crime.

Rodolphe mounted into the carriage, Murphy seated himself at his side, and the horses started off at a gallop.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

The next morning, Rodolphe, still disguised as a workman, was to be seen at the door of a tavern called the "Panier-Fleuri," situated not far from the "*barrière*" of Bercy. At ten o'clock of the evening previous, the Chourineur had been exact at the appointed time and place, as indicated by Rodolphe; the continuation of this story will give the result of this interview.

It was then noon, and raining in torrents; the Seine, swollen by the almost continual rains, had obtained a great height, and overflowed a part of the quay. Rodolphe, looking from time to time with great impatience on the side of the "*barrière*," at last descried at a distance a man and woman advancing, sheltered by an umbrella; it was La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole. These two persons were completely metamorphosed; the brigand had abandoned his wretched clothes and his air of brutal ferocity: he wore a long surtout of green beaver cloth, and a round hat; his cravat and his shirt were of extreme whiteness. If it had not been for his ugliness, and the savage sparkling of his eye, always sharp and piercing, one would have taken this man, with his peacable and confident gait, for an honest citizen. The Borgnesse, also in her Sunday garb, wore a white hat, a large shawl of "bourre-de-soie," imitation cashmere, and carried in her hand a large "cabas" (a box for figs).

The rain having ceased for a moment, Rodolphe, surmounting the disgust that he felt at the sight of these wretches, walked straight up to them.

For the "Argot" of the tapis-franc, the Maître d'Ecole had substituted a language quite "recherche," which appeared the more horrible, as it announced a cultivated mind, and contrasted with the sanguinary boastings of this brigand.

As Rodolphe approached him, the Maître d'Ecole saluted him profoundly, and La Chouette made a low courtesy. "Monsieur, your very humble servant," said he: "delighted to make, or, rather, to make again your acquaintance, for the day before yesterday you deigned to bestow on me two blows with your fists, enough to stun a rhinoceros. But we will say no more about that now; it was a pleasantry on your part—I am sure a simple pleasantry—think no more about it; grave affairs bring us together again. I saw the Chourineur last night at eleven o'clock at the tapis-franc; I told him to meet us here this morning, if he wished to be our assistant; but it appears that he refuses decidedly." "You accept, then?" "If you please, monsieur, your name?" "Rodolphe."

"Monsieur Rodolphe, we will enter into the Panier-Fleuri. Neither madame nor myself has breakfasted. We will speak of our little affairs while we are breaking a crust."

"Willingly."

"However, we can talk as we are walking; you and the Chourineur, owe, without meaning to reproach you, some damages to my wife and me. You have made us lose more than two thousand francs. La Chouette had an appointment, near Saint Ouen, with a tall gentleman in mourning, who came to ask for you, the other night, at the tapis-franc; he proposed that amount if we would do something to you. But, Finette, go and choose a cabinet at the Panier-Fleuri, and order the breakfast; some cutlets, a morsel of veal, a salad, and two bottles of Beaune-première; we will join you."

La Chouette had not for a moment taken her eye from Rodolphe; she went in, after exchanging a rapid glance with her companion, who continued,

"I tell you, then, Monsieur Rodolphe, that the Chourineur has 'edified' me about this proposition for the two thousand francs."

"What does that mean, 'edify?'"

"It is true this language is a little too high-flown for you; I mean to say that the Chourineur has told me what the tall man in black wanted of you, with his two thousand francs." "Well, well." "It is not so well, young man; for, the Chourineur having met La Chouette, yesterday morning, near Saint Ouen, never left her a moment, as soon as he saw the tall man in

black arrive; so that he did not dare to come near her. It is, then, two thousand francs that you must put us in the way of getting, without counting the five hundred that we were to have received for a portfolio, that we were to return, but which otherwise we should not have returned, after inspection of the papers, which appear to us to be of more value than that."

"It contains, then, papers of much value?"

"It contains papers which appear to me very curious, although the greater part are written in English, and which I keep here," said the brigand, striking the pocket of his surtout. On learning that the Maître d'Ecole had about his person the papers he had stolen from Tom, Rodolphe was much satisfied, as they were of the first importance for him. His instructions to the Chourineur had been on this account, to prevent Tom from approaching La Chouette; for she would keep the portfolio, and Rodolphe hoped that he would become the possessor.

"I take care of these papers as I would of my purse," said the brigand; "for I have found out the address of this stranger, and, by some means or other, I will see him."

"We can make a trade, if you will; for, if our plot succeeds, I will buy those papers from you; I, who know the man—that will be better than your—"

"We will see—but let us return to business."

"Well, then, I have proposed a superb affair to the Chourineur; at first he accepted it, and then backed out."

"He always had singular ideas." "But, in declining, he observed to me—" "He observed to you!! the devil, you are fierce upon grammar." "Maître d'Ecole, it is my trade. He observed to me, that if he didn't eat 'pain rouge,' that was no reason why others should not, and that you, doubtless, would lend me your aid."

"And may I know, without indiscretion, why you made an appointment with the Chourineur yesterday, at Saint Ouen? that which procured him the advantage of meeting La Chouette? he was rather embarrassed how to answer that question." Rodolphe imperceptibly bit his lips; he however, answered, shrugging his shoulders, "I believe so, for I had only told him half of my project—you understand—not knowing whether he was quite decided." "It was more prudent." "So much the more prudent, as I had two strings to my bow." "Ah, bah!!! Certainly." "You are a man of precaution. You had, then, given a rendezvous to the Chourineur at Saint Ouen for—"

Rodolphe, after a moment's hesitation, had the happiness to imagine a story which would cover the "maladresse" of the Chourineur.

"Here is the story. The affair that I propose is very good, because the master of the house in question is in the country. All my fear was that he might return; to be perfectly sure, I said to myself, there is only one thing to do."

"That was to assure yourself that he was in the country."

"As you say. I set out, then, for Pierrefitte, where his country-house is. My cousin is a servant there—do you understand?" "Perfectly, my boy. Well?"

"My cousin told me that her master would not return to Paris until the day after to-morrow."

"After to-morrow?" "Yes." "Very well. But I return to my question. Why did you agree to meet the Chourineur at Saint Ouen?" "You are not very cunning. What is the distance from Pierrefitte to Saint Ouen?"

"About a league." "And from Saint Ouen to Paris?" "The same." "Well! if I had found no one at Pierrefitte, that is to say, the house vacant, there would have been some good to be done there—not so good as at Paris, but passable—I would return to Saint Ouen to seek the Chourineur, who was waiting for me: from thence we could return to Pierrefitte by a cross-road that I know, and—" "I comprehend. If, on the contrary, the affair was to come off at Paris?" "We would reach the 'barrière de l'Etoile' by the road of the Révolte, and from thence to the Allée des Veuves." "There is only one step—it is quite plain. At Saint Ouen, you had two strings to your bow—that was very adroit. Now I understand why the Chourineur was at Saint Ouen. So now we can say that the house in the Allée des Veuves will be uninhabited until after to-morrow."

"Uninhabited, except by the porter."

"Understood. And it is an advantageous operation?"

"My cousin has spoken to me of sixty thousand francs in gold—in the cabinet of her master." "And you know the rooms?" "Like my pocket. My cousin has lived there for a year; and it is from hearing her speak of the immense sums her master drew from time to time from the bank, to place them otherwise, that this idea came first into my head. As the porter is strong, I spoke about it to the Chourineur; after much persuasion, he at first consented, but afterward drew back. However, he is not capable of selling a friend."

"No! he has some—But here we are. I do not know if you are like me, but the morning air has given me an appetite." La Chouette was on the sill of the door. "This way—this way," she cried; "I have ordered the breakfast." Rodolphe wished that the brigand should pass in first—he had his reasons—but the Maître d'Ecole was so polite, so urgent, that he was obliged to precede him.

Before sitting down to table, the Maître d'Ecole struck lightly on the floor and walls, so as to assure himself of their thickness. "We will have no need to speak very low," he said; "the wainscot is not thin; let them serve all at once, and we need not be interrupted in our conversation." The breakfast was then brought in by a servant of the inn; but before the door was closed, Rodolphe saw the coalman, Murphy, seated in an adjoining cabinet. The chamber wherein passed the scene we are about to describe was long and narrow, and lighted by a window that looked into the street directly opposite the door. La Chouette sat with her back to this window; the Maître d'Ecole was on one side of the table, and Rodolphe was on the other: as soon as the servant went out, the brigand arose, took his plate, and seated himself at the side of Rodolphe, so as to completely conceal him from the door. "We can talk better," he said, "and we need not talk so loud." "And, besides, you wish to place yourself between the door and me, to prevent my going out," answered Rodolphe, boldly.

The "Maître d'Ecole" made a sign in the affirmative; and then half drawing out of the pocket of his coat a long round stiletto, with a wooden handle, "Do you see that?" "Yes." "Notice to amateurs," said he, knitting his brows, with a significant gesture. "And look out for me. I have put a dagger in my man," added La Chouette.

Rodolphe, with great composure, put his hand under his blouse, and drew out a small double-barrelled pistol, which he showed to the Maître d'Ecole, and then replaced it in his pocket.

"We are made to understand one another," said the brigand, "but you don't exactly comprehend. I just suppose what is hardly probable. If any one should come to arrest me, whether you have set the trap for me or not—all the same—I'll stick you! So saying, he cast a ferocious glance at Rodolphe.

"And I'll jump on him to assist you, Fourline," cried La Chouette. Rodolphe answered not a word, but he shrugged his shoulders and poured out a glass of wine, which he drank. This "sang froid" imposed upon the Maître d'Ecole, and he said, "I only warn you."

"Well, well, put your skewer into your pocket, there are no chickens here to be skewered. I am an old cock, and have good spurs, my man," said Rodolphe. "Now let us talk about business." "Let us talk about business, but don't say anything against my skewer; that makes no noise; it does not trouble any one." "Yes, and does its work very nice, don't it, Fourline?" added La Chouette.

"Apropos," said Rodolphe to La Chouette, "is it true that you know who are the parents of La Goualeuse?"

"My man has put into the portfolio of the tall man two letters which speak about this. But she shall never see them, the little gironde. I would rather tear out both her eyes with my own hands. Oh! when I catch her at the tapis-franc, her account shall be paid."

"Come, come! Finette, talking, talking, all talk; yet business does not get on." "Can we talk before her?" asked Rodolphe. "With all confidence; she has been tried, and can be of great use to us in watching, getting information, receiving, selling, &c., &c.; she has every quality for an excellent manager. Dear Finette!" added the brigand, extending his hand to her, "you have no idea how many services she has rendered me. But take off your shawl, my dear, you may take cold when you go out; put your shawl along with your cabas." La Chouette took off her shawl. Notwithstanding his presence of mind and the command which he had over himself, Rodolphe was not able to control a movement of surprise in seeing, suspended by a silver ring to a heavy chain of mock gold which the old woman had around her neck, a little "Saint Esprit" of lapis-lazuli, conforming in every respect to the description of the one worn by the son of Madame Georges, at the time of his abduction.

At this discovery, a sudden thought struck Rodolphe. According to the account of the Chourineur, the Maître d'Ecole, in escaping from the galleys, six months back, had, by disfiguring and mutilating himself, evaded all the pursuits and researches of the police. It was also just six months since the husband of Madame Georges had made his escape, and no one knew what had become of him. From all this, he came to the conclusion that it was very possible that the Maître d'Ecole and the husband of this unfortunate were one and the same person: this latter had belonged to the better class of society; the Maître d'Ecole expressed himself often in select language. One remembrance awakened another. Rodolphe also recalled to mind that Madame Georges, one day, in speaking of the arrest of her husband, had mentioned the Herculean resistance of the monster, so that he had nearly made his escape. If the brigand was the husband of Madame Georges, he must know the fate of his son, besides: he had preserved in the portfolio of the stranger some papers relative to the birth of La Goualeuse, so that Rodolphe had new and grave reasons for persisting in his projects.

Happily, his preoccupation escaped the brigand, who was very busy in helping La Chouette.

Rodolphe said to the Borgnesse, "Marbleu! you have a fine chain there." "Fine, but not dear," said the old woman, laughing; "it is false gold, which I keep until my dear man gives me a real one." "That will depend on the gentleman, Finette; if we make a good business be easy." "It is astonishing how well it is imitated," said Rodolphe. "And at the end—what is it, then, the little blue thing?" "It is a present from my man, until he can give me a 'toquante,' an't it, 'Fourliné?'"

Rodolphe saw his suspicions half confirmed, and awaited with anxiety the answer of the brigand, who replied,

"You must take care of that, Finette, 'toquante' or no 'toquante'—it is a talisman."

"A talisman?" said Rodolphe, carelessly. "You believe in talismans, do you? Where the devil did you get it? give me the address of the maker." "They don't make any more, my good sir; the shop is shut. Such as you see it, that jewel is of great antiquity—three generations. I think a great deal of it—it is a family tradition," he added, with a hideous smile; "it is on that account that I have given it to Finette, to give her luck in all those enterprises in which she so worthily assists me. You shall see her work—you shall see her—if we make together some *commercial* operations. But to return to our business. You say, then, that in the Allée des Veuves—" "There is at number 17 a house occupied by a rich man; he is called Monsieur —" "I will not be so indiscreet as to ask you his name; there is, you say, sixty thousand francs in gold?" cried La Chouette. Rodolphe made a sign in the affirmative. "And you know all the rooms in the house?" said the Maître d'Ecole. "Very well." "And the entrance, is it difficult?" "A wall of seven feet in height on the side of the Allée des Veuves, a garden and windows down to the ground." "And is there only one porter to guard all the treasure?" "Yes!" "And what may be your plan of campaign, young man?" demanded the Maître d'Ecole, carelessly. "It is very simple: climb over the wall, pick the lock of the door, or force the window-shutters from without." "But if the porter should awake?" said the Maître d'Ecole, looking steadily at Rodolphe. "That would be his own fault," said he, with a significant gesture. "Well! does it suit you?" "You know I cannot answer you, without first examining the premises myself, that is to say, by the aid of my wife; but if all you have told me is true, it seems to me that we will take it right warm—to-night," said the villain, looking fixedly at Rodolphe. "To-night? Impossible," he answered, coldly. "Why not? since the owner will not return until after to-morrow?" "Yes, but I cannot to-night." "Truly? Well, and I cannot to-morrow." "For what reason?" "The same that prevents you from acting to-night," said the brigand, chuckling. After a moment's reflection, Rodolphe replied, "Very

well—good—let it be to-night. Where shall we meet?" "Meet! why, we won't part," said the Maître d'Ecole. "How?" "Why should we part? if the rain holds up a little, we will go and take a look at the Allée des Veuves; you will see how my wife can work. That done, we will return and play a game of piquet, and eat a mouthful in a cellar that I know of in the Champs Elysées, near the river; and as the Allee des Veuves is deserted very early, we will go there about ten o'clock." "I will rejoin you at nine o'clock, then." "Do you want to do this job or not?" "Certainly." "Well, then, you must not leave us before this night; otherwise—" "Otherwise?" "I shall think you want to lay a snare for me, and it is on that account you wish to leave me." "If I wished to lay a trap for you, what will hinder me laying it to-night?" "Everything. You did not think that I would propose to act so soon. By not quitting us, you cannot inform any one." "Then you mistrust me?" "Infinitely; but as there may be some truth in what you have told me, and the half of sixty thousand francs is worth the trouble, I mean to try it; but to-night or never." "If you say never, I shall know how to hold myself respecting you, and I will serve you, in my turn, a dish of my cooking." "I will return your politeness, you may reckon on it." "All this is folly!" said La Chouette. "I think like my 'Fourline:' either to-night, or not at all." Rodolphe found himself in an anxious position; if he let this occasion escape of taking the Maître d'Ecole, he perhaps would never find him again; henceforth on his guard, or perhaps recognised, arrested, and taken back to the galleys, he would carry with him those secrets which he had so much interest to discover. Trusting to chance, to his courage and address, he said to the Maître d'Ecole, "I consent; we will not quit one another until to-night." "Then I am your man—and you shall not repent. But it is now two o'clock; from hence to the Allée des Veuves it is quite far; it rains in torrents; pay the scot, and let us take a hack." "If we take a hack, I can first smoke a cigar." "Without doubt," said the Maître d'Ecole; "Finette does not mind the smell of tobacco." "Well, I'll go and get the cigars," said Rodolphe, rising. "Do not give yourself the trouble," said the Maître d'Ecole, stopping him; "Finette will go." Rodolphe reseated himself. The Maître d'Ecole had imagined his design, and La Chouette went out. "What a good manager I have been," said he, complacently; "heiu! she would go through fire to serve me." "Speaking of fire, it is not very warm here," said Rodolphe, putting his hands under his blouse. Then, continuing the conversation with the brigand, he took a pencil from the pocket of his waistcoat, and without being perceived he wrote some words in haste, taking care to place the letters wide apart, for he wrote without seeing. Having finished, the difficulty was to send it to its address. He arose, and walked to the window, and began to sing, keeping time with his fingers on the window. The Maître d'Ecole came and looked through the window, and said to him, carelessly, "What are you playing there?" "I play, 'Tu n'aura pas ma rose!'"

"It is very pretty. I only wished to see if it had effect enough on any of the passers-by to induce them to stop and listen."

"I have no such pretensions." "You are wrong, young man, for you beat the glass as you would a drum."

CHAPTER XVI.

PREPARATIONS.

At this moment Chouette came in with the tobacco.

"It seems to me that it has stopped raining," said Rodolphe, lighting his cigar; "if we go and see the carriage ourselves, it will stretch our legs." "What do you say? it does not rain any more? Are you blind?" said the Maître d'Ecole. "Do you think I am going to expose Finette to the risk of taking cold? Risk her precious life, and spoil her fine new shawl?"

"You are right, my man; it is real dog's weather!"

"Well! the servant is coming. When we pay her, we will send her for a hack," answered Rodolphe. "Ah! now you talk like a sensible man." The servant entered, and Rodolphe gave her five francs. "Ah! monsieur, I cannot permit it; you are too kind," cried the Maître d'Ecole. "Come, come, every one in his turn." "I submit, but on condition that I offer you something, directly, at a little tavern in the Champs Elysées, which I know: a charming place." "Well, well, I accept." The servant being paid, they descended, and Rodolphe wished to pass behind, out of politeness for La Chouette; but the Maître d'Ecole would not suffer it; he followed him closely, watching every movement. The people of the eating-house kept also a bar; among the many customers, a coachman, with his large hat drawn over his eyes, was paying his account when our party descended. Notwithstanding the close observance of the brigand and La Chouette, Rodolphe, who went ahead, exchanged a rapid and imperceptible glance with Murphy.

The door of the hack was open; Rodolphe stopped, decided this time to get in last, as the coachman was slowly drawing near. In effect, La Chouette passed in first, but after many compliments, Rodolphe was obliged to follow, for the Maître d'Ecole whispered in his ear, "You are determined, then, that I shall mistrust you?" Rodolphe mounted, the coachman advanced to the door whistling, and looked at Rodolphe with a surprised and troubled air. "Where do you want to go, Bourgevis?" asked the coachman. Rodolphe answered, in a loud voice, "Allée des—" 'Des Acacias,' cried the Maître d'Ecole, interrupting him with a loud voice; "we will pay you well, coachman."

"How the devil could you say where we are going before all those folks?" continued the Maître d'Ecole. "Let all be discovered to-morrow! such words might betray us. Ah! young man, young man, you are very imprudent!" Rodolphe answered, "True, I never thought of that; but with my cigar I am going to smoke you like herrings; suppose we open one of the windows?" and joining the action to the word, he let drop without a small paper nicely folded, the same which he had written on under his blouse. The Maître d'Ecole watched him so closely that, notwithstanding the immovable composure of Rodolphe, he could not but perceive a glance of triumph, for, putting his head out of the door, he cried to the coachman, "Whip behind! whip behind! there is some one on the foot-board." Rodolphe shuddered, but he joined his cries to those of his companion; the coachman stood on his seat, and said, "No, no, 'bourgeois,' there is no one there." "Parbleu! I want to be certain, just for curi-

osity sake," answered the Maitre d'Ecole, jumping into the street. He saw no one, perceived nothing, so he thought himself mistaken. "You will laugh," said he, getting in; "I do not know why, but I thought some one was following us." The carriage at this moment turned into a cross street, and disappeared. Murphy, who had not lost sight of it, and who had perceived the manœuvre of Rodolphe, run and picked up the little note, which had lodged in a crack of the pavement. At the end of a quarter of an hour, the Maitre d'Ecole said to the coachman, "We have changed our mind: 'Place De la Magdeleine.'" Rodolphe looked at him in astonishment.

"Without doubt, young man, from this place one can go a thousand different ways. If we should get into trouble, the deposition of the coachman could do us no harm." At that moment the hack approached the barrière, a man of large stature, clothed in a long white surtout, having a hat drawn over his eyes, and of a very dark complexion, bent over the shoulders of a large and magnificent horse, passed rapidly on a hard trot.

"Fine horse, fine gentleman," said Rodolphe, leaning out of the window and following Murphy with his eyes, "what a pace he goes! did you see him?"

"Ma foi! he went by so quickly," said the Maitre d'Ecole, "I did not remark him." Rodolphe completely concealed his joy. Murphy had deciphered the note without a doubt. The Maitre d'Ecole, certain that the carriage was not followed, was entirely reassured, and wishing to imitate La Chouette, who was sleeping, or, rather, who pretended to sleep, said to Rodolphe,

"Pardon me, young man, but the movement of the carriage always produces a singular effect; it makes me sleep like a child."

The brigand under the disguise of a false sleep wished to examine the features of his companion, to see if they betrayed any emotion.

Rodolphe, suspecting this, answered, "I got up early this morning, and I am very sleepy. I will do like you," and he shut his eyes.

Soon the deep breathing of the Maitre d'Ecole and La Chouette, who snored in unison, so completely deceived Rodolphe, that, believing his companions sound asleep, he half opened his eyes. The Maitre d'Ecole and La Chouette, notwithstanding their snores, had their eyes open, and were exchanging some mysterious signs, by means of their fingers curiously placed on the palms of their hands. All at once this ceased. The brigand, perceiving, without doubt, that Rodolphe was not asleep, cried, laughing, "Ah! ah! comrade, you are, then, proving your friends?" "That ought not to surprise you; you, who snore with your eyes wide open." "I? oh, that's a different thing; I am a somnambulist."

The carriage stopped at the Place de la Magdeleine. The rain had for a moment ceased, but the clouds, driven by the violence of the winds, were so black, and so low, that it was almost night. The trio turned their steps towards the "Cours de la Reine;" the brigand said, "Young man, I have an idea—not a bad one—to assure myself that all you have said about the house in the 'Allée des Veuves' is true." "Do you wish to go there now? that would awaken suspicions; and, besides, it is hardly four o'clock." "I am not such a fool as that, young man! but I wonder why a man has a wife, whose name is Finette?" La Chouette raised her head proudly. "Do you see her, young man? One would say she was a cavalry horse who had just heard the trumpet sound the charge." "You wish to send her there as a spy?" "Exactly." "Number 17 Allée des Veuves, is it not, my man?" cried La Chouette, impatiently: "be easy; I have only one eye, but it is a good one." "Do you see, do you see, young man? She burns to be off at once." "If she manages to get into the house adroitly, I do not think your plan a bad one. Take care of the umbrella, Fourline." "In a half hour I will be here, and you shall see that I know what to do," cried La Chouette. "Stop a moment, Finette; we will go into the 'Cœur Saignant.' It is only two steps from here. If the little 'Tortillard' (a lame person) is there, you can take him with you; he can remain at the door while you go in, and watch."

"You are right. He is as cunning as a fox, this little 'Tortillard;' he is not ten years old, and it is he who the other—" A sign from the Maitre d'Ecole interrupted La Chouette.

"What does it mean—the 'Cœur Saignant?' A strange name for a tavern," said Rodolphe. "You must complain of it to the tavernkeeper." "What is his name?" "He does not ask the name of his guests." "Yes, but—" "Oh, you can call him just what you please; Peter, Thomas, Christopher, or Barnaby; he'll always answer. But here we are, and just in time, for the rain begins again; and the river, how grand it is—like a torrent—do look! Two days more of such weather, and the water will be over the arch of the bridge." "You say that we have arrived: where the devil is the tavern? I don't see any house here!" "You don't look well around you." "Where do you want me to look?" "At your feet." "At my feet?" "Yes; look there! Can't you see the roof?"

Rodolphe had not perceived one of those subterranean taverns, that might have been seen a few years back, in certain parts of the Champs Elysées, especially near the 'Cours de la Reine.'

A staircase, cut in the damp soil, led to a sort of ditch or area; one side, cut perpendicularly, supported a sort of low, mean building with cracked walls; its roof of tiles covered with green moss, was hardly as high as the place where Rodolphe was standing; two or three hovels of worm-eaten wood, serving for sheds, storehouses, &c., were joined to this miserable dwelling. A very narrow passage, traversing the ditch through its whole length, led from the staircase to the door of the house; the remainder of the ground was covered with a sort of arbour, under which might be seen two rows of coarse tables firmly planted in the ground. The wretched tin sign, blown about by the wind, creaked sadly on its rusty hinges, and on it was painted a bleeding heart, pierced with an arrow. The post to which it was suspended reared its head high above this human kennel.

A heavy, thick fog was now added to the rain, and the night was rapidly approaching. "What do you think of this hotel, young man?" asked the Maitre d'Ecole. "Thanks to the rain that has fallen for two days, it ought not to be too damp—there must be fine fishing. Come, let us descend." "Stop a moment; I must first find out if the landlord is there. Attention!" and rolling his tongue in a strange manner, he produced a singular cry, guttural and prolonged. A similar cry was returned from the house. "He is there," said the Maitre d'Ecole. "Pardon, young man! Respect to the ladies! Let

Chouette go down first. I'll follow you. Take care you don't fall—it is very slippery."

CHAPTER XVII.

LE CŒUR-SAIGNANT.

The landlord of the "Bleeding Heart," after having replied to the signal of the Maître d'Ecole, civilly advanced to the door to receive him. This person, whom Rodolphe had sought for in "la cité," and whom he did not yet know, was Bras-Rouge. Small and slender, weak and feeble, this man was about fifty years of age; his weasel-shaped face, his sharp nose, his retreating chin, his bony cheeks, his little, sharp, sparkling, black eyes, gave to him an inimitable expression of cunning, artifice, and intelligence. An old white wig, or, rather, yellow as his bilious complexion, placed on the top of his scull, did not conceal his grisly locks; and he wore a round jacket, with a long, black apron, such as is usually worn by the "garçons" of the wine-sellers. Our trio had hardly descended the steps, when a child of not more than ten years, very small, but with a very cunning look, sickly, lame, and slightly humpbacked, came and joined Bras-Rouge, to whom there was such a resemblance, that at once he would be recognised as his son. He had the same penetrating, cunning look; his forehead was almost concealed by thick yellow hair, coarse and stiff as a mane; trousers of a maroon colour, and a gray blouse, fastened with a leather belt, completed the costume of "Tortillard," so named in consequence of his deformity; he stood close alongside of his father, on his sound leg, like a heron on the borders of a swamp.

"Exactly! here is the 'môme,'" said the Maître d'Ecole: "Finette, the time is short; night is coming. You must profit by the daylight that remains." "You are right, my man. I am going to ask his father for him." "Good-day, old man," said Bras-Rouge, addressing the Maître d'Ecole in a sharp, false voice: "what can I do to serve you?" "I want you to lend your boy to my wife for a quarter of an hour. She has lost something near here: he will help her find it."

Bras-Rouge winked his eye, and made a sign to the bandit, saying to his son, "Tortillard, follow madame." This frightful child, attracted by the ugliness and by the wicked look of La Chouette, as other children are charmed by a good and benevolent expression of countenance, ran limping to take the hand of the Borgnesse. "My little love of a 'momacque,' come! There's a child for you," said Finette: "how it comes right to you: not like 'La Pegriotte,' who always looked as if she was sick at her stomach when she came near me, the little beggar." "Come, make haste, Finette! Open your eye, and look sharp. I'll wait for you here." "It shan't be long. Go on ahead, Tortillard!" and the Borgnesse and the lame boy mounted the slippery staircase. "Finette, take your umbrella, too," cried the brigand. "It will only be in my way, my man," answered the old woman, as she disappeared with Tortillard in the fog, now fast thickening into night, and amid the hollow sighings of the wind, which agitated the dark branches, and despoiled the tall elms of the Champs Elysées.

"Let us enter," said Rodolphe, bowing his head as he passed through the door of the tavern. It was divided into two apartments; in the one was a bar and a billiard-table in bad condition; in the other, tables and garden-chairs that had once been green. Two narrow windows with small panes, and covered with spider webs, hardly lighted these rooms, whose green walls were saturated with humidity.

Rodolphe was left alone for a moment, while the two worthies had time for a few words and some mysterious signs.

"You will take a glass of beer or brandy while we are waiting for Finette?" said the Maître d'Ecole. "No! I am not thirsty." "Every one to his liking. For myself, I'll drink a glass of brandy," added the brigand, seating himself at one of the small tables in the second room. It was getting to be so dark that it was impossible to see, in one of the corners of this room, the open entrance to one of the cellars, which was descended by steps, with two folding doors, one of which was left open for convenience of access.

The table by which the Maître d'Ecole had seated himself was quite near this hole, to which he turned his back, in this manner concealing it from Rodolphe. The latter looked through the windows for occupation, and to conceal his anxiety. The sight of Murphy, walking quickly towards the "Allée des Veuves," did not altogether reassure him, for he feared he had not altogether been able to decipher his mysterious note. More than ever he trembled for fear of losing this opportunity of possessing the secrets he was so anxious to discover, and which he had so much interest to know. Although he was very vigorous, very resolute, and well armed, he had to struggle in cunning with a murderer capable of doing anything. Must we say it? Such was the energetic temper of his disposition, so singular, so eager for violent and strong emotions, that Rodolphe found a sort of terrible charm in his inquietudes, and in the obstacles that had frustrated the plans he had laid the evening before with his faithful Murphy and the Chourineur. However, not willing that he should be mistrusted, he came and seated himself at the table of the Maître d'Ecole, and asked for a glass.

Bras-Rouge, since he had exchanged the few words with the Maître d'Ecole, regarded Rodolphe with mistrust and defiance. "My advice, young man, is," said the Maître-d'Ecole, "that if my wife tells us the people we want to see are at home, we go and make them a visit at eight o'clock." "That will be too early by two hours," said Rodolphe; "it would incommode them." "Do you think so?" "I am sure of it." "Bah! among friends? Should'nt stand upon ceremony." "I know them; and I repeat, we must not go before ten o'clock." "How headstrong you are, young man!" "It is my idea; and may the devil burn me if I stir from hence before ten o'clock." "Don't trouble yourself; I never shut up my establishment until midnight," said Bras-Rouge, in his shrill voice; "it is just the time my best customers come, and my neighbours don't complain of any noise that is made here." "I must consent to

everything you say, young man," said the Maître d'Ecole. "So be it; we will make our visit at ten o'clock."

"Here is La Chouette," said Bras-Rouge, hearing and answering a cry similar to that made by the Maitre d'Ecole on arriving at this tavern. She entered alone, saying, "All right; understood." Bras-Rouge discreetly retired, without asking after Tortillard, whom he probably did not yet expect to see. The garments of the old woman were streaming with water. She seated herself opposite Rodolphe and the brigand. "Well?" said he. "This young man has told you the truth so far." "Ah! do you see?" cried Rodolphe. "Let La Chouette tell her story, young man. Come, go on, Finette."

"I arrived at No. 17, leaving Tortillard concealed in a hole to watch. It was still light. I rang at a little low door—hinges on the outside—two inches of daylight under the sill—in fine, nothing else. I rang, the porter opened it. He is a large, stout man, of about fifty, with a sleepy, good-humoured look, red whiskers, and bald head. Before I rang, I had put my cap in my pocket, so that I might appear to be one of the neighbours. As soon as I saw him, I began to weep bitterly, saying that I had lost my parrot, Cocotte, a little animal that I adored. I said that I lived in the avenue Morbeuf, and that I had pursued my favourite from garden to garden. Finally, I begged him to let me look for my pet in his garden." "Hem!" said the Maître d'Ecole, pointing to La Chouette with an air of proud satisfaction; "what a woman!" "It is very adroit," said Rodolphe; "but what then?" "The porter allowed me to look for my bird, and I ran all over the garden, crying 'Cocotte! Cocotte!' looking in the air and on all sides, so as to see everything. Within the walls, trellises on every side, a real staircase; at the corner of the wall there is a pine-tree, cut like a ladder; a woman 'enceinte' could descend with ease. The house has six windows on the ground floor; there is no upper story; and there are four air holes to the cellar, without iron bars. The windows are all closed with shutters, fastened below. Staple above; push it down, and draw the wire." "An't worth a rush," said the Maître d'Ecole; "all is open."

La Chouette continued.

"The door glazed—two blinds without." "A memorandum," said the brigand. "It is exact, just as if I could see it," cried Rodolphe. "On the left there is a well," continued La Chouette. "The rope may be of use, because on that side there are no trellises, if retreat should be cut off, on the side of the door as you enter the house." "Did you enter the house?" "She entered the house, young man," said the Maître d'Ecole with pride.

"Certainly I entered. Not finding Cocotte, I groaned as if I was quite exhausted, and asked permission of the porter to seat myself on the steps. The good man asked me to enter, and offered me a glass of wine and water. 'A simple glass of water,' said I, 'my good sir.' He then asked me to enter into the antechamber: carpeted all over, good precaution; footsteps can't be heard, nor smashing of windows, if it should be necessary to break a pane; to the right and left doors with common locks; can almost open them, by blowing. At the end, a strong door, locked; had the look of a chest; it smelt of silver! I had my wax in my 'cabas.'" "She had her wax, young man! She never goes without her wax!" said the brigand.

Chouette continued. "I wanted to get near that door, so I pretended to be taken with a violent cough, so violent, that I was forced to lean against the wall. Hearing me cough, the porter said, 'I will go and get a bit of sugar.' He probably had to get a spoon, for I heard the rattling of silver. Silver in the right-hand room: don't forget that, Fourline. Finally, what with coughing, and groaning, I reached the door. I had the wax in the palm of my hand, and I leaned against the lock, as if it were nothing. Here is the print; if it don't answer for to-day, it will for another time; and now you can tell us if it is the door of the chest."

"Exactly! there is where the money is," answered Rodolphe.

"But *all* the money is not there!" cried La Chouette, her green eye twinkling. "In approaching the window, still pretending to look for Cocotte, I saw in one of the rooms, at the left of the door, bags of dollars on a bureau. I saw them as plain as I see you, my man. There were at least a dozen."

"Where was Tortillard?" said the Maître d'Ecole, roughly.

"He was all the while in his hole, two steps from the door of the garden. He sees in the dark like a cat. There is no other entrance to No. 17. When we go there, he can tell us if any one has come." "It is good."

Hardly had he pronounced these words, when the Maître d'Ecole threw himself suddenly on Rodolphe, caught him by the throat, and threw him backward into the cellar, which was open, behind the table. This attack was so sudden, so unexpected, so vigorous, that Rodolphe was not able to foresee or prevent it. La Chouette, frightened, gave a loud scream. She had not, at once, seen the result of this attack. As soon as the noise of the falling body had ceased, the Maître d'Ecole, who was perfectly acquainted with the subterranean apartments of the house, descended slowly into the cellar, listening with attention. "'Fourline,' take care!" cried La Borgnesse, leaning over the opening. "Draw your dirk." The brigand did not reply, but disappeared. At first nothing was heard; but after a few moments, the distant noise of a door, grating on its rusty hinges, sounded heavily through the cellar, and then again all was still. The obscurity was complete. La Chouette, rummaging in her "cabas," struck a light from a lucifer match, which, applied to a small candle, spread its sickly rays around the gloomy room.

At this moment the horrid figure of the Maître d'Ecole appeared at the opening of the trap. La Chouette was not able to restrain an exclamation of affright at the sight of his pale, mutilated face, with eyes almost phosphorescent, which seemed to crawl on the ground in the midst of the darkness, which the feeble glimmer of the candle hardly dispelled. Hardly recovered from her emotion, the old woman cried, with a kind of humble flattery, "You must, indeed, look frightful; for you made *me* afraid—Me!"

"Quick! quick! to the Allée des Veuves,"

said the brigand, shutting the cellar doors, and fastening them with a bar of iron. "In an hour it will be too late!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CELLAR.

Rodolphe fainted from the effects of the blow, and fell almost lifeless at the foot of the staircase. The Maître d'Ecole, dragging him to the entrance of a second cellar, which was much deeper, pushed him in, and closed the door, which was very thick, and fastened with iron; after which he had rejoined La Chouette, to go with her to commit a robbery, perhaps a murder, in the Allée des Veuves. In about an hour Rodolphe came to himself, and found that he was lying on the ground, amid the most profound darkness. Stretching out his arms, he felt the stone steps; and finding his feet were cold and wet, he moved them, and perceived that they were immersed in a pool of water. With a violent effort he succeeded in seating himself on the lowest step of the staircase, and as he slowly recovered from his fainting fit, he found that happily none of his limbs were fractured. He listened. He heard nothing—nothing but a sort of dripping, dull, faint, but continual. At first he did not suspect the cause, but as he came more to himself, the surprise to which he had been a victim, all the circumstances came slowly to his recollection. He felt the water now over his ankles. His fears were awakened. He comprehended, at length, his situation. The swelling of the Seine was formidable, and this place was beneath the level of the river. His danger recalled Rodolphe to himself. Quick as a flash he mounted the damp staircase, and, arrived at the top, he threw himself against the door. In vain he tried to move it; immovable and firm with its bars of iron, his efforts were fruitless. In this desperate situation his first thought was about Murphy. "If he is not on his guard, this monster will assassinate him. It is I," cried he, "who will have caused his death. Poor Murphy!"

This cruel thought augmented the strength of Rodolphe. Supporting himself on his feet, and bending his shoulders, he exhausted himself in vain efforts to move the door. Hoping to find some lever or instrument in the cave, he descended the steps. Two or three round elastic bodies ran from his feet: they were rats, which the water had driven from their holes. He groped about, but found nothing. The water was now to the height of his knees; so he returned to the staircase, in a state of unutterable despair. He counted the steps: there were thirteen; and three were already submerged.

Thirteen! fatal number! In certain positions the strongest minds are not free from superstition; Rodolphe saw in this number a bad omen. The fate of Murphy returned to his mind, and he sought in vain for some opening, between the ground and the door, which was doubtless swollen by the dampness; his efforts were unavailing

Rodolphe then, in despair, shouted at the top of his voice, with the faint hope that he might be heard by some of the "habitués" of the tavern. He listened: naught was heard but the noise of the dripping water, continual—always mounting — mounting — mounting! He then seated himself on the topmost step, his thoughts always recurring to the situation of Murphy, who, perhaps, at that moment was dying under the assassin's knife. Bitterly he regretted his bold and imprudent projects, although their motive was generous. He recalled to his mind the thousand proofs of the devotion of Murphy, who, rich and honoured, had left his wife and child, his dearest interests, to follow him in the valiant but strange penance which he had imposed on himself.

The water continued to rise: but five steps remained dry. In rising and standing near the door, his head touched the top of the vault; he could calculate how long his agony would last. His death would be slow, silent, frightful. He thought of his pistol; at the risk of wounding himself, he could fire at the door, and perhaps break it down; but alas, alas! in his fall this arm had been lost, or carried off by the Maître d'Ecole. If it had not been for his fears for Murphy, Rodolphe had awaited death with serenity. He had lived long; he had been ardently loved; he had done a great deal of good; he could have wished to do more. God knew it! He did not murmur against his fate, he saw in it a just punishment for a fatal action, not yet expiated; his ideas were exalted, purified by this danger: but a new torment came to augment the horrors of his position, and to try his resignation.

The rats, driven by the water, had fled from step to step, in vain trying to escape. Finding it difficult to hold on by the walls, they caught hold of the garments of Rodolphe. When he felt them swarming about him, his disgust, his horror, were inexpressible. He tried to drive them away; but cold and sharp bites imbrued his hands with blood. In his fall his vest and blouse had been torn open: he felt on his naked breast the touch of icy paws; and as often as he tore them off and threw them at a distance, they would return swimming. Again, again he shouted: no one heard him. In a few moments his cries would cease; the water was up to his neck, and would soon cover his mouth. Pure air began to fail; the first symptoms of apoplexy attacked Rodolphe; the arteries of his temples began to beat with violence; his head swam—he was about to die. He gave one last thought to Murphy, and raised his prayer to God, not that he would deliver him from punishment, but that he would accept his sufferings.

At this awful moment, on the point of quitting not only all that made life desirable, brilliant, envied, but also a title almost royal, a *sovereign power;* forced to renounce an enterprise which, in satisfying two of his fondest natural impulses, *the love of the good and hatred of the wicked*, he might one day have counted on as an expiation for his faults; about perishing by a horrible death, Rodolphe had not for a moment one feeling of anger or useless phrensy, during which a feeble mind would accuse or curse, in turn, man, fate, and God. No: as long as his mind remained clear, Ro-

dolphe supported his fate with submission, with resignation. When his faculties were obscured by agony, when absolutely delivered to vital and natural impulses, he struggled, if it can be said, physically, but not morally, against death. His consciousness was almost lost; the water boiled around his ears; the last ray of reason was about leaving him forever, when hurried steps, and a noise of voices, resounded above the door of the cellar. Hope animated his dying strength; and he could just hear these words, the last he could comprehend:

"You see there is nobody here."

"Thunder! it is true," answered sadly the voice of the Chourineur, and the footsteps retreated.

Rodolphe, annihilated, could sustain himself no longer; he slipped from the staircase.

Suddenly the door of the cellar was opened from without; the water flowed out like a sluice, and the Chourineur could just seize the two arms of Rodolphe, who, half drowned, had, with a convulsive movement, clung to the sill of the doorway.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NURSE.

Snatched from a certain death by the Chourineur, and carried to the house in the Allée des Veuves, Rodolphe was placed in bed, in a chamber comfortably furnished. A large fire blazed in the fireplace, a lamp placed on a commode spread a clear light through the apartment; the bed of Rodolphe was surrounded by thick curtains of green damask, which concealed its occupant from the light.

A negro of middling size, with a white, woolly head, clothed with great neatness, and wearing an orange and green riband at the buttonhole of his blue coat, held in his hand a gold minute watch, which he seemed to consult as he counted with his right hand the pulse of Rodolphe: sad and pensive, he regarded his patient with the most profound solicitude. The Chourineur, clothed in rags, covered with mud, remained immovable at the foot of the bed, with his arms crossed; his red, shaggy beard was dripping with water; and his hard and bronzed features wore an ineffable expression of pity and interest. Hardly daring to breathe, he watched the contemplative attitude of the doctor, and seemed to draw from it an ill omen; and he muttered to himself in a low tone, "Who could think, to see him weak and feeble as he is, that he could have ever given me such blows on my head. It won't be long before he recovers his strength, will it, doctor? Foi d'homme, I wish he could beat his convalescence on my back; it would do him good, wouldn't it, doctor?"

The black made a slight sign with his hand. "Give me the potion." The Chourineur, who had left his nailed shoes at the door, went towards the commode, stepping lightly on the end of his toes, but with such contortions of his body, such balancings of his arms, such swellings of his back and shoulders, that under any other circumstances would have been highly ludicrous. The poor devil seemed as if he wished to throw all his weight on that part of himself that did not touch the floor; which, however, notwithstanding the carpet, did not prevent the floor from groaning under his weight. Unluckily, in his ardour to do well, and from fear of letting the glass vial fall, he squeezed it so tight in his large hands that it was broken, and its contents spilled upon the carpet. At the sight of this mishap the Chourineur remain-immovable, one of his large legs being in the air, the toes nervously contracted, looking alternately in a confused manner at the doctor and at the neck of the bottle which remained in his hand. "What a devil of an awkward fellow!" cried the negro, impatiently. "Thunder of a fool!" added the Chourineur, apostrophizing himself.

"Ah!" said the Esculapius, looking at the commode, "fortunately you took the wrong bottle. I want the other one."

"The little red one?" asked the unfortunate nurse.

"To be sure: there is no other." The Chourineur, in turning on his heels, according to his old military habits, crashed the remains of the vial: tender feet would have been cruelly wounded; but our friend, thanks to his profession, had a pair of natural sandals, hard as the hoof of a horse. "Take care, you will hurt yourself," cried the physician. The Chourineur paid not the least attention to this advice. Profoundly occupied with his new mission, which he wished to execute skilfully, to make up for his first awkwardness, one should have seen with what delicacy, with what agility, with what care, he took hold of the frail glass with two fingers. A butterfly could not have left an atom of the golden dust of its wings between the forefinger and thumb of the Chourineur. The black doctor shuddered at this excess of precaution, happily without cause. The Chourineur, in approaching the bed, again stepped on the broken glass.

"Do you wish to lame yourself?" said the doctor, in a low voice. The Chourineur looked at him with surprise. "What! lame myself, doctor?" "Yes, twice you have stepped on the broken glass." "Oh! if that is all, never mind. I have the soles of my feet lined with leather." "A small spoon," said the doctor. The Chourineur recommenced his sylphlike movements, and brought what the doctor had demanded.

After some spoonfuls of this potion, Rodolphe made a slight movement, and moved his hands. "Good! good! He is aroused from his torpor," said the doctor. "The bleeding has saved him; he will soon be out of danger."

"Saved? Bravo! Vive la Charte!" cried the Chourineur, in the explosion of his joy. "But you must be quiet!" "Yes, doctor." "The pulse improves, wonderfully! wonderfully!" "And the poor friend of Monsieur Rodolphe, doctor? Thunder! when he knows, happily that—" "Silence!" "Yes, doctor." "Take a seat." "But, doctor—" "Take a seat. You worry me by moving around me; it disturbs me. Come, take a seat!" "Doctor, I am as dirty as a bunch of floating fagots that one is about to— I should soil the furniture." "Then sit on the floor." "I should spoil the carpet." "Do as you please; but in the name

of Heaven remain quiet," said the doctor, in a tone of impatience; and seating himself in an arm-chair, he leaned his head on his hands.

After a moment of profound thought, the Chourineur, less on account of his fatigue than to obey the doctor, took hold of a chair with the greatest precaution, and turned it upside down with a perfectly satisfied and assured air, intending to seat himself modestly on the back spokes, so as to soil nothing. Unfortunately, quite unacquainted with the laws of gravity, as he sat down the chair overturned. The unfortunate man, with an involuntary movement, stretched out his hand, and overturned a stand on which was a salver with cups and saucers.

At this formidable noise, the black doctor sprang from his chair, and Rodolphe, also awakening with a start, sat up in bed, looked around with anxiety, and asked, "Where is Murphy? where is Murphy?"

"Be assured, your highness," said the black, respectfully, "there is hope." "Was he wounded?" cried Rodolphe.

"Alas! yes, my lord." "Where is he? I wish to see him," said he, trying to raise himself; but he fell back from pain and exhaustion.

"Let me be carried at once to Murphy, since I am unable to walk!" cried he. "My lord, he is now sleeping: it would be dangerous to cause him any emotion." "Ah! you deceive me; he is dead! He is murdered! and it is I—I who am the cause;" cried Rodolphe, raising his hands towards heaven.

"My lord knows I am incapable of telling a falsehood. I affirm, on my honour, that Monsieur Murphy is living—very badly wounded, it is true; but the chances of his cure are almost certain." "You tell me this to prepare me for some frightful news. He is doubtless in a desperate state!" "My lord—" "I am sure of it. You deceive me. I must be carried to him at once; the sight of a friend will do him good." "Once more, my lord, I affirm on my honour that, unless something unforeseen should arise, Monsieur Murphy will soon be convalescent."

"The truth, the whole truth, my dear David?"

"The whole truth, my lord." "Listen, you know my regard for you. Since you have belonged to my house you have always had my confidence. Never have I doubted your great skill; but for the love of Heaven, if a consultation is necessary—" "That was my first thought, my lord; but at present it is useless, you can believe me. And besides, I did not wish to introduce strangers here before knowing if your orders of yesterday —" "But how did all this happen?" said Rodolphe, interrupting him. Who took me from the cellar where I was drowning? I have a confused recollection of having heard the voice of the Chourineur: was I mistaken?" "No, no! this brave man can tell you all about it, my lord, for he has done all."

"But where is he? where is he?" The doctor looked around for the awkward nurse, who, confused at his fall, had hidden himself behind the curtain of the bed.

"There he is," cried the doctor; "he looks quite confused." "Come here, my good fellow!" said Rodolphe, stretching out his hand to his preserver.

CHAPTER XX.

STORY OF THE CHOURINEUR.

The confusion of the Chourineur was so much the more profound, as he had heard the black doctor call Rodolphe "*My Lord*," several times. "But draw near and give me your hand," said Rodolphe. "Pardon, Monsieur—no, I mean to say my Lord; but—" "Call me Rodolphe, as before; I like it better." "And for me also, I shall feel more easy. But excuse my hand, I have done much work since—" and he put out timidly his black and bony hand. Rodolphe pressed it cordially. "Come," said he, "sit down, and tell me all. How did you discover the cellar?—But, on reflection, the Maître d'Ecole?"

"Is here in safety," said the black physician. "Tied like two bunches of tobacco—he and La Chouette. From the pretty faces they make, when they look at each other, they must cordially hate one another just now." "And my poor Murphy! mon Dieu! and I only think of it now! David, where is he wounded?" "In the right side, my lord; happily towards the last false rib." "Oh! I must have terrible revenge! David, I count on you." "My lord knows that I am his, body and soul," answered the black, coldly. "But how did you arrive in time, my good fellow?" said Rodolphe to the Chourineur. "If you will, my lord—no, Monsieur Rodolphe, I will begin at the beginning." "You are right: I listen."

"You know that last night you told me, after you had returned from the country, where you had been with the poor Goualeuse, 'Try to find the Maître d'Ecole in the cité: you will tell him that you know of some good affair, that you do not wish to have anything to do with it; but that if he wishes to take your place, he has only to go to-morrow (this morning) to the barrière of Bercy, at the Panier-Fleuri, and there he will find some one who can give farther information.' Very well, in leaving you I ran to the cité. I went to the Ogresse: no Maître d'Ecole there. I walked through the streets of Saint-Eloi aux Fèves, and the Vieille-Draperie: nobody there. Finally, I caught him with that screw of a Chouette at the Parvis de Nôtre Dame, at the house of a little tailor, a pawnbroker, receiver, or thief. They wanted to make a dash with the money they had stolen from the tall man in mourning, who wished to do something with you. La Chouette was cheapening a red shawl—the old monster! I told my business to the Maître d'Ecole; he said it suited him, and he would be at the rendezvous. Good! This morning, according to your order, I came here to give you the answer. You said, 'Mon garçon, return to-morrow before light. You shall pass the day here, and at night you shall see something worth your trouble.' You said no more; but I understood. I said to myself, 'This is something got up to play a trick on the Maître d'Ecole to-morrow morning: holding out a bait. He is an old villain: he killed the cattle-merchant. I am in for it.'"

"And my error was, not to have told you all, mon garçon. This frightful evil would not, perhaps, have happened." "That regards you, Monsieur Rodolphe. That which regards me

was to serve you; because, in fine, I don't know why, I have already told you, I feel myself to be your bulldog." "Well, enough." "I said to myself then, 'To-morrow shall be a holyday; to-day I had leave. Monsieur Rodolphe has paid me for the two days I have lost, and two others in advance; for, do you see? here are three days that I have not been to my masters'; and not being a millionaire, labour is my bread.' I added, 'Stop, it is right; M. Rodolphe pays me for my time; my time belongs to him. I'll go and employ it for him.' The thought gave me this idea: 'The Maître d'Ecole is cunning; he will no doubt fear a trap. M. Rodolphe will propose to him something for to-morrow, it is true; but the "gueux" is capable of coming here in the daytime to reconnoitre; and if he is at all suspicious, to bring along another robber, or to say "agreed" for to-morrow, and to do the job on his own account to-day.'"

"You have wisely imagined. Just so it happened, and Providence has willed that I should owe my life to you." "It is astonishing, Monsieur Rodolphe, how, since I have known you, things have happened to me, that appear to have been contrived up yonder! and that I have had thoughts I never had before, since you said to me, 'You have yet a heart and honour.' Heart! honour! Thunder! these words appear to stir up something inside. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, when one is accustomed to hear the cry of mad dog! mad dog! if he wishes only to approach honest people—"

"So you have had thoughts that are new to you?"

"Surely, Monsieur Rodolphe. 'Stop,' said I to myself again. 'Now if I should know some one who had done a bad action; drink—anger—no matter what, I would say to him, 'My man, you have done wrong:' good. But this is not all: *ce n'est pas pour le roi de Prusse*, that *le bon Dieu* makes a man who may drown himself or starve with hunger. 'Come, let us be friends: if you make forty sous a day, give twenty to some poor old souls, or to little children; to any one who may be more unfortunate than you are, who has neither bread nor strength; and, above all, don't forget, my man, that if there is some one to be saved at the risk of your hide, it is your business! If you do, and you begin again your bad tricks, you will always find me—.' But I ask pardon, Monsieur Rodolphe, I am talking away—and you are curious to know—" "No; I like to hear you talk thus. And besides, I shall know only too soon how this horrible affair has happened, to which my poor Murphy has fallen a victim. I felt sure that I should not leave the Maître d'Ecole for a moment during this dangerous enterprise. Then he should have killed me a thousand times before he touched Murphy. Alas! fate has decided otherwise. Continue, mon garçon."

"Willing, then, to employ my time for you, Monsieur Rodolphe, I said, 'I must go and hide myself in some place, where I can see the walls and the garden door; that is the sole entrance. If I find a snug corner—it rains—I'll remain all day, all night, and to-morrow morning I shall be at hand.' It was about two o'clock, when I said that to myself, 'aux Batignolles,' where I went to eat a mouthful. After leaving you, Monsieur Rodolphe, I returned to the Champs Elyseés. I looked out for my nest. What do I see? A little tavern only ten steps from your door. I took possession of the lower floor, and seated myself near a window. I ordered some nuts and some drink, saying I expected some friends: a humpback, and a tall woman, it was quite likely. From my place I had a complete view of your door. It rained tremendously; no one passed—night came."

"But," said Rodolphe, interrupting the Chourineur, "why did you not go to my house?"

"You told me to come the next morning, Monsieur Rodolphe. I did not dare to come sooner. It would have looked like skulking—le brosseur, as the troopers say. After all, I am what I am, a liberated galley-slave; and when any one is with me, as you are, Monsieur Rodolphe, one must only go to him when he says, 'Come.' After that, if I should see a spider on the collar of your coat, I'd take him off, and crush him, without asking your permission; you understand? So I was then at the window, cracking my nuts, and drinking my wine, when through the fog, whom should I see but La Chouette, with the 'môme' of Bras-Rouge, little Tortillard?"

"Bras-Rouge? is he, then, the keeper of the tavern in the Champs Elyseés?" cried Rodolphe. "Yes, sir: did you not know it?" "No. I thought he lived in the cité." "He lives there also: he lives everywhere. Bras-Rouge is a cunning and proud 'gueux,' with his yellow wig and pointed nose! To go on, when I saw Chouette and Tortillard, I said, 'Good; it begins to grow warm!' Tortillard hid himself in one of the ditches of the 'allée,' right opposite your door, just as if he was getting shelter from the rain: he was on the watch. La Chouette took off her bonnet, put it in her pocket, and rang at the door. Poor Monsieur Murphy, your friend, came and opened it; and she went throwing about her arms, and running about the garden. I would have given my tongue to the dogs, I thought, if I could only find out what La Chouette wanted. Finally, she came out, put on her cap, said two words to Tortillard, who went back to his hole, and cleared out. I reflected a minute: 'Don't get perplexed. Tortillard is come with La Chouette: the Maître d'Ecole and Monsieur Rodolphe are there at Bras Rouge's.'"

"Well, after that?" "'La Chouette has come to spy; the affair will, then, come off to-night? They will do it to-night. M. Rodolphe thinks it will take place to-morrow. He is, then, enfonce?'" "Well?"

"'M. Rodolphe is done for. I must go to Bras-Rouge's. I'll see what it all means. Yes; but if during this time the Maître d'Ecole should come? It is night, it is true: so much the worse. I'll go and say to M. Murphy, "Look out." Yes, but that little vermin of a Tortillard is there near the door. He'll hear me ring; he'll see me; he'll give La Chouette warning. If she returns, that will spoil all. And besides, perhaps M. Rodolphe has arranged for to-night.' Thunder, these yeas and nays made my brain

whirl. I was confounded. I could see nothing but fire. I did not know what to do. I said, 'I'll go out; perhaps the fresh air will assist me.' It did assist me. I took off my blouse and cravat, and went straight to the burrow of Tortillard. I took the 'moutard' by the back of the neck: he kicked, and scratched, and squalled, I tell you. I wrapped him in my blouse, making a bag of it by tying one end with the sleeves, and the other with my cravat, and just leaving room enough to breathe; I took the packet under my arm, and seeing near by a sort of garden very marshy, surrounded by a low wall, I threw Tortillard in the middle of a bed of carrots. He grunted like a pig, but at two steps off he could not be heard. I started off; it was time! I climbed on one of the large trees of the allée, just opposite your door, over the hiding-place of Tortillard. Ten minutes after, I heard steps; all the time raising cats and dogs. It was so dark—so dark that the devil would have stepped on his tail. I listened: it was La Chouette. 'Tortillard! Tortillard!' whispered she. Yes, look for him, your Tortillard. 'It rains, and the "môme" has got tired of waiting,' said the Maître d'Ecole, swearing: 'if I catch him, he'll take a scorching.' 'Fourline, take care,' answered La Chouette. 'Perhaps he has gone to tell us something: if it should be a trap? He didn't want to do it until 10 o'clock.' 'That's just the reason,' answered the Maître d'Ecole; 'it is now only seven. You have seen money; who risks nothing, nothing gains. Give me the pincers and the cold chisel.'"

"These instruments?" asked Rodolphe.

"They came from Bras-Rouge's. Oh, he has a house well furnished. In a moment, the door is forced. 'Remain there,' said the Maître d'Ecole to La Chouette. 'Look out, and cry, "Take care," if you hear anything.' 'Put your dirk in your buttonhole, so as to have it handy,' said La Borgnesse, as the Maître d'Ecole entered the garden. I thought at once, 'M. Rodolphe is not here: he is dead, or he is living at this moment. I can do nothing for him; but the friends of our friend are ours.' Oh, no! pardon, my lord!"

"Go on! go on! Well?" "I said, 'The Maître d'Ecole may murder M. Murphy, the friend of M. Rodolphe, who expects no danger.' It was then I began to get warm. I jumped from the tree, and pounced upon La Chouette. I silenced her with two blows of the fist—choice ones. She fell without a whimper. I ran into the garden: Thunder! Monsieur Rodolphe, it was too late. Poor Murphy! Hearing the noise at the door, he had doubtless come out of the vestibule, and closing with the Maître d'Ecole, they rolled together down the steps. Already wounded, he kept himself firm, and did not cry for help. 'Brave man! he is like the good dogs, which bite with their teeth, and not with the mouth,' as I said to myself. I pitched right into the affray, catching hold of the Maître d'Ecole by one leg; it was the only disposable part for the moment. 'Vive la Charte! it is I! the Chourineur! the Chourineur! Room for two, Monsieur Murphy!' 'Ah! brigand! where do you come from?' cried the Maître d'Ecole, alarmed at this. 'Don't be so curious,' I answered, squeezing his leg between my knees, and clipping one of his wings. It was the one with the poniard—the good one. 'Eh! Rodolphe!' cried Murphy, helping me all he could."

"Brave, excellent man!" murmured Rodolphe, sadly.

"'I knew nothing about him,' I answered. 'This scoundrel perhaps has killed him.' And I hugged the Maître d'Ecole tighter, for he was trying to stick me with his skewer; but as I was lying with my breast on his arm, he had only his fist clear. 'You are then alone!' I said to M. Murphy, as we still struggled with the villain. 'There are others near at hand, but they cannot hear us cry.' 'Shout for help; there may be some one passing.' 'No: since we have got him, we must keep him here; but I feel weak—I am wounded,' said M. Murphy. 'Thunder! go, then, and seek for assistance, if you are able. I will try to hold him. Take away his knife; help me to get well on him; and if he were ten times as strong, I'd hold him.' The Maître d'Ecole said nothing, but you could hear him blow like an ox; but, thunder! what efforts! M. Murphy could not get the knife out of his hands; the fist of that man is like a vice. Finally, by bearing with all my might on his right arm, I got my arms around his neck, just as if I wished to embrace him. To crook him in that manner, was the height of my ambition. Then I said to M. Murphy, 'Make haste: I'll wait for you. If you have one too many, let him pick up La Chouette, behind the door of the garden, I have stunned her.' I remained alone with the Maître d'Ecole. He knew what he had to expect."

"He did not know it! nor you, my good fellow," said Rodolphe, with a gloomy look, his features contracted with that hard, almost ferocious expression, of which we have spoken.

The Chourineur, astonished, said to Rodolphe, "I thought that the Chourineur knew what he had to expect, for, thunder! it is not to brag. But there was one moment, when I was not at a wedding. We were half on the ground, half on the last step of the porch. I had my arms around his neck—cheek against cheek. I could hear his teeth grind. It was dark—raining all the while; but the lamp remaining in the vestibule gave us a faint light. I had one of his legs between mine. Notwithstanding, his muscles were so strong, that he would raise us both a foot from the ground. He tried to bite, but he could not. Never did I feel so strong. Thunder! my heart beat, but in the right place. I said, 'I am like a person holding a mad dog to prevent him from biting everybody.' 'Let me go, and I will do nothing to you,' said he. 'Ah! you're a coward,' cried I. 'Your courage is only in your strength. You would not have dared to kill the cattle merchant of Poissy, if he had been as strong as I am, heiu!' 'No,' said he; 'but I am going to kill you like him!' Saying this, he made such a quick and violent movement, that he succeeded in throwing me off; but I kept my hold around his neck, his right arm under me. His legs once free, he made good use of them. It gave him hope: he turned me half over; and if I had not held on to the sword arm, it was all up with me—finished. At this moment my left hand gave out, I was obliged to loosen my fingers. That spoiled all. I said to myself, 'I am under: he will kill me. Never mind, I'd rather be in my

place than his.' M. Rodolphe told me that I had courage and honour—I felt it was true. I was just thinking, when I saw La Chouette on the step, with her round eye, and her red shawl. Thunder! I thought I had the nightmare. 'Finette!' cried the Maître-d'Ecole, 'I have dropped my knife; pick it up—there—under him; and strike—in the back—between the shoulders.' 'Wait, wait, Fourline, until I look.' And there was La Chouette, turning and turning like a bird of ill omen, as she is. At last, she saw the poniard, and sprang to get it. I was flat on my belly, and fetched her such a kick with my heel in her stomach, that I upset her; but she soon raised herself and fell upon me. I could do no more, I clung still to the neck of the Maître d'Ecole; but he gave me such blows in my mouth, that I was about to give up; I began to be faint, when I saw three or four fine fellows well armed running down the steps; and M. Murphy, very pale, and supported by the physician. They seized the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette, and secured them. That was not all. I wanted M. Rodolphe. I jumped on La Chouette. I remembered the tooth of the poor Goualeuse, and catching hold of her arm, gave it a twist, saying, 'Where is M. Rodolphe?' She held quiet. At the second twist, she cried, 'At Bras Rouge's—in the cellar of the "Cœur Suignant."' Good. In passing, I stopped to pick up Tortillard from his carroty bed: it was all in my road. I looked—there was nothing left but my blouse: he had gnawed it with his teeth. I reached the 'Cœur Suignant:' I jumped at the throat of Bras-Rouge: 'Where is the young man who came here to-night with the Maître d'Ecole?' 'Don't squeeze so hard, and I will tell you. They wanted to play a trick on him, and shut him in my cellar: we will go and let him out.' We descended—no one there. 'He must have gone out when my back was turned,' said Bras-Rouge; 'you see there is no one there.' I was about going sadly away, when, by the light of the lantern, I saw another door. I ran and opened it, and received a famous 'jet d'eau' right in my face. I saw your two poor arms in the air. I fished you out, and brought you here on my back, as there was no one to go and call a coach. That's all, Monsieur Rodolphe; and I can say, without boasting, that I am most proudly content!"

"Mon garçon, I owe you my life. It is a debt; and I will pay it, be assured, in many ways. You have so much heart, that you will partake of the sentiments which inspire me at this hour. I feel a fearful inquietude for the friend whom you have so bravely defended; a thirst for vengeance against him, who had so nearly killed you both." "I can comprehend that, Monsieur Rodolphe. To jump on you like a thief, throw you into a cellar so you might drown—the Maître d'Ecole merits his fate. He acknowledged to me, that he killed the cattle-merchant. I am no coward, but thunder! I would go now, willingly, to call the guard, to take this brigand!" "David, will you go and see how Murphy is?" said Rodolphe, without replying to the Chourineur: "you can then re-return." The black went out.

"Do you know where the Maître d'Ecole is, mon garçon?" "No. Do you want to let him go? Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, no such generosity! I repeat what I have said; he is a mad dog—look out, passers by!" "He never shall bite any one again, be assured." "You are going to shut him up somewhere?" "No. In half an hour he shall go hence." "The Maître d'Ecole?" "Yes." "Without gendarmes?" "Yes." "How, shall he go out free!" "Free." "And all alone?" "Yes, all alone. He shall go where he likes," said Rodolphe, interrupting the Chourineur, with a smile that terrified him. The black returned. "Well, David—and Murphy?" "He sleeps, my lord," said the physician, sadly. "The respiration is quite oppressed." "There is still danger!" "His situation is very serious, my lord. However, we must hope." "Oh! Murphy! vengeance! vengeance!" cried Rodolphe. "David, one word!" and he whispered in the ear of the black. He trembled. "You hesitate!" said Rodolphe to him; "I have often mentioned this thing to you. The moment to make the application is come." "I do not hesitate, my lord. I approve of this idea. It comprises a penal reform worthy of the examination of those who are versed in criminal matters; for this punishment will be simple, and at the same time terrible and just. In this case it is applicable. Without enumerating the crimes which sent this brigand to the galleys for life, he has committed three murders: the cattle-merchant, Murphy, and yourself. It is justice." "He will still have before him the horizon without end, of repentance," added Rodolphe; "well, David, you understand me?" "We act in concurrence, my lord." After a moment's silence, Rodolphe added: "You think five thousand francs will answer, David?" "Perfectly, my lord." "Mon garçon," said Rodolphe to the amazed Chourineur, "I have two words to say to this gentleman. In the mean time, go into the adjoining room. You will find a large red portfolio on a bureau: take out of it five thousand francs, and bring them to me."

"And for whom are these five thousand francs?" said the Chourineur, involuntarily. "For the Maître d'Ecole; and, at the same time, you can tell them to bring him hither"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PUNISHMENT.

The scene is changed to a room hung with red, and brilliantly lighted. Rodolphe, clothed in a long dressing-gown of black velvet, which increased the pallor of his face, is seated before a large table covered with a cloth. On this table are seen two portfolios, the one which was stolen from Tom by the Maître d'Ecole in la cité, and that which was the property of the brigand; the chain of La Chouette, to which was suspended the little "Saint Esprit" in "lapis lazule;" the poniard, still bloody, which had stabbed Murphy; the iron pincers, which had been used to break open the door; and, finally, the five thousand francs, which the Chourineur had brought from the adjoining room

The black doctor is seated on one side of the table, the Chourineur at the other. The Maître d'Ecole, strongly bound, so that it was impossi-

ble to stir, is placed in a large arm-chair on wheels, in the middle of the room. No one else was present. Rodolphe is no longer irritable; he is calm, sad, collected. He is about to accomplish a solemn and formidable mission.

The doctor is pensive. The Chourineur cannot take his eyes from Rodolphe; a vague fear oppresses him.

The Maître d'Ecole is livid—he is afraid.

A legal arrest, perhaps, had appeared less formidable. His audacity would not have forsaken him before an ordinary tribunal; but everything that now surrounded him surprised, alarmed him. He is in the power of Rodolphe, whom he had considered as a man capable of betraying him when about to commit a crime, and whom he had wished to sacrifice to this suspicion, with the hope of profiting alone in the robbery. Now Rodolphe appeared to him as terrible and imposing as justice itself.

The most profound silence reigned without. Nothing could be heard but the rain falling and dripping from the roof on the pavement. Rodolphe addresses the Maître d'Ecole: "Escaped from the galleys of Rochefort, where you were condemned for life for the crimes of forgery, robbery, and murder, you are Anselmo Duresnel?"

"It is false! Let it be proved!" said the Maître d'Ecole, in an altered voice, looking around him with a disturbed air. "How!" cried the Chourineur: "we were not together at Rochefort?" Rodolphe made a sign to the Chourineur to remain quiet, and he continued:

"You *are* Anselmo Duresnel: you will acknowledge it by-and-by. You have murdered and robbed a cattle-merchant on the road to Poissy?" "It is false!" "You will confess it directly." The brigand looked at Rodolphe with surprise. "This night you have broken into this house to rob: you have stabbed the master of the house."

"You proposed the robbery to me yourself," said the Maître d'Ecole, recovering slightly his assurance; "I was attacked, and I defended myself." "The man you stabbed did not attack you. He was without arms! I proposed this to you, it is true. I will tell you directly for what purpose. The evening previous, after having stolen a pocket-book from a man and woman in 'la cité,' which pocket-book is now before you, you offered to kill me for one thousand francs!" "I heard it," cried the Chourineur. The Maître d'Ecole cast on him a look of savage hatred. Rodolphe continued: "You see, there was no need of your being tempted by me to do evil." "You are not a magistrate, and I will not answer." "Now I will tell you why I proposed this robbery. I knew you had escaped from the galleys. You knew the parents of an unfortunate being, whose misfortunes were caused by your accomplice, La Chouette. I wished to get you here under the pretence of a robbery, the only means by which I could get you to come. Once here, I would have given you your choice, either to be delivered into the hands of justice, who would make you pay with the loss of your head for the murder of the cattle-merchant—" "It is false! I am not the man." "Or to be conducted out of France, by my cares, to a place of perpetual seclusion; but on the condition that you give me the information I required. You have been condemned for life—you have escaped from prison. By taking you, by preventing in future the possibility of your doing harm, I would serve the world at large, and by your confessions I should find the means, perhaps, to restore to her family a poor creature, more unfortunate than culpable. Such was at first my project. It was not legal; but, by your escape and your new crimes, you are without the law. Yesterday, a providential revelation taught me your true name." "It is false! my name is not Duresnel!"

Rodolphe took from the table the chain of La Chouette, and showing to the Maître d'Ecole the little "Saint Esprit" of lapis lazulé, "Sacrilege," said he. "You have given to a miserable, infamous creature, this holy relic! three times holy—for your child had this pious gift from his mother and grandmother!" The Maître d'Ecole, stupified with this discovery, hung his head without answering. "Yesterday I learned that fifteen years since you took your son from his mother, and that you alone possess the secret of his existence. This new crime was another motive for me to entrap you, without speaking of what is personal. It is not that which I revenge. This night you have again spilled blood without any provocation. The man whom you have assassinated came to you with confidence, not suspecting your murderous intent. He asked you what you wanted. 'Your money and your life!' and you struck him with your poniard." "Such was the story of M. Murphy when I came to his assistance," said the doctor. "It is false! He lied!" "Monsieur Murphy never lies," said Rodolphe, coldly. "Your crimes demand an extraordinary reparation. You have broken into this garden with arms in your hands. You have stabbed a man, in order to steal. You have committed another murder. You must die here. In compassion to your wife and son, I will save you the shame of the scaffold. It will be supposed that you have fallen in your murderous attempt. Prepare yourself; the arms are charged."

The countenance of Rodolphe was implacable.

The Maître d'Ecole had remarked in the adjoining apartment two armed men with carbines. His name was known, and he thought, in effect, that he was about to die, so that his family should be saved from this new shame. Like his fellows, this man was as cowardly as he was ferocious. Believing his last hour was come, he shook convulsively; his lips became blanched; with a suffocating voice, he cried, "Pardon!" "There is no pardon for you," said Rodolphe. "If your brains are not blown out here, the scaffold awaits you." "I prefer the scaffold. I can live two or three months more. What difference can it make to you if I shall be punished a little later? Mercy! Mercy!" "But your wife—your son—they bear your name!" "My name is already dishonoured. Oh! if I could only live eight days! Mercy!" "Not even that contempt of life, which is often found among great criminals!" said Rodolphe, with disgust.

"Besides, the *law* forbids any to take it in their own hands," continued the Maître d'Ecole, with assurance. "The law!" cried Rodolphe; "the law! You dare to invoke the law; you, who for twenty years have lived in open violation of all law?" The brigand cast down his head without replying, and then said, in a tone much

more humble, "Then for pity! pity! let me live!" "Will you tell me where your son is?" "Yes, yes! I'll tell you all I know about him." "Will you tell me who are the relations of this young girl, who, in her childhood, was so tortured by La Chouette?" "There are papers in my portfolio that can give you some information. It seems that her mother is a great lady." "Where is your son?" "You will let me live?" "Confess all first!" "That is, when you know all—" said the Maître d'Ecole, hesitating. "You have killed him!" "I confided him to one of my accomplices, who, when I was arrested, was able to escape." "What has he done with him?" "He has brought him up; he has given him an education, so that he could enter into business—so that he could serve us. But I will not tell you any more, unless you promise not to kill me." "Do you make conditions, miserable creature?" "Well! No, no! but pity! have me arrested only for the crime of to-day; do not speak of the others! Leave me a chance to save my head!" "You wish, then, to live?" "Oh yes, yes; who knows? No one can say what may happen," said the brigand, involuntarily. He already thought of a new flight, a new escape. "You wish, then, to live at any price—to live!"

"But to live, even if in chains! One month—for eight days—oh! not to die at once!" "Confess all your crimes, and you shall live." "I shall live? oh truly, I shall live?"

"Listen: in pity to your wife, your child, I wish to give you sage advice. Die to-day! die!" "Oh no, no, no! do not take back your promise! Let me live! Life the most frightful, the most hideous, anything but death!" "You wish it?" "Oh, yes, yes!" "And your son—what have you done with him?" "This friend of whom I have spoken had him taught book-keeping, so as to get him a situation in a bank, in order that he might keep us advised—of certain matters. This was agreed between us. Although at Rochefort, and, always thinking about my escape, I directed all the plans; we corresponded in cipher."

"This man frightens me," cried Rodolphe, shuddering; "he knows crimes I never suspected. Acknowledge: why did you wish to place your son at a banker's?" "For—you understand—being in concert with us—to inspire confidence in the banker—to aid us—and—" "Oh! mon Dieu! her son, her son!" cried Rodolphe, concealing his face in his hands.

"But we didn't intend any forgery!" cried the brigand; "and besides, when it was revealed to my son what was expected, he refused. After a violent scene with the person who had brought him up, he disappeared. It is more than eighteen months since. We do not know what has become of him. You will see there, in my portfolio, how he has been sought after, for fear we should be denounced; but all traces of him have been lost in Paris. The last house he dwelt in was in the Rue du Temple, No. 14, under the name of François Germain; the address is also in my portfolio. You see, I have told all. Keep your promise! have me arrested only for the business of to-night!" "And the cattle-merchant of Poissy?" "It is impossible that can be discovered, there are no proofs. I can acknowledge it before you, to show my good-will; but before the judge I will deny it." "You avow it, then!" "I was in great distress; I did not know how to live. La Chouette was my counsellor. Now I repent, you see, since I acknowledge it. Ah! if you were only generous enough not to deliver me to justice, I would give you my word of honour not to begin again!" "You shall live, and I will not deliver you to justice." "You pardon me?" cried the Maître d'Ecole, not believing what he heard; "you pardon me?" "I judge you, and I punish you!" cried Rodolphe, in a voice of thunder. "I will not deliver you to justice, because you will go to the scaffold or the galleys; that must not be; no, it must not be. To the galleys! to rule again by your strength and by your villany? to satisfy again your brutal instincts of oppression? to be abhorred, feared by all; for crime has its pride, and you rejoiced in your monstrosity. To the galleys? no, no; your iron body defies the labour of the yard and the rod of the sergeant. And, besides, chains can be broken, walls pulled down, ramparts scaled; and, some day, you will again escape, to cast yourself anew on society, like a savage wild beast, marking your way with rapine and murder; for nothing can resist your Herculean strength, nothing is out of reach of your knife; that must not be—no, it must not! since, at the galleys, you would break your chain. To secure one from your madness, what must be done? deliver you to the executioner?" "But is it my death, then, that you wish?" cried the brigand; "is it my death?"

"Death? don't hope for it; you are so cowardly! you fear it so much, that you could never believe it imminent! In your desire to live, in your obstinate hopes, you would escape the agonies of its formidable approach! Foolish, senseless hope! But it is of no consequence; it will veil the expiatory honours of the punishment; you will never believe, until you are under the hands of the executioner! And then, stupified with terror, you will be but a senseless mass of mortality, an offering to the manes of your victims. This cannot be—you would believe you would be saved until the last moment. You, monster—hope? How! you dare to think that hope can shed its balmy influences over you? Oh! it is too much! even old Satan would laugh. I do not mean you to hope any more in this life—I—"

"But what have I done to this man? who is he? what does he wish with me? where am I?" cried the Maître d'Ecole, almost in a state of delirium.

Rodolphe continued: "If, on the contrary, you had braved death, even then you ought not to be delivered to justice. For you, the scaffold would only be a bloody stage, where, like many others, you would make a parade of your ferocity; or, tired of your miserable life, you would damn your soul with a final blasphemy! That must not be, neither. It is not good for the people to see the condemned jest with the executioner, bully the hangman, blow out the divine spark which God has placed within us, with scorn and contempt. There is something holy in the welfare of a soul. Every crime can be expiated and forgiven, says the Saviour, but only to those who have sincerely repented. From the tribunal to the scaffold—the

distance is too short. You must not die thus." The Maître d'Ecole was horror-struck. For the first time in his life he found there was something to be feared worse than death. This vague fear was horrible.

The black doctor and the Chourineur looked at Rodolphe with anguish; they listened with shuddering to his voice, deep, harrowing, merciless cutting like a sword. Rodolphe continued: "Anselmo Duresnel, you, then, shall not go to the galleys; you shall not die." "But what do you want with me? it is hell that sends you here!"

"Listen," said Rodolphe, rising, in a solemn manner: "you have criminally abused your strength; I will paralyse it. The strongest have trembled before you—you shall tremble before the most weak. Assassin! you have plunged the creatures of God into eternal darkness—the shadows of eternity shall commence for you in this life, to-night—directly—your punishment at length will equal your crimes—this frightful punishment will leave you at the horizon of expiation, without end. I should be as criminal as you are, if, in punishing you, I only satisfied a vengeance, however just it might be. Far from being barren like death, your chastisement ought to produce good fruit; far from damning you; perhaps it will reform you. If, to put you in a condition where you can do no harm, I shut you out forever from the splendours of creation; if I plunge you into an impenetrable night alone, with the remembrance of your misdeeds, it is that you may meditate incessantly on their enormities. Yes! forever isolated from the exterior world, you will be forced always to look within yourself; and then, I hope that your forehead, bronzed by infamy, will blush with shame; your heart hardened by ferocity, corroded by crime, will be softened by commiseration. Each one of your words is blasphemous; each one will become a prayer. You are bold and cruel, because you are strong; you shall be lowly and humble, because you shall be weak. You are a stranger to repentance; some day you will weep for your victims. You have degraded the understanding that God has placed within you; you have reduced it to thoughts of rapine and murder; from a man you have made yourself a wild beast; some day your understanding will be chastened by remorse, and raised by expiation. You have not even respected that which is respected by the wild beasts, their females and their young. After a long life, consecrated to the redemption of your crimes, your last prayer will be to supplicate God to grant you the unhoped-for happiness to die between your wife and your son." As he pronounced these last words, Rodolphe was visibly affected.

The Maître d'Ecole felt hardly any more fear; he thought that Rodolphe was only alarming him by this lecture on morality. Almost reassured by the soft voice of his judge, the brigand, now the more insolent, as he was less alarmed, said, with a coarse laugh, "Ah! are we playing at charades? or are we at catechism here?" The black looked at Rodolphe with inquietude; he expected an explosion of anger on his part. But it was not so. The young man hung his head, with an ineffable expression of sorrow, and said to the doctor, "Do it, David. May God punish me alone, if I am deceived!" and he concealed his face in his hands.

At these words, "Do it," the negro rang the bell. Two men, clothed in black, entered. With a sign, the doctor showed them the door of a side cabinet. The two men rolled the chair on which the brigand was tied into this room. "Tie his head to the back of the chair with a handkerchief, and place another one over his month," said the black doctor, without entering the apartment. "You are going to strangle me now?" cried the Maître d'Ecole: "pardon! and—" Then nothing was heard but a confused murmur. The two men reappeared, and, at a sign from the black, retired. "My lord?" said the doctor once more to Rodolphe, in an interrogative manner. "Do it," answered Rodolphe, without changing his position. David entered slowly into the cabinet. "Monsieur Rodolphe, I am afraid," said the Chourineur, pale and trembling. "Monsieur Rodolphe, speak to me, then, I am afraid; is it a dream? What is he going to do to the Maître d'Ecole, the negro? Monsieur Rodolphe, I hear nothing—it makes me still more afraid—"

David came out of the cabinet; he was pale as negroes are; his lips were white. He again rang; the two men came in. "Bring back the chair!" It was done. "Take off the bandage!" It was taken off. "You mean, then, to put me to the rack?" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with a tone of anger rather than grief. "Why did you amuse yourself by pricking my eyes thus? You hurt me; is it to torment me again that you have put all the lights out here, as within?" There was a moment of frightful silence. "You are blind," said David, in a mournful tone.

"It is not true; it is not possible! You have made it dark expressly," cried the brigand, making violent efforts to release himself. "Take off his bonds; let him rise, let him walk," said Rodolphe. It was done; he raised himself quickly, made one step with his hands before him, then fell back in the chair, lifting his arms to heaven.

"David, give him this port folio," said Rodolphe.

The negro put in his trembling hands a pocket-book.

"There is in this pocket-book a sum sufficient to secure you an asylum and bread to the end of your days in some solitude. Now you are free; go and repent; the Lord is merciful." "Blind!" repeated the Maître d'Ecole, holding mechanically the portfolio in his hand. "Open the doors, let him go!" said Rodolphe. The doors were opened with a loud crash.

"Blind! blind! blind!" repeated the horror-stricken bandit. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! it is, then, true!"

"You are free—you have money—go!"

"But I can't go—I—what do you wish me to do? I can't see!" cried he in a voice of despair. "But it is a frightful crime to take advantage of one's strength, for—"

"It is a crime, is it?" repeated Rodolphe, in a solemn tone. "And you, what have you done with your strength?" "Oh death! Yes, I should have preferred death!" cried the Maître d'Ecole. "To be at the mercy of the world; to fear every one; a child could beat me now;

what can I do? Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! What can I do?" "You have money." "They will steal it from me!" said the brigand.

"They will rob you! Do you hear these words—you say it with fear—you who are a robber? go, go." "For the love of God," said the Maître d'Ecole, in a supplicating manner, "let some one conduct me! How can I go into the streets? Ah! kill me! I ask you, for pity's sake, kill me!" "No, one day you will repent." "Never, never! I will never repent! Oh! I will revenge myself! I will revenge myself!" and grinding his teeth with rage, he jumped out of the chair with clinched fists and a menancing air; and the first step he stumbled and fell. "No, no, I cannot; and yet I am so strong. Ah! I am much to be pitied; no one will pity me; no one!" And he wept.

It is impossible to paint the stupor and affright of the Chourineur during this terrible scene: his rude and rough features expressed compassion; he approached Rodolphe, and said in a low voice, "Monsieur Rodolphe, he has perhaps received what he deserved, for he was a famous villain! He wanted to kill me just now; but never mind; now he is blind, he weeps. Thunder! it makes me feel bad. He can't see to walk—he may be crushed in the streets. Will you let me conduct him to some place where he can be quiet, at least?" "Good," said Rodolphe, touched with this generosity, and taking his hand; "good; go!" The Chourineur approached the Maître d'Ecole, and placed his hand on his shoulder. The brigand trembled. "Who touched me?" said he, in a mournful tone. "I—" "Who are you?" "The Chourineur." "You come to revenge yourself, also!" "You cannot see how to go out? take my arm—I will conduct you." "You—you?" "Yes; now, come!" "You wish to spread a snare for me?" "You know I am not a scoundrel—that I will not take advantage of your misfortune. Come; let us go—it is daylight." "Daylight! Ah! I shall never see daylight again. I—never—" Rodolphe could no longer support the scene; he went in, followed by David, making signs to the servants to retire. The Chourineur and the Maître d'Ecole remained alone. "Is it true that there is money in the portfolio he gave me?" asked the brigand, after a long silence. "Yes. I put there myself five thousand francs: with that you can go and board somewhere—in some corner of the country, for the rest of your days; or would you rather go to the Ogresse?" "No! she would rob me." "To Bras-Rouge?" "He would poison me, to steal my money!" "Where, then, shall I take you?" "I don't know. You are not a robber, Chourineur. Here, conceal my portfolio in my vest, so that 'La Chouette' can't see it; she would soon empty it." "La Chouette! they have carried her to the hospital of Beaujou. In struggling with you last night, I have broken one of her legs." "But what is to become of me? Mon Dieu! what is to become of me? With this black curtain always before me! and if on this black curtain I should see appear the pale faces and the dead who—"

He shuddered, and said to the Chourineur, "This man—of last night, is he dead?" "No." "So much the better;" and after remaining for some moments silent, he cried, with a new access of rage,

"It is you, Chourineur, who has caused all this! Brigand! if it had not been for you, I should have killed the man, and carried off the money. If I am blind, it is your fault—yes, it is your fault!"

"Don't think any more about that—it does you no good: will you come or not? I am tired—I want to sleep—I have had holyday enough now. To-morrow I shall return to my work—I will take you where you wish to go; afterward I will go to bed."

"But I don't know where to go—to my lodgings? I dare not—it must be said—"

"Well, listen. Will you come for a day or two to my lodgings? I will look out for some kind folks, who, not knowing who you are, will take you for a boarder, as an unfortunate blind man. Stop—there is a man I know at the Port St. Nicholas, whose mother lives at Saint Mandé; a worthy woman, who is poor; perhaps—she will take care of you. Come, now—yes or no?" "I believe I can rely on you, Chourineur. I am not afraid to go with you—with my money. You have never stolen—you are not a bad man—you are generous." "Come, that is good—no more epitaphs—enough." "I am only grateful for what you wish to do for me, Chourineur. You are without hatred, and without ill-will," said the brigand with humility; "you are a much better man than I am." "Thunder! I think so. M. Rodolphe said I had a heart." "But who is this man, then—he is not a man!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with renewed rage; "he is an executioner—a monster!" The Chourineur shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Let us go?" "We shall go to your room, Chourineur?" "Yes." "You have no ill-feeling towards me for this night's work? You swear it, don't you?" "Yes." "And you are sure he is not dead—*the man?*" "I am sure of it." "That will be at least one the less," said the brigand, in a hollow voice. And leaning on the arm of the Chourineur, he left the house of the *Allée des Veuves.*

CHAPTER XXII.

L'ILE ADAM.

A MONTH had passed since the occurrence of the event of which we have spoken. We will now conduct the reader to the little town of L'Ile Adam, situated in a delightful position on the banks of the River Oise, near a forest. The smallest facts become events in the country. Thus the idlers of L'Ile Adam, who were promenading on the "Place de l'Eglise" one fine morning, were very busy, wondering when the new proprietor of the finest butcher stand in the town, which had been recently purchased from the widow Dumont, would arrive. The new owner must be rich, for he had most splendidly painted and decorated the shop.

For three weeks the workmen had laboured day and night; a fine grating, all bronze and gilt, extended across the entrance to the stall, leaving a free circulation of air when it was closed. On each side of the grating rose large pilasters, surmounted with two bulls' heads with gilded horns; these supported the entabla-

ture destined to receive the sign. The rest of the house, composed of a single story, had been painted stone colour, with blinds or "*persiennes*" of French gray. The works were all terminated, except the placing of the sign, which was most impatiently waited for by the idlers, very desirous of knowing the name of the widow's successor. At length the workmen brought a large board painted black, and in gilded letters could be read, "*Francœur, marchand boucher.*" The curiosity of the good folks was only partially satisfied. Who was this Mr. Francœur? One, who had more curiosity than the rest, went and asked the boy who had charge of the shop, a fine, active, hearty-looking fellow, with broad shoulders, and who was busily occupied in arranging the meats for sale.

However, nothing was to be learned from him, for he answered that he did not know his master yet; the purchase had been made by a third person, but he did not doubt that he would do everything he could to merit the favour of the "*bourgeois*" of L'Ile Adam. This little compliment, made in a pleasant manner, joined to the neat appearance of the shop, disposed the idlers much in favour of M. Francœur; many of them even condescended to promise their custom to the butcher's boy.

Two hours after, a neat little basket wagon, quite new, drawn by a fine stout horse, drove into the yard of the house, and two men got out. The one was Murphy, completely cured of his wounds, although rather pale; the other was the Chourineur. At the risk of repeating a vulgarity, we will say that the imposture of dress is so powerful, that the frequenter of the taverns of the "*cité*" was hardly recognisable in the decent dress he now wore. Even his face had undergone the same change; he had thrown off, with his rags, his savage, brutal, and turbulent manner; to have seen him walk with his hands in the pockets of his long and comfortable riding-coat of dark brown cloth, his chin neatly shaved, and buried in a white cravat with embroidered corners, one would have taken him for one of the most harmless and inoffensive "*bourgeois*" in the world.

Murphy fastened the reins of the horse to an iron ring attached to the wall, and entered with his companion into a pretty little room, which was back of the shop, and neatly furnished with simple furniture, made of walnut: the two windows looked out to the yard, where the horse was neighing with impatience. Murphy appeared to be quite at home, for he opened a closet and took out a bottle of brandy, saying to the Chourineur, it was quite cold riding this morning: "Will you take a glass of brandy, my boy?" "If it is all the same to you, Monsieur Murphy, I will not drink." "You refuse a taste?" "Yes; I am too happy—joy that makes one warm; besides, when I say content, perhaps." "How is that?" "Yesterday, when you came to look for me at the Port Saint Nicolas, where I was working hard, to make myself warm—I had not seen you since the night when the negro with white hair had put out the eyes of the Maître d'Ecole. It was no doubt necessary that he should not escape, it is true—but—thunder! that scared me; and M. Rodolphe—what a face! he who had such a good-natured look. He made me really afraid." "Well, well, what then?" "You said to me, 'Good-day, Chourineur'—'Good-day, M. Murphy. So you are well again? so much the better—thunder! so much the better. And M. Rodolphe?' 'He was obliged to leave, some days after, the *Allée des Veuves*, and he forgot you, "*mon garçon.*"' 'Well, M. Murphy,' I answered, 'if M. Rodolphe has forgotten me, true that makes me sorry.' 'I meant to say, my good fellow, that he had forgotten to recompense your services, but that he would always remember.' Thus, Monsieur Murphy, these words made me glad right away. Thunder! I—I shall never forget him! He said to me that I had honour, had a heart—enough, sufficient."

"Unfortunately, my boy, my lord is gone without leaving any orders concerning you; as for myself, I have nothing but what my lord gives me; I cannot acknowledge as I should wish all I owe you on my own account." "Come, come, Monsieur Murphy, you are amusing yourself." "Why the devil did you not return to the *Allée des Veuves*, after that fatal night? My lord would not have gone without thinking about you." "Damé! M. Rodolphe did not ask me—I thought he had not farther need of my services." "But you ought to have thought, at least, that he had need at least to acknowledge his gratitude." "Since you have told me that M. Rodolphe has not forgotten me, Monsieur Murphy—" "Go along—well, we'll talk no more about it—only I had much trouble to find you. Don't you go any more to the Ogresse?" "No." "Why not?" "It is one of my notions—foolishness." "Very good. But now let us return to what you were saying. What was it, Monsieur Murphy? You said, 'I am happy to have met you—and still more happy, perhaps—'" "Ah! I remember. Yesterday you said to me, '*Mon garçon*, I am not rich, but I can find you an easier place than one on the quay, where you can earn four francs a day.' Four francs a day—*Vive la Charte!* I could not believe—pay of a sub-adjutant!! I answered you, 'It suits me, Monsieur Murphy!' 'But, says you, 'you must not be clothed like a "*gueux*," for it would frighten the honest folks where I shall take you.' I answer you, 'I have no others.' Then you said, 'Come to the Temple.' I follow you. I chose what I wanted at Mother Hubert; you advanced the money to pay for it, and in a quarter of an hour I am as fine as a proprietor or a dentist. You appointed me to meet you this morning at the 'Porte Saint Denis,' at daylight; I found you there with your wagon, and here we are."

"Well, and what is there to regret in all this?"

"It is to be well clad, do you see—that spoils one; and when I shall put on my old clothes, I shall feel bad; and, besides, to earn four francs a day, I who only earned two—and that so sudden—it seemed to me to be too fine, and could not last; and I would much prefer to sleep all my life on the miserable straw bed of my lodgings, than to sleep five or six nights in a good bed. That is my character."

"That is reasonable; but it would be better always to sleep in a good bed. It is clear, better have a belly full of bread than to starve with hunger. Ah! this is a butcher's shop here?" said the Chourineur, hearing the blows of the meat-axe, and seeing through the curtains quarters of beef. "Yes, *mon garçon*, it belongs to one of my friends. While my horse blows, are you a mind to visit it?" "Ma foi, yes; it recalls the days of my youth, only I had Montfaucon for a slaughter-house, and old horses for cattle. It is droll! but if I had money, I do not know any trade that I should have preferred to that of a butcher. To go to the fairs on one's pony to

buy cattle; return home to one's own fireside; to get warm if it should be cold, or to get dry if one is wet; find your wife, a good fat soul, with a host of children, who would rummage your pocket to see if you have brought anything from the fair; and then in the morning in the slaughter-house, take hold of an ox by the horns, especially when he is savage—'*nom de nom*'—he should be savage—draw him down to the ring—knock him over—cut him up—dress him—thunder! that would have been my ambition, like the Goualeuse desired to eat the barley sugar when she was little. Apropos of this young girl, M. Murphy; seeing that she returned no more to the Ogresse, I had no doubt but that M. Rodolphe had kept her away. Now, I call that a good action—poor girl! she did not wish to do wrong—she was so young! and, besides, later—custom—in fine, M. Rudolphe has done well." "I am of your opinion, but will you visit the shop while the horse blows?" The Chourineur and Murphy entered into the shop; from thence they went to the stable, where they found three fine bullocks, and a score of sheep; thence to the slaughter-house, pens, and other outhouses, all of which were in a state of great order and neatness. When they had seen all but the upper story of the dwelling, Murphy said, "You must acknowledge now that my friend is a happy man. This house and shop belongs to him, without counting a thousand dollars ready money for trade: he is about thirty-eight years of age, strong as a bull, iron constitution, and fond of his trade. The good and honest boy that you saw below, fills his place with much intelligence when he goes to buy his cattle at the fair. Once more, is not my friend a very happy man?" "Ah! marry, yes, Monsieur Murphy; but what will you have? There are happy and unhappy folks; when I think that I am going to earn four francs a day, and that there are some who earn only the half, if not—" "Will you go up stairs and see the rest of the house?" "Willingly, Monsieur Murphy; because the *bourgeois*, who wishes to employ you, is up there." "The *bourgeois*, who wishes to employ me?" "Yes." "Stop—why did you not tell me this sooner?"

"I will explain by-and-by." "A moment," said the Chourineur, with an embarrassed and mournful air, catching Murphy by the arm. "Listen, I ought to tell you a thing: that Monsieur Rodolphe has perhaps not told you, but which I ought not to conceal from the *bourgeois*, who wishes to employ me—because, if it disgust him, whether it be now or after—" "What do you mean to say?" "I wish to say—" "Well?" "That I am a *repris de justice*—that I have been to the galleys," said the Chourineur, in a hoarse voice. "Ah!" said Murphy. "But I have never wronged any one," cried the Chourineur; and I would rather starve with hunger than to steal. But I have done worse than steal," added he, casting down his eyes. "I have killed—in anger; and this is not all," said he, after a moment's silence. "The *bourgeois* never like to employ criminals—and they are right. This is the reason which has always prevented my getting any work except on the quays; for I have always said, in asking for work, So and so—and so—do you want me or not? I'd rather be refused than to be discovered afterward. I only mean to tell you that I am going to tell all to the *bourgeois*. You know him; if you think he will refuse me, let me avoid seeing him by telling me so, and I will turn upon my heels." "Come along," said Murphy. The Chourineur followed Murphy; they mounted the staircase, and on opening a door, they found themselves in the presence of Rodolphe. "My good Murphy," said he, "leave us alone."

CHAPTER XXIII.

RECOMPENSE.

"Vive la Charte! I am delighted to find you once more, Monsieur Rodolphe, or, rather, my lord," cried the Chourineur; and he really experienced great joy, for noble hearts are as much attached by services rendered as received. "Good-day, *mon garçon*; I also am delighted to see you." "That joker of a Mr. Murphy, who said you had gone; but stop, my lord." "Call me Monsieur Rodolphe—I prefer it." "Well! Monsieur Rodolphe, excuse me for not coming to see you since that night. I feel now that I have been impolite; but you did not want me, did you?" "I pardon you," said Rodolphe, smiling; "but has M. Murphy shown you this house?" "Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe—fine house, fine shop; it is substantial, and in good order. Speaking of substantial, it is I who am going to be substantial, Monsieur Rodolphe: four francs a day M. Murphy has got for me—four francs!" "I have better than that to propose to you, *mon garçon*." "Oh! better, without troubling yourself—it is difficult—four francs a day!" "I have a better proposition, I tell you; for this house, and all that it contains, this shop, and the thousand dollars that you see in this portfolio, all belongs to you." The Chourineur smiled in a simple manner, crushed his beaver hat between his knees, and did not seem to comprehend what Rodolphe had said, although his language was very plain and clear. The latter continued, with much kindness, "I imagine your surprise, but I repeat, this house and this money are all yours—your property." The face of the Chourineur became very much flushed; he passed his iron hand over his face, dripping with perspiration, and muttered, with a faltering voice, "Oh! that is to say—that is to say—my property." "Yes, your property, since I give it to you. Do you understand? I give it to you—to you."

The Chourineur shook on his chair, scratched his head, coughed, cast down his eyes, but said not a word. He felt the current of his ideas escape him: he understood perfectly what Rodolphe had said to him, and it was just on that account that he could not believe what he heard. Between the profound misery, the degradation in which he had always lived, and the position which Rodolphe assured him, there was an abyss, which the service he had rendered to Rodolphe did not seem to merit. Not wishing to hurry the moment, when his protégé would at length open his eyes to the reality, Rodolphe enjoyed with delight this stupor, this incredibility of delight. He saw, with a mixture of joy and bitterness unutterable, that among a certain class the habit of suffering and ill-fortune is such, that their reason refuses to admit the possibility of a future, which for a great number would be very little to be desired. After having for a while enjoyed the stupid surprise of the Chourineur, Rodolphe continued, "What I give you, then, seems beyond your

wishes?" "My lord," said the Chourineur, rising suddenly, "you propose this house, and this money, to try me; but I cannot—" "You cannot what?" said Rodolphe, in astonishment. The face of the Chourineur brightened up, his bashfulness passed away; he said, with a firm voice, "It is not to engage me to steal that you offer me so much money, I know that well. Besides, I never have stolen in my life—it is perhaps to kill some one," added he, in a mournful tone. "Ah! the unfortunate!" cried Rodolphe, with bitterness. "Compassion to them is so rarely met with, that they can only explain liberality by crime!" Then addressing the Chourineur, he said, in a tone of great kindness, "You judge me wrongfully—you deceive yourself. I require nothing from you but what is honourable. That which I give you, I give because you have deserved it." "I!" cried the Chourineur, whose wonderings began again; "I deserve it: and how?"

"I am going to tell you. Without distinct ideas of good and evil—abandoned to your natural instincts, shut up in the galleys, for fifteen years, with the most frightful villains—pressed by misery, by hunger—forced by your disgrace, and by the reprobation of honest people, to continue to frequent the resort of malefactors—not only have you remained honest, but the remorse for your crime has survived the expiation which human justice had imposed." This simple and noble language was a new source of astonishment for the Chourineur. He looked at Rodolphe with respect, mingled with fear and gratitude. But he could not yet believe the evidence of his senses. "How, Monsieur Rodolphe, because you have beaten me, because believing you to be a workman like myself, since you speak '*Argot*' like papa and mamma, I have related you my life over a mug of wine; and after that I saved you from drowning. You—how?—finally—I—a house—money—I like a '*bourgeois*.' Stop, Monsieur Rodolphe; once more, it is not possible."

"Believing me one of your fellows, you related to me your story as it was, without any deceit or concealment, what was culpable—what was praiseworthy. I have judged you—well judged—and it pleases me to reward you."

"But, Monsieur Rodolphe, it cannot be. No, for there are poor workmen who have been honest all their lives, and who—" "I know it, and perhaps I have done for many of them more than I do for you. But if the man who lives honest in the midst of honest people, encouraged by their esteem, merits interest and assistance; he who, notwithstanding he is separated from all decent people, remains honest in the society of the most miserable scoundrels upon earth, he also merits interest and asssistance. Besides, this is not all; you have saved my life—you have also saved that of my dearest friend. That which I do for you, then, is as much dictated by personal gratitude, as the desire to drag from mire a noble and strong mind, which is only sullied, not lost. And this is not all—" "What have I done, then, besides, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

Rodolphe took him cordially by the hand, and said, "Filled with commiseration for a man who had wished to kill you, you offered him your assistance; you have even given him an asylum in your dwelling, '*impasse Nôtre Dame, No. 9.*'"

"Do you know where I live, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"Because you forget the services you have rendered me, must I forget them? When you left my house, you were watched, and were seen entering your house with the Maître d'Ecole."

"But M. Murphy told me that you did not know where I lived, Monsieur Rodolphe." "I wished to prove you once more—I wished to know if your generosity was disinterested. In effect, after your courageous action, you returned to your rude labours of the day, asking nothing, hoping nothing; not even a bitter word against the apparent ingratitude with which I despised your services; and when Murphy, yesterday, proposed an occupation by which you would be better remunerated than by your habitual work, you accepted with joy, with gratitude!" "Listen now, Monsieur Rodolphe, about that; four francs a day are always four francs a day; as to the service I have rendered you, it is rather I who should thank." "How is that?"

"Yes, yes, Monsieur Rodolphe," added he, with a melancholy voice. "I have already received something; for since I have known you, and you said these words, '*You have yet a heart and honour*,' it is astonishing how much I have reflected. It is really droll that two words, two single words, could produce that. But, in fact, if you sow two little grains in the ground, from almost nothing springs up the large stalk of corn." This just and almost poetical comparison struck Rodolphe. And truly, two words, but two words, magical and powerful for those who comprehend them, had almost suddenly developed in this energetic mind instincts good and generous, which had only existed in the germe.

"Do you see, my lord," continued the Chourineur, "I have saved Monsieur Rodolphe and M. Murphy a little, it is true; but if I should save hundreds and thousands, that would not render life to those who—"

"This remorse is salutary, but a good action is always counted," said Rodolphe; and then, willing to change the discourse, he said, "You have placed the Maître d'Ecole at St. Mandé?" "Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe. He got me to change his bills for gold, and to buy a belt, which I fastened around him. We put his change in this—and good-by! He has board for thirty sous a day, with some worthy, good people, to whom this small sum is of use." "You must do one more service for me mon, garçon?" "Speak, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"In a few days you will go and see him, with this paper: it is the title for a perpetual place among the 'Bons Pauvres.' He will give four thousand five hundred francs, and he will be admitted for life, on the presentation of this paper, it is all agreed upon, all arranged. I have thought that this would be best. It will assure him food and shelter for the remainder of his days, and he will only have to think of repentance. I regret now that I did not give him this entrance at once, instead of money, which may be squandered or stolen; but he inspired me with such horror, that I only thought of getting rid of his presence. You will make him this offer, and you will conduct him to the hospital. If, by chance, he should refuse, we will decide how to act differently. So it is agreed, then, you will go and see him." "It will be with much pleasure, Monsieur Rodolphe, that I would render you this service, but I don't know if I shall be free.

M. Murphy has engaged me with a 'bourgeois,' at four francs a day." Rodolphe looked at the Chourineur with astonishment. "How! and your house? and your shop?"

"Come, Monsieur Rodolphe, don't make fun of a poor devil. You have amused yourself enough, to *prove* me, as you said. Your house, and your shop, it is a song of the same tune. You said to yourself, now let me see if this animal of a Chourineur will be enough of a turkey-cock to imagine that—enough—enough, Monsieur Rodolphe. You are a joker—do stop!" "How? Did I not explain all this to you just now?" "To give a colour to the thing, yes; and, 'foi l'homme,' I did bite. Did you ever see such a fool?" "But, mon garçon, you are crazy!" "No, no, my lord. Stop, speak to me about M. Murphy. Although it is astonishing, yet four francs a day,—I can imagine it; but a house, a shop, money—what a farce! Thunder, what a farce!" and he laughed long and loud. "But, once more—"

"Listen, my lord; frankly, at first, you have a little deceived me. I said to myself, M. Rodolphe is a gay boy, not many like him; he has, perhaps, some message to send to the devil; he is going to give me the commission, and he wishes to grease my paws, so that I won't be afraid of the fire. But afterward I reflected that I was wrong to think so of you; and then I thought you were willing just to get up a little farce, for a laugh; for if I was *Job* enough to believe that you were going to give me a fortune for nothing, then you would have said, Poor Chourineur, go, you wrong me—are you sick?" Rodolphe began to find it rather embarrassing to convince the Chourineur. He said to him in a grave and imposing manner, almost severe, "I never jest with the gratitude and interest inspired by noble conduct. I have told you this house and this money are yours; it is I who gives them to you; and since you hesitate to believe me, since you force me to take an oath, I swear on my honour, all this belongs to you, and that I give it to you for the reasons I have stated." At this firm and dignified manner, and at the serious expression of Rodolphe, the Chourineur could no longer doubt the truth. During some moments, he looked at him in silence, and then, without emphasis, with a voice profoundly moved, he said, "I believe you, my lord, and I thank you: a poor man like me knows not how to make speeches. Once more, I thank you: all I can say to you is, that I never will refuse succour to the unfortunate; because it is poverty and hunger, the Ogresse, and people of that kind, who have deceived the poor Goualeuse; and, once in the sink, all the world has not arm strong enough to pull them out." "You cannot thank me in a better way, mon garçon; you understand me. You will find in this secretary the titles of this property, acquired for you under the name of M. Francœur."

"M. Francœur?" "You have no name. I give you this one. It is of good omen. You will honour it, I am sure." "My lord, I promise you." "Courage, *mon garçon!* You can aid me in a great and good undertaking." "I, my lord!" "You; in the eyes of the world you shall be a living and salutary example. The happy position in which Providence has placed you will prove that those who have fallen very low can yet be raised, and hope much, when they repent, and still preserve pure some striking qualifications. In seeing you happy, because after committing a criminal action, expiated by a terrible punishment, you have preserved your honour, courage, and disinterestedness, those who would have given up, will try to become better. I wish no one to be ignorant of your past life. Sooner or later it will be known; better anticipate a revelation. I will shortly go to the mayor of this district with you. I have inquired about him, and find he is a man worthy to concur in my work. I will tell him who I am, and I will be your security; and to establish from the present honourable relations between you and the two persons who morally represent the society of this town, I will secure a sum of two thousand francs for the poor, to be paid monthly for two years; every month I will send you the sum, of which the use shall be regulated by you, the mayor, and the *curé*. If either of them should feel the smallest scruples in co-operating with you, this must disappear before the exigencies of charity. These relations once well assured, it will depend upon yourself to merit the esteem of these worthy people, and you will not fail." "My lord, I comprehend you. It is not to me, the Chourineur, to whom you do all this good; it is to those unfortunates who, like me, have found themselves in trouble, in crime, and who have come out of it, as you say, with *heart and honour*. It is like in the army: when all the soldiers of a battalion distinguish themselves, they cannot all be rewarded with the decoration (legion of honour); there are only four crosses for five hundred brave fellows; but those who do not get the star say, 'Good—I'll get it another time,' and the other time they rush still more fearlessly into danger." Rodolphe listened to his protégé with much happiness. In rendering to this man his own, his self-esteem—in raising him in his own estimation—in giving him, as we may say, a consciousness of his own integrity, he had almost instantaneously developed in his heart and mind reflections filled with good sense, sentiment, honour; almost, we may say, delicacy.

"That which you say to me, Francœur," answered Rodolphe, "is a new manner to prove your gratitude. I take it kindly."

"So much the better, my lord, for I should be much embarrassed to prove the contrary." "Now let us go and visit your house; my old Murphy has had this pleasure; I wish to have it, also."

Rodolphe and the Chourineur descended. At the moment they entered the court, the "*garçon,*" addressing the Chourineur, said to him, respectfully, "Since you are the '*bourgeois,*' Monsieur Francœur, I come to let you know that business is brisk. There are no more cutlets nor legs of mutton left; we must kill a sheep or two at once." "Parbleu!" said Rodolphe to the Chourineur, "here is a fine occasion to exercise your talent. I want to have the first use of it; the fresh air has given me an appetite, and I will taste one of your cutlets, although rather too fresh, I fear." "You are very good, Monsieur Rodolphe," said the Chourineur, with a joyous air; "you flatter me, but I will do my best." "Shall I take two sheep to the slaughter-house, bourgeois?" said the garçon. "Yes, and bring a sharp knife, not too pointed, and with a strong back." "I have just what you want, bourgeois; don't be uneasy—you could shave with it—look here." "Thunder! Monsieur Rodolphe!" said the Chourineur, taking off his coat quickly, and turning up the sleeves of his shirt. "This reminds me of my youth and the '*abattoir.*' You shall see how I'll cut. '*Nom de nom.*' I wish I

was there at once! Your knife, boy—your knife—that is it—you understand—there's a blade! Who wants to have it? Thunder! with a knife like that I would fight a mad bull."

The Chourineur brandished the knife; his eyes began to be filled with blood; his evil passions began to predominate; his instinct, his sanguinary appetite, reappeared with all its fearful energy. The slaughter-house was in the court; it was a vaulted, dark room, paved with stone, and lighted from above by a small opening. The garçon brought one of the sheep to the door. "Shall I fasten him to the ring, bourgeois?"

"Fasten him—thunder! and my knees! Be easy—I will hold it there like a vice. Give me the beast, and go back to the shop." Rodolphe remained alone with the Chourineur; he watched him with attention, almost with anguish. "Come, to work," said he to him. "And it shan't be long—thunder! you will see how I'll manage the knife. My hands burn. There's a humming in my ears. My temples throb, as they always do, when I see red. Come, advance, you—eh! Madelon, that I may stab you to death." With eyes glittering with ferocity, no longer conscious of the presence of Rodolphe, he raised the animal without any effort, and with a bound he carried it into the slaughter-house, with savage and ferocious joy. He looked like a wolf rushing into his den with his prey. Rodolphe followed him, and leaned against one of the boards of the door, which was closed.

The slaughter-house was dark; a bright ray of sunshine fell from above, and lightened up "*à la Rembrandt*" the hard face of the Chourineur—his pale blond hair, and his red whiskers. Bent almost double, holding by his teeth a long knife which shone in the "*clair-obscur*," he drew the sheep between his knees. When he had secured it, he took it by the head, drew the knife across the throat, and killed it. At the moment that the animal felt the blade, it uttered a low, plaintive cry, turning its dying look towards the Chourineur, and two spirts of blood sprinkled him in the face. This cry, this look, this blood, caused a frightful impression on this man. His knife fell from his hands; his face became livid, contracted, frightful, from the blood which covered it; his eyes became staring, his hair bristled on his head, and falling back suddenly with horror, he cried, with a suffocating voice, "Oh! the sergeant! the sergeant!"

Rodolphe ran to him. "Recover yourself, mon garçon."

"There—there—the sergeant!" repeated the Chourineur, still retreating, his eye fixed, haggard, and pointing with one finger to some invisible phantom. Then uttering a heart-rending cry, as if the spectre had touched him, he rushed to the end of the slaughter-house, to the darkest corner, and there, striking his face, arms, breast, against the wall, as if endeavouring to throw it down, that he might escape the horrible vision, he again repeated, in a hoarse and convulsive voice,

"Oh! the sergeant! the sergeant! the sergeant!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEPARTURE.

Thanks to the care and agitation of Murphy and Rodolphe, who soothed his agitation with much trouble, the Chourineur came completely to himself after a long crisis.

He found himself alone with Rodolphe, in one of the rooms on the first story. "My lord," said he, with dejection, "you have been very good to me; but you see I would prefer to be a thousand times more unhappy than I have been, than to accept the trade you propose."

"You must reflect, nevertheless."

"Listen, my lord; when I heard the cry of the poor beast, which could not defend itself—when I felt its blood in my face—a warm blood, which seemed to be alive—oh! you do not know what it is—then I saw my dream again—the sergeant—and the poor young soldier that I 'chourined'—who did not defend themselves, and who, in dying, looked at me with an air so mournful, so sad, that they looked as if they pitied me. Oh! my lord! it is enough to drive one mad!" And the unfortunate man buried his face in his hands, convulsively.

"Come, come, calm yourself."

"Excuse me, my lord; but I feel now that the sight of blood—of a knife—I cannot support it. At each moment it would awaken dreams that I had began to forget. To have every day your hands or feet in blood—cutting the throats of the poor beasts, who cannot defend themselves—oh, no! no, I cannot. I would rather be blind like the Maître d'Ecole, than to follow this business." It is impossible to paint the energy of gesture, of accent, of expression, as the Chourineur thus spoke. Rodolphe felt profoundly grieved. He was satisfied at the horrible impression the sight of blood had caused his protégé. For a moment the bloody instinct, brute nature, had conquered the man; but remorse had conquered the instinct. It was beautiful—it was a great lesson. We must, however, say, to the credit of Rodolphe, he had not despaired of this movement. His will, and not chance, had led him to the scene at the slaughter-house. "Pardon me, my lord," said the Chourineur, timidly: "I make but poor returns for your goodness towards me; but—" "Far from that; you meet all my wishes. And now, I must confess, I was not certain that I should find in you this holy exaltation of remorse." "How, my lord?" "Listen," said Rodolphe: "this is what I have thought. I had chosen for you the occupation of a butcher, because your tastes and instincts were that way." "Alas! my lord, it is true. Without that which you know, it would have been my delight. I said so just now to M. Murphy."

"I know it: thus my poor Francœur, so well named, if you had accepted the offer that I made you—and you can yet, without losing my esteem—everything that is here belongs to you. I paid a holy debt. I drew you from a painful situation; I constituted in you a good, and striking, and salutary example, and I should continue to interest myself in you for the future. If, on the contrary, the sight of the blood that you would shed mechanically recalls your crime; if this involuntary sensation proves to me that remorse is always lying dormant in your breast, my views for you are changed; for the situation I offer you becomes a horrible punishment each day."

"Oh! it is too true, Monsieur Rodolphe—a horrible punishment."

"Now this is what I propose: you will accept it, I believe, for I have acted, thinking what would come to pass. A person who possesses a large property in Algiers has ceded to me for you (the deed only has to be signed) a large farm, intended for grazing. The land is very fertile, and under full cultivation; but I will not conceal from you, knowing your courage, and your need of exercising it, I have acquired this property conditionally, although it is situated on the limits of Atlas, that is to say, at the advance posts, and exposed to frequent attacks from the Arabs. It is as necessary for the owner to be as much a soldier as a cultivator; it is at once a redoubt and a farmhouse. The man who takes care of this property during the absence of its owner will give you every information; he is said to be honest and devoted; you will keep him with you as long as it is necessary. Once established there, not only can you increase your substance by labour and intelligence, but you can render true service to your country by your courage. The colonists organize themselves as militia. The extent of your property, the number of tenants subsisting on it, will render you the chief of a troop sufficiently considerable, armed, disciplined, animated by your bravery. It will be of great utility in protecting the scattered population of the plain. I repeat, I have chosen this, notwithstanding the danger, or, rather, on account of the danger, because I wish to make your natural intrepidity of service: because that, in having expiated, almost atoned for a great crime, your complete restoration will be more noble, more entire, more heroic, if it is achieved in the midst of the dangers of an unsubdued country, than if in the midst of the peaceful habits of a small town. If I did not offer this to you at first, it was that it was more than probable that the other would satisfy you; and, besides, this is so much more venturesome, I did not wish to expose you to it without giving you your choice. It is yet time. If you do not like this arrangement, say so frankly; we will look for another; if not, to-morrow all will be signed. I will give you the titles of your property, and you shall go to Algiers with a person recommended by the former owner of the property, to put you in possession. There is the rent of two years now due; this you will receive on your arrival. The farm produces about three thousand francs; work, improve the land, be active, vigilant, and you will easily increase your substance, and those of your tenants, whom you will always be ready to assist; for I cannot doubt, you will always show yourself charitable and generous, and you will remember, that to be rich, is to give much. Although at some distance from you, I shall not forget you; never, never can I forget that I and my best friend owe to you our lives. The only proof of attachment and gratitude I ask is, that you will at once learn to read and write, so you can each week inform me of your welfare, and that you can address yourself directly to me if you have need of advice or assistance."

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It is useless to attempt to describe the joy of the Chourineur. His character and natural impulse are so well known to the reader, that it can be well imagined that no proposition could have suited him better.

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The next morning, in effect, the Chourineur departed for Algiers.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

RESEARCHES.

The house that Rodolphe possessed in the Allée des Veuves was not the place of his ordinary abode. He dwelt in one of the largest hotels of the Faubourg Saint Germain, situated at the end of the Rue Plumet. To avoid the honours due to his sovereign rank, he had guarded his "incognito" since his arrival at Parris. His "chargé d'affaires" near the court of France had announced that his master would return the indispensable official visits under the name and title of the Count de Duren. Thanks to the usage so frequent in the courts of the north, a prince can travel with as much liberty as ease, and escape those ceremonies which from constant repetition become tiresome. Notwithstanding his incognito, Rodolphe lived in great state. We lead the reader into the hotel the morning after the departure of the Chourineur. Ten o'clock had just struck. In the middle of a large room, situated on the ground floor, and opening into the cabinet of Rodolphe, Murphy, seated before a desk, was sealing some despatches. An usher, dressed in black, wearing around his neck a silver chain, opened the folding doors, and announced, "His Excellency the Baron de Graün!" Murphy, without desisting from his occupation, saluted the baron with a gesture at once familiar and cordial. "Monsieur le Chargé d'Affaires," said he, smiling, "will you step to the fire and warm yourself? I will be at your service in a moment." "Sir Walter Murphy, private secretary of his serene highness, I await your orders," answered the baron, gayly, making a profound bow to the worthy knight.

The baron was about fifty years of age. His thin gray hair was slightly frizzed and powdered. His slightly protuberant chin was almost buried in the folds of a large muslin cravat of dazzling whiteness. His expression betrayed tact; his "tournure" distinction; and from the glasses of his golden spectacles peered a look as cunning as it was penetrating. Although so early in the morning, M. de Graün wore a black dress coat—it was according to etiquette—a riband of several colours was tied in the buttonhole. He placed his hat on a chair, and walked to the fireplace, while Murphy continued his work. "His highness must have been up all night, my dear Murphy, for your correspondence appears to be very voluminous." "My lord did not retire until six o'clock this morning. He has written, among others, a letter of eight pages to the grand-marshal, and he has dictated one to me, not less in length, to the chief of the Supreme Council." "Shall I await the 'levee' of his highness, to give him the information that I have obtained?"

"No, my dear baron. My lord has given orders that he should not be awakened before two or three o'clock. He wishes you to send off these despatches by a special courier this morning, instead of waiting until Monday. You will confide your information to me, and I will communicate it to his highness when he arises; such are his orders."

"Well! his highness will be satisfied, I believe, with what I have to tell him. But, my dear Murphy, I hope the sending of this courier is not of bad augury. The last despatches that I had the honour to transmit to his highness—" "Announced that all went on well there. And it is because my lord wishes to express, as soon as possible, his satisfaction to the chief of the supreme council and the grand-marshal, that he wishes you to send off this courier to-day."

"I recognise his highness there. If a reprimand had been in agitation, he would not have been in such haste; besides, there is only one opinion of the firm and wise administration of our government 'ad intérim.' It is very simple," added the baron, smiling; "the watch was good, and perfectly regulated by our master; it only required to be kept wound up, so that its sure and invariable action would continue to indicate the employment of each hour, and of every one. Order in a government produces always confidence and tranquillity among the people; this it is which explains to me the good news you give." "And here, nothing new, dear baron? nothing whispered? our mysterious adventures—" "Are completely unknown. Since the arrival of my lord at Paris, they have become so habituated only to see him very rarely among the few persons who were presented to him, they believe he prefers solitude, and that he makes frequent excursions in the environs of Paris. His highness has wisely dispensed, for a time, with the chamberlain and aid-de-camp whom he brought with him from Germany." "And who would have been very inconvenient witnesses for us." "Thus, with the exception of the Countess Sarah M'Gregor, and her brother Tom Seyton, of Halsbury, and Karl, their tool, no one knows of their disguises; now, neither the countess, nor her brother, nor Karl have any interest in betraying this secret." "Ah! my dear baron," said Murphy, sighing, "what a misfortune that this cursed countess is a widow now!"

"Was she not married in 1827 or 1828?"

"In 1827, a little while after the death of that little girl, who would now have been sixteen or seventeen years old; and who my lord weeps for every day, without ever speaking of her."

"Regrets easily to be conceived, as his highness had no children from his marriage."

"Thus, my dear baron, I have thought that, independent of the pity which the poor Goualeuse inspired, the interest that my lord felt for this unfortunate creature was, above all, created by the thought that this child he so bitterly regrets (as much as he detests the countess her mother) would have been about the same age." "It does appear like a fatality, that this Sarah, from whom we had thought ourselves forever delivered, should just find herself free eighteen months after his highness has lost the model of wives. The countess believes, I am certain, that she is favoured by fate in this double widowhood." "And her insensate hopes are stronger than ever, notwithstanding she knows that my lord has for her the most profound aversion. Has she not been the cause— Ah, baron," said Murphy, without finishing his phrase, "this woman is a horror. God grant she brings us no more trouble!"

"What can be feared from her, my dear Murphy? Formerly, she had over my lord that influence which a cunning and intriguing woman always has over a young man who loves for the first time, and who, above all, finds himself in the circumstances you know; but this influence has been destroyed by the discovery of the unworthy manœuvres of this creature, and, above all, by the remembrance of the frightful event she caused."

"Lower, my dear De Graün—lower," said Murphy. "Alas! we are now in this fatal month, and we draw near the date not less fatal, *this 13th of Jannary*; I always dread for my lord this fatal anniversary." "Yet, if a great fault can be forgiven by expiation, ought not his highness to be absolved?"

"For pity's sake, my dear De Graün, let us talk no more about it. I shall feel sad for the rest of the day."

"I say, then, that at this time the designs of the Countess Sarah are absurd; the death of the poor child broke the last link which could attach my lord to this woman; she is mad if she persists in her hopes." "Yes! but it is a dangerous madness. Her brother, you know, partakes of her ambitious and headstrong imagination; although this worthy couple have now as much reason to despair as they had to hope eighteen years ago."

"Ah! and what trouble has that infernal Abbé Polidoré caused in those days by his criminal 'complaisance!'"

"Speaking of this wretch, I have been informed that he was here a year or two since, plunged, without doubt, in profound misery, or occupied in some infernal machinations."

"What a fall for a man of so much learning, mind, and intelligence! but also of an abominable perversity! Heaven grant that he may not meet the countess! The union of these two evil spirits would be very dangerous."

"Once more, my dear Murphy, the interest of the countess, however unreasonable her ambition, will always prevent her profiting by the love of adventures of my lord, to try some wicked scheme." "I hope so; yet chance has prevented I do not know what proposition, detestable without doubt, that this woman wished to make to the Maître d'Ecole—this frightful wretch, who, now no longer in a condition to injure any one, lives unknown, perhaps repentant, among some honest peasants of the village of Saint Mandé. Alas! I feel convinced it was, above all, to avenge me, that my lord, in inflicting a terrible punishment, saw the risk of placing himself in a grave position."

"Grave! No, no, my dear Murphy; for this is the question. An escaped criminal, an acknowledged murderer, introduces himself into your house, and strikes you with his poniard; you can kill him by the legitimate law of self-defence, or send him to the scaffold; in either case he loses his life. Now, instead of killing

him or handing him to the executioner, with a formidable punishment, but merited, you put this monster in a condition to harm no one—who will accuse you? Will justice commence a civil action against you, in favour of such a bandit? Could you be condemned for not having gone as far as the law allowed—for only having deprived him of sight instead of killing him? How! to defend my life, or to revenge a flagrant case of adultery, society recognises my right of life or death on my fellow-creature—a formidable right, without control, without appeal, which constitutes me judge and executioner, and yet I cannot modify at my pleasure the capital punishment which otherwise I could inflict with impunity? and above all—above all, in a case like this of the brigand, of whom we have been speaking, for this is the question—I put aside our position as sovereign prince of the Germanic Confederation. I know, of right, that signifies nothing; but it is a forced privilege; besides, such a process commenced against my lord—how many generous actions would plead for him! Once more: suppose this strange cause should be called before the Tribunal, what do you think would happen?" "My lord has always said he would accept the accusation, and not avail himself of the immunity of his position. But who could noise about these events? You know the unshaken discretion of David and the four Hungarian servants of the house in the Allée des Veuves. The Chourineur, whom my lord has rewarded, has not spoken a word on the subject to any one. Before he left for Africa, he swore to be secret. As to the brigand himself, he knows that to complain himself is to bring his head to the scaffold. Finally, neither his highness, nor you, nor I will speak of it: is it not so?" "My dear Murphy, this secret, although known to a great many, will not be the less kept. At the most, some difficulties alone would be to fear; and yet such noble and grand actions would be brought to light in this strange trial, that such an accusation, I repeat it, would be a triumph for his highness." "You reassure me, completely. But you bring me the information you have obtained with the aid of the letters found on the Maître d'Ecole, and by the declarations made by La Chouette during her stay at the hospital, which she left a few days since, completely cured. Here are the papers," said the baron, drawing them from his pocket. "They are relative to the researches made concerning the birth of the young girl called La Goualeuse, and on the actual place of residence of François Germaine, son of the Maître d'Ecole."

"Will you read me these notes, my dear De Graün? I know the intentions of my lord. I will see if the information is sufficient. Are you entirely satisfied with your agent?" "He is an excellent man—full of intelligence, address, and discretion. I am sometimes even obliged to moderate his zeal. For, you know, his highness reserves certain elucidations to himself." "And is he perfectly ignorant of the interest my lord has in all this?" "Absolutely. My diplomatic position serves as an excellent pretext for these investigations. M. Badinot (the name of our man) has many agents and concealed correspondents among all classes of society; formerly a lawyer, forced to give up practice from an abuse of confidence, he has not lost sight of the position and fortune of his former clients; he knows many secrets, which he boldly boasts of having trafficked for; twice enriched and ruined by business, too well known to attempt new speculations, reduced to live from day to day by a variety of means more or less illicit, he is a sort of Figaro sufficiently difficult to understand; as long as his interest commands, he belongs, body and soul, to him who pays; he has no interest to deceive us; besides, I have him watched, so that we have no reason to mistrust him." "The information he has heretofere brought us was always very exact." "He has probity in his manner; and I assure you, my dear Murphy, that M. Badinot is the very original typo of one of those mysterious existences which are only met with and are possible at Paris; he would much amuse his highness, if it was not necessary that he should have no communication with him." "The pay of M. Badinot can be increased if you should think it necessary."

"Five hundred francs a month and expenses—about as much more seems to me to be quite enough: he appears to be satisfied; we will see about it."

"And he feels no shame for his employment?"

"He? on the contrary, he prides himself upon it; he never fails, in bringing me his 'rapports,' to put on a most important air. I dare not say a diplomatic one; for the funny fellow pretends to believe they concern the state, and to wonder at the hidden relations which can exist between the most diverse interests and the destinies of empires. Yes, he has the impudence to say to me sometimes, 'What complications, unknown to the vulgar, in the government of a state! who would say, Monsieur le Baron, that the notes I give you have, without doubt, their part of action in the affairs of Europe.'"

"Ah! rogues seek to deceive themselves with their rogueries; it is always complimentary to honest men. But these notes, my dear baron?" "Here they are, almost entirely digested from the report of M. Badinot." "I listen."

M. de Graün read as follows:

"NOTE RELATIVE TO FLEUR DE MARIE.

"Towards the commencemant of the year 1827, a man called Pierre Tournemine, now confined in the galleys of Rochefort for the crime of forgery, proposed to the woman Gervais, called La Chouette, to take charge forever of a little girl, about five or six years of age, for which she was to receive the sum of one thousand francs.

("Alas! my dear baron," said Murphy, interrupting M. de Graün, "1827—that is the same year that my lord heard of the death of the little girl he regretted so bitterly. On this account, and many others, this year was a sad one for our master.")

"The bargain concluded, the child remained for two years with this woman, at the end of which, wishing to escape the bad treatment with which she was overwhelmed, the little girl disappeared; La Chouette had not seen or

heard of her for many years, when she met her about six weeks since in a tavern of the cité. The child became a young girl, bore the surname of La Goualeuse. A few days before this rencounter, the above-mentioned Tournemine, who the Maître d'Ecole had known at the galleys, had sent to Bras-Rouge a detailed letter concerning the child formerly confided to the woman Gervais, called "La Chouette." From this letter, and from the declarations of La Chouette, it results that a Madame Séraphin, housekeeper of a notary called Jacques Ferrand, had, in 1827, charged Tournemine to find a woman who, for the sum of one thousand francs, would consent to take charge of a child of five or six years that some one wishes to abandon, as has been said before. La Chouette accepted the proposition.

"The object of Tournemine in addressing Bras-Rouge was to put him in the way, through some third person, to extort some money from Madame Séraphin, by threatening to noise their adventures, now forgotten, about. Tournemine affirmed that this Madame Séraphin was only the agent of some person unknown. Bras-Rouge had confided this letter to La Chouette, an associate for some time in crime with the Maître d'Ecole; this explains how the document was found in possession of the brigand, and why, when she met La Goualeuse at the Lapin-Blanc, La Chouette, to torment Fleur de Marie, said to her, 'Your parents are found, but you shall not know them.' The question was to know if this letter contained the truth."

"Information has been obtained of Madame Séraphin, and of the notary, Jacques Ferrand."

"They are both alive."

"The notary lives in the 'Rue du Sentier, No. 41;' he passes for being very austere and pious; at least, he attends church punctually; he exercises in his practice an excessive regularity, approaching to harshness; his business is excellent; he lives with a parsimony approaching to avarice; Madame Séraphin still continues his housekeeper."

"M. Jacques Ferrand, who was very poor, has bought his office for three hundred and fifty thousand francs; these funds were furnished him, under a good guarantee, by M. Charles Robert, superior officer of the staff of the National Guard of Paris, a very handsome young man, very much the fashion in a certain circle. He divides with the notary the profits of the office, which is estimated to be about fifty thousand francs; but he has nothing to do with the national affairs, well understood. Some evil-minded people affirm that, in consequence of some fortunate speculations at the 'Change, in concert with M. Charles Robert, the notary is now able to pay back the money borrowed; but the reputation of M. Jacques Ferrand is so well established, that it is generally agreed these reports are horrible calumnies. It appears, then, certain, that Madame Séraphin, housekeeper of this holy man, can furnish precious 'éclaircissemens' on the birth of La Goualeuse."

"Truly! dear Baron," said Murphy, "there is some appearance of reality in the declarations of this Tournemine. Perhaps we shall find at the notary's the means of discovering the relations of this unfortunate girl. Now, have you been able to obtain as much information concerning the son of the Maître d'Ecole?"

"Perhaps less precise; they are, however, quite satisfactory."

"Truly, your M. Badinot is a treasure."

"You see that this Bras-Rouge is the soul of all these undertakings. M. Badinot, who necessarily has much to do with the police, has already pointed him out to us as the go-between among galley-slaves, when my lord took the first steps towards finding the son of Madame Georges Duresnel, the unfortunate wife of the Maître d'Ecole."

"Without doubt; and it was in going to look for Bras-Rouge in his den in the cité, Rue aux Fèves, No. 43, that my lord met the Chourineur and La Goualeuse. His highness wished to profit by the occasion to visit these fearful haunts, thinking that perhaps he would find there some unfortunate beings he might drag from the filth. His presentiment did not deceive him; but at the price of what dangers—mon Dieu!" "Dangers that you have barely partaken of, my dear Murphy." "Am I not, on this account, *coalman in ordinary* to his Serene Highness?" asked Murphy, laughing. "Rather say intrepid body-guard, my worthy friend. But to speak of your courage and your devotion is but a tautology. I continue my report. Here is the note concerning François Germain, son of Madame Georges and of the Maître d'Ecole, otherwise called Duresnel."

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNING FRANÇOIS GERMAIN.

M. DE GRAUN continued: "About eighteen months since, a young man called François Germain arrived at Paris, from Nantes, where he had been employed in the banking-house of Noel & Co. It results from the acknowledgments of the Maître d'Ecole, and from several letters found upon him, that the scoundrel to whom he confided his son, in order to pervert him, so he might some day be employed in criminal affairs, unfolded this horrible scheme to the young man, in proposing to him to favour an attempt at robbery and forgery in the banking-house where he was employed. The young man refused this offer with indignation; but not wishing to denounce the man who had brought him up, he wrote an anonymous letter to his patron, advising him of the plot, and left Nantes secretly, to escape from the hands of those who had desired to make him their accomplice.

"These wretches, learning his flight, came to Paris, had an interview with Bras-Rouge, and then commenced a search for the sea of the Matire d'Ecole, without doubt with evil intentions, since this young man knew their designs. After a long pursuit, they at length discovered his retreat: it was too late; Germain, having some days before met the person who had endeavoured to corrupt him, had changed his abode, suspecting the motive which brought this man to Paris: thus a second time he escaped from his persecutors. However, about six weeks since, these wretches ascertained that he lived in the Rue du Temple, No. 17. One night, in entering his lodgings, he had a

narrow escape from being murdered (this circumstance the Maître d'Ecole had concealed from my lord). Germain, suspecting where this came from, left the Rue du Temple, and up to this time no information can be obtained of his place of abode. The researches were at this point, when the Maitre d'Ecole was punished for his crimes. It was at this point also they have been resumed by order of his highness. And here is the result.

"François Germain lived about three months in the house in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, a house otherwise extremely curious from the manners and strange occupations of most of its inhabitants. Germain was very much liked there for his gay, lively, and obliging disposition; although he appeared to live on a very narrow income, he had shown great likeness to an indigent family who lived in the garret of this house. We have not been able to find out the new dwelling-place of François Germain, nor the profession he follows; but it is supposed that he was employed in some office or commercial house, for he went out in the morning and returned towards ten o'clock in the evening. The only person that knows to a certainty where he dwells at present is a locataire of the house in the Rue du Temple; this young girl, who appears intimately connected with Germain, is a very pretty 'grisette,' called Mlle. Rigolette; she occupies the room next to the one where Germain lodged; this room, vacant since his departure, is now to be rented."

"Rigolette?" said Murphy, suddenly, who for some moments had appeared as if in deep thought; "Rigolette? I know that name!" "How, Sir Walter Murphy!" answered the baron, laughing; "how, most worthy and respectable father of a family, you know a 'grisette?' How! the name of a Mlle. Rigolette is not new to you! Ah! fy! fy!"

"Pardieu! My lord has put me in the way to have such strange acquaintances, that you ought not to be so much surprised, baron; but wait a moment. Yes, now I recollect perfectly: my lord, in relating to me the history of La Goualeuse, could not prevent a laugh at this droll name, Rigolette; as well as I can remember, she was one of the prison friends of this poor Fleur de Marie." "Well at this time, Mlle. Rigolette can be of excessive utility. I finish my 'rapport.'"

"There would perhaps be some advantage in hiring the vacant chamber of the Rue du Temple. No instructions have been given to push these investigations farther; but, from some words let drop by the porteress, we have every reason to believe, not only will it be possible to find in this house some certain information respecting François Germain, by means of this Mlle. Rigolette, but that my lord can witness there manners, customs, occupations, and, above all, misery, of which he suspects not the existence."

CHAPTER III.

THE MARQUIS D'HARVILLE.

"Thus, you see, my dear Murphy," said M. le Graün, on finishing the reading of this report, which he handed to him, "that it is at the notary Jacques Ferrand's we must seek for the trace of the parents of La Goualeuse, and it is from Mlle. Rigolette we must ask for the abode of François Germain. It is already a great deal, it seems to me, to know where to seek—what one searches."

"Without doubt, baron; besides, my lord will find, I am sure, an ample harvest in the house of which you speak. This is not all yet; have you informed yourself of that concerning the Marquis d'Harville?" "Yes; and as regards the question of money, the fears of his highness have no foundation. M. Badinot affirms, and I believe him well informed, that the fortune of the marquis has never been more substantial, nor more wisely administered."

"After having in vain sought for the cause of the profound chagrin which appeared to oppress M. d'Harville, my lord thought it was possible that he might be embarrassed in his money affairs: he would then have come to his assistance in that mysterious, delicate way, which, you know, he can manage so well; but since he is mistaken in his conjectures, he will have to renounce his inquiries with so much the more regret, since he loves and esteems him so much." "It is quite plain his highness has never forgotten all that his father owes to the marquis. Do you know, my dear Murphy, that in 1815, at the time of the reorganization of the states of the Germanic Confederation, the father of his highness ran great risks of elimination, on account of his attachment, known and proved, for Napoleon? The deceased Marquis d'Harville rendered, on this occasion, immense services to the father of our master, thanks to the friendship of the Emperor Alexander, a friendship which dated from the time of the emigration of the marquis to Russia, and who, invoked by him, had a powerful influence in the deliberations of this Congress, where the interests of the princes of the Confederation were debated." "And now see, baron, how often noble actions are, as it were, linked together; in '92 the father of the marquis was proscribed; he found in Germany, with the father of my lord, the most generous hospitality; after a sojourn of three years in our court, he set out for Russia, where he merited the attention of the Czar, and with his assistance he is able to be of great use to the prince, who had so kindly received him many years before."

"Was it not 1815, during the sojourn of the old Marquis d'Harville with the then reigning grand-duke, that the friendship of my lord and the young d'Harville commenced?" "Yes; they have preserved the most delightful recollections of these joyous scenes of their youth. This is not all. My lord has such profound respect for the memory of the man who was so useful to his father, that all who belong to the family D'Harville have a claim on his benevolence. Thus, not less on account of her misfortunes and her virtues than this relationship, has Madame Georges been indebted to the kindness of his highness." "Madame Georges! wife of Duresnel! the galley-slave, called the Maître d'Ecole!" cried the baron. "Yes, the mother of this François Germain, whom we seek for, and who, I hope, we shall find." "She is a

relation of M. d'Harville?" "She was a cousin of his mother, and her most intimate friend. The old marquis had for Madame Georges the greastest friendship." "But how could the D'Harville family allow her to marry this monster, my dear Murphy?"

"The father of this unfortunate woman, M. de Lagny, intendant of Languedoc before the Revolution, possessed great wealth; he escaped the proscription. In the few days of quietness which remained after this terrible epoch, he looked about for a husband for his daughter. Duresnel presented himself; he belonged to an excellent parliamentary family; he was rich, but under a hypocritical exterior he concealed the most profligate inclinations; he married Mademoiselle de Lagny. After a short time of dissimulation, the vices of this man soon displayed themselves: dissipated, an immoderate gambler, addicted to intemperance, he rendered his wife miserable. She did not complain, concealed her griefs, and, after the death of her father, retired to an estate, which she improved to divert her mind. Soon their common fortune was swallowed up in play and debauchery; the property whither she had retired was sold. Then she brought her son and joined her relation, the Marchioness d'Harville, whom she loved as a sister. Duresnel, having run through his own property and that of his wife, found himself reduced to expedients; he became a forger, robber, assassin, was condemned for life to the galleys, took his son from his wife, to confide him to one of his confederates. You know the rest."

"But how did my lord find out Madame Duresnel?" "When Duresnel was sent to the galleys, his wife, reduced to the most profound poverty, took the name of Georges." "In this cruel position, why did she not apply to the Marchioness d'Harville, her best friend?" "The marchioness died before the condemnation of Duresnel, and since, from an invincible shame, never has Madame Georges presented herself to her family, who certainly would have had for her that regard her misfortunes merited. However, once reduced to the most absolute misery by sickness, she resolved to implore assistance from M. d'Harville, the son of her dearest friend. It was thus that my lord met her." "How then?" "One day he was going to see M. d'Harville; a few steps before him walked a poor woman, wretchedly clothed, pale, suffering, and cast down. Arrived at the door of the Hôtel d'Harville, at the moment she was about to knock, after a long hesitation, she turned quickly around, as if her courage failed her. Very much surprised, my lord followed this woman, very much interested with her modest and sorrowful manner. She entered into a lodging of a very humble appearance. My lord made some inquiries concerning her, and found that she sewed for her living, but that work and health were both wanting, and that she was reduced to a state of abject misery. The next day I went to the house with my lord. We arrived in time to prevent her dying with hunger. After a long illness, in which every care and attention was paid her, she related the story of her life to his highness, of whose rank she was entirely ignorant." "And thus it was he became acquainted with the fact that Madame Georges belonged to the family D'Harville?" "Yes; and after this explication, my lord, who appreciated more and more the excellent qualities of Madame Georges, made her leave Paris, and established her at the farm of Bouqueval, where she is at present with La Goualeuse. She has found in this quiet retreat, if not happiness, at least tranquillity, and in overseeing the farm, she can chase away her sorrows. As much to assuage the susceptibility of Madame Georges, as because he does not wish to speak of his benefactions, my lord has left M. d'Harville ignorant of the whole affair." "I can now comprehend the double interest his highness has to discover the son of this poor woman." "You can judge also by this, my dear baron, of the affection that my lord has for all this family, and how lively is his chagrin at seeing the young marquis so sad, with so many reasons to be happy." "Yes, and what does the marquis need? He unites everything, birth, fortune, mind, and youth; his wife is charming, as virtuous as she is handsome." "That is true, and my lord has only thought of what we have been talking about, after having in vain endeavoured to penetrate the cause of the melancholy of M. d'Harville; he has always shown much sensibility at the repeated testimonials of affection from his highness, but has always remained completely reserved on this subject. Perhaps it is a heart sickness?"

"Yet they say he is very much in love with his wife; she gives him no cause for jealousy. I often meet her in society: she is very much surrounded, as almost all young and charming women are, but her reputation has never suffered the slightest taint." "Yes, the marquis boasts much of his wife. He has only a small discussion with her on the subject of the Countess Sarah M'Gregor." "Does she visit her, then?" "By the most unlucky chance, the father of the Marquis d'Harville knew, some seventeen years ago, Sarah Seyton, of Halsbury, and her brother Tom, during their stay in Paris, where they were patronised by the English ambassadress. Learning that the brother and sister were going to Germany, the old marquis gave them letters of introduction to the father of my lord. Alas! my dear De Graün, perhaps without this introduction many of our troubles would have been avoided, for my lord would never have known this woman. However, when the Countess Sarah returned here, knowing the friendship of his highness for the marquis, she presented herself at the Hôtel d'Harville, in the hopes of meeting my lord; she is as eager in her pursuit as my lord is to avoid her." "To disguise herself as a man to run after him in la cité. No one else but this woman would have thought of such a thing." "She hopes by this to force my lord to an interview, which he has always refused and avoided. But, to return to Madame d'Harville, her husband, to whom my lord had spoken of Sarah as she deserved, had advised his wife to see her as seldom as possible; but the young marchioness, seduced by the hypocritical flatteries of the countess, has a little revolted at the advice of M. d'Harville. Hence some little dissensions, but which certainly are not the cause of the secret grief of the marquis."

"Ah! women, women! my dear Murphy;

I regret much that Madame d'Harville is acquainted with this Sarah. This young and lovely marchioness can only lose by such an acquaintance, such a diabolical creature." "Speaking of diabolical creatures," said Murphy, "here is a despatch relative to Cecily, the unworthy wife of the worthy David." "Between ourselves, my dear Murphy, this audacious mulatto would have well merited the punishment that her husband, our good negro doctor, inflicted on the Maître d'Ecole. She has also caused blood to flow, and her corruption is frightful." "Yet, notwithstanding all this, so handsome, so seducing! A wicked heart under a gracious exterior always causes me a double horror."

"On this account Cecily is doubly odious; but I hope that this despatch annuls the last orders given by my lord on the subject of this miserable creature." "On the contrary, baron." "My lord, then, still desires that she should be assisted to escape from the fortress where she has been sent for life?" "Yes." "And that her pretended 'ravisseur' should bring her to France? to Paris?" "Yes, and more; this despatch orders them to hasten her escape, and to make her travel rapidly, so that she can reach here in ten days at farthest."

"I am lost in astonishment. My lord has always evinced such a repugnance for her!" "And he manifests now, if possible, still more." "Yet he sends for her to come to him? However, it will always be easy to get rid of Cecily if she does not accomplish what he expects from her. The son of the jailer of the fortress of Gerolsteine is ordered to carry her off, feigning to be in love with her; he has every facility offered him to accomplish this project. Delighted with her escape, she will follow her supposed lover to Paris; but she will always be an escaped prisoner, and I have everything in order to claim her from the government whenever my lord may require it." "We shall see, my dear De Graün. I also beg you will write to our chancellor, by order of his highness, a legalized copy of the act of marriage of David, for he was married at the ducal palace as an officer of the household of my lord." "By writing by the courier of to-day, we can have this act in eight days at farthest." "When David learned by my lord of the approaching arrival of Cecily, he was thunderstruck; he cried, 'I hope your highness will not oblige me to see this monster!' 'Be easy,' said my lord, 'you shall not see her; but I have need of her for certain projects.' David was much relieved by this declaration. Nevertheless, I am convinced sad recollections are revived for him." "Poor negro! no doubt he loves her still. They say she is so handsome!" "Charming, too charming. The unpitying eye of a Creole is necessary to discover the mixed blood in the imperceptible shade of bistre which lightly colours the crown of the rosy finger-nails of this mulatto; our bright beauties of the north have not a more beautiful complexion, a whiter skin, nor more golden, chestnut-coloured hair." "I was in France when my lord returned from America, bringing with him David and Cecily. I know this excellent man has since that time been attached to his highness by the most lively gratitude, but I have always been ignorant how he came to be annexed to the suite of our master, and how he married Cecily, who I saw for the first time about a year after her marriage, and 'dieu sait' the scandal she had already created!" "I can inform you of what you wish to know, my dear baron; I accompanied my lord in this voyage to America, where he rescued David and the mulatto from the frightful fate." "You are very kind, my dear Murphy; I listen," said the baron.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORY OF DAVID AND CECILY.

"M. Willis, a rich American planter of Florida," said Murphy, "had observed in one of his black slaves, named David, attached to the infirmary of his habitation, a very remarkable degree of intelligence, a profound commiseration for the poor sick, to whom he gave the medicines prescribed by the physicians, and, finally, a taste so remarkable for the study of botany as applied to medicine, that, without any instruction, he had classified all the plants found on the plantation and in the environs. The residence of M. Willis, situated on the border of the sea, was about fifteen or twenty leagues from the nearest city. The physicians of the country, ignorant enough, put themselves to no inconvenience on account of the distance, and the irregular means of communication. Wishing to remedy this, and have always near him a skilful practitioner, he thought he would send this young man to study medicine and surgery in France. Delighted with the offer, the young man went to Paris; at the end of eight years of hard study, David received his degree, with great distinction, and returned to America to place his knowledge at the disposition of his master." "But David ought to have looked upon himself as free in setting his foot on the soil of France?" "But David was of rare loyalty; he promised M. Willis that he would return, and he did return; and besides, he did not regard as his own, instruction acquired with the money of his master; and still more, he hoped to ameliorate, morally and physically, the sufferings of the slaves, his ancient companions. He promised himself, not only to be their physician, but their support, their defender with their master." "He must have been endowed with rare probity, and a holy feeling for his fellows, to return to a master, after a stay of eight years at Paris, among the most democratic young men of Europe." "From all this you can judge the man. Well, behold him in Florida, and, it must be said, treated with consideration by M. Willis; eating at his table, and sleeping under his roof. Yet this man, stupid, wicked, and sensual—despotic, like most of the Creoles, thought himself very generous in allowing him a salary of six hundred francs. At the end of a few months, the typhus fever broke out; M. Willis was attacked, but promptly cured by the excellent care of David. Of thirty negroes grievously attacked, only two perished. M. Willis, enchanted with the services of David, increased his wages to twelve hundred francs. The black doctor thought himself the happiest man in the world; his brethren looked upon

him as a god; he had obtained, it is true, some melioration of their condition; he hoped still more for the future; 'en attendant,' he moralized; he consoled these poor people; he exhorted them to resignation; he spoke to them of God, who watched over the negro as over the white; of another world, not peopled with masters and slaves, but with the just and righteous; of another life—eternal—where one was not a beast of burden, the thing of another, but where the victims of this lower world were so happy, that they prayed in heaven for their executioners. What shall I say to you! To these unfortunate beings, who, different from other men, count with bitter joy each step they take towards the tomb—to these unfortunate beings, who, hoping for annihilation, David had caused to hope for an immortal liberty; their chains then appeared less heavy, their labours less painful. David was their idol. A year passed in this manner. Among the prettiest slaves had been remarked a mulatto of fifteen, called Cecily. M. Willis took a sultan's fancy for this young girl; but for the first time in his life, perhaps, he received a decided refusal. Cecily loved; she loved David, who, during the epidemic, had saved and nursed her with the tenderest care; love, the most pure love, paid the debt of gratitude. David had too much delicacy to speak of his happiness until the time should come that he could marry her; he only waited until she had attained her sixteenth year. M. Willis, ignorant of this mutual affection, had superbly cast his handkerchief at the pretty mulatto. She came and related to David what had happened, and he resolved to go at once and ask her in marriage."

"The deuse! my dear Murphy, I am afraid to guess the answer of the American sultan. He refused?"

"He refused. He said he had a fancy for this young girl; he had never permitted a refusal from a slave; he liked her, and would have her. David might choose any other woman he pleased. David spoke of his love, which Cecily had returned for a long time. The planter shrugged his shoulders; it was in vain. The Creole had the impudence to say that it was showing a bad example for a master to give up to a slave, and that he would not set this example to satisfy a whim of David. He supplicated; the master became impatient. David, ashamed to humble himself farther, spoke in a firm manner of the services he had rendered, and of his disinterestedness. M. Willis, very much irritated, answered, 'that he was a thousand times too well treated for a slave.' At these words, the indignation of David burst forth: for the first time, he spoke as a man enlightened as to his rights by his sojourn of eight years in France. M. Willis, furious, treated him as a slave, and threatened to chain him. David answered with bitter and violent words. Two hours after, tied to a stake, they lacerated him with a whip, while, before his eyes, Cecily was dragged into the seraglio of the planter."

"The conduct of this planter was stupid and frightful; it was the absurdity of cruelty. He had need of the services of this man, after all."

"Such need, that on this very day, the rage into which he had thrown himself, joined to his habitual intoxication, brought on a most violent inflammatory disease, which made a rapid progress; an acute disease sat in; an express was sent for a physician, but it was impossible that he could arrive before thirty-six hours."

"Truly, all this seems providential. The fatal position of this man was well deserved."

"The disease made most rapid progress. David could alone save him; but the planter, distrustful, like all such wretches, had not a doubt but that the black, to revenge himself, would poison him; for after the whipping they had thrown David into a dungeon. Finally, frightened at the progress of the malady, sinking under his sufferings, thinking that, with death staring him in the face, he had at least a chance in the generosity of his slave, after long hesitation, Willis ordered David to be released."

"And David saved the planter?" "For five days and nights he watched him as he would his father, combating with the disease step by step, showing profound knowledge and admirable skill; he succeeded in conquering it, to the great surprise of the physician they had sent for, and who only had arrived the second day." "And when once more restored to health, the planter—" "Not wishing to show his shame before the slave who had overwhelmed him with such generosity, he contrived, with considerable expense, to secure the services of the physician, by attaching him to his household. David was sent back to his dungeon." "That is horrible! but it does not astonish me; David would have been for this man a living remorse." "This barbarous conduct was not dictated alone by vengeance and jealousy. The negroes of M. Willis loved David with all the ardour of gratitude; he was for them the saviour of their souls and bodies. They knew what he had done for their master during his late illness. Thus emerging, as if by a miracle, from the brutal apathy into which slavery usually plunges the creature, they showed plainly their indignation, or rather, their grief, when they saw David wounded with the lashes of the whip. M. Willis, much exasperated, thought he saw in this symptoms of a revolt. Knowing the influence that David had acquired over his slaves, he thought he might direct a rising to revenge himself for the ingratitude of his master. This fear was a new motive for the planter to overwhelm him with cruel treatment, and place him in a position where he could do no injury." "With this view of the case, this conduct seems to be less foolish, although none the less ferocious."

"A short time after these events we arrived in America. My lord had chartered a Danish brig at St. Thomas; we visited, incognito, several of the habitations on the coast. We were magnificently received by M. Willis. The evening after our arrival, at table, excited as much by drink as the desire of boasting, M. Willis related to us as a good joke the history of David and Cecily; for I forgot to tell you that this unfortunate creature was also cast into a dungeon, to punish her for her disdainful rejection of her master. At this frightful story his highness thought that Willis was boasting, or that he was drunk; the man was drunk, but he was not boasting. To convince our incredulity, the planter arose from the table reeling, told a slave to take a lantern, and

conduct us to the dungeon of David." "Well?" "Never in my life have I seen such a heart-rending spectacle. Haggard, thin, half naked, covered with sores, David and this unhappy girl, chained by the middle of the body, the one at one end of the dungeon, the other at the opposite, they looked like spectres. The lantern which lighted us cast on this picture a still more gloomy shade. David pronounced not a word. The planter said, with cruel irony, 'Well! doctor, how d'ye do? you who are so learned! save yourself, then!' The black answered by one word, with a gesture sublime; he slowly raised his right hand, and pointed with his finger towards heaven; and without looking at his master, he said, in a solemn tone, 'God!' 'Dieu!' answered the planter, with a shout of laughter; 'say to him I defy him!—to carry away my slaves before death!'"

"He was a disgusting fool!"

"We were so much disgusted, my lord said not a word. We left the dungeon. We returned on board the brig, which was anchored off at a short distance. At one o'clock in the morning, when all the inhabitants were plunged in a profound sleep, my lord landed with eight men well armed, went straight to the dungeon, forced it, and carried off David and Cecily. The two victims were carried on board without being perceived; after which my lord and myself returned to the mansion of the planter. Strange! unaccountable! these men torture their slaves, yet take no precautions against them; they sleep with the windows and doors open. We reached easily the chamber of the planter, lighted by a small lamp. My lord awoke this man. He started up, his brain still bewildered from the effects of drink. 'You have this night defied God to take away your two victims, before their death! He does take them away,' said monseigneur. Then taking a bag that I carried, and which held 25,000 francs in gold, he threw it on the bed, and added, 'This will indemnify you for the loss of your slaves. To your violence which kills, I oppose a violence which saves. God shall be the judge;' and we disappeared, leaving M. Willis stupified, immovable, believing himself in a dream. Some minutes afterward we were on board the brig, and set sail."

"It seems to me, my dear Murphy, that his highness paid too largely to this scoundrel for the loss of his slaves; for, in truth, David did not belong to him any more." "We had calculated about the expense incurred by David's studies at Paris during eight years, and then added at least three times their value as common slaves. Our conduct was contrary to law, I know; but if you had seen the almost agonizing condition of these poor creatures, if you had heard this sacrilegious defiance of God, you would comprehend how my lord wished, as he said, on this occasion 'to play a little the part of Providence.'" "It was as much to be censured, and as much to be justified as the punishment of the Maître d'Ecole, my worthy sir. And nothing occurred from this?" "Nothing could happen. The brig was under Danish colours; the incognito of his highness strictly guarded; we passed for rich Englishmen. To whom could M. Willis, if he dared to complain, address his reclamations? In fact, he told us himself, and the physician attested it, that the two slaves could not have lived eight days longer in that frightful dungeon. It needed the greatest care and attention to restore David and Cecily to health. Since this time, he has remained attached to the household as physician, and he has for my lord the most profound attachment." "David married Cecily, without doubt, on his arrival in Europe?" "This marriage, which promised to be so happy, took place in the chapel of the palace; but a strange and extraordinary change—hardly in the enjoyment of an unlooked-for position, forgetting all that David had suffered for her, and all that she had suffered for him, ashamed, in this new world, that she had married a negro, Cecily, seduced by a man of great depravity, committed a first fault; one would say, that the innate perversity of this creature, until then dormant, only awaited this moment to develop itself with fearful energy. You know the rest—the scandal of her adventures. After two years' marriage, David, who had as much confidence as love, learned all this infamy: like a thunder-bolt, it drew him from his blind and profound security."

"It was said that he wished to kill his wife?"

"Yes; but, thanks to request of monseigneur, he consented that she should be imprisoned for life in a fortress; and it is this prison that his highness has just opened—to your great astonishment and mine, I will not conceal it, my dear baron." "Frankly, the resolution of my lord astonishes me the more, since the governor of the fortress has, on several occasions, informed his highness that this woman was incorrigible: it was impossible to change this audacious character, hardened by vice; yet monseigneur persists in bringing her here.—For what end? and for what motive?"

"My dear baron, I am just as ignorant as you are. But it grows late, and his highness desires your courier should set out as soon as possible for Gerolstein." "Before two o'clock he shall be on the road. So, my dear Murphy, farewell until to-night."

"To-night?" "Have you forgotten the grand ball at the embassy of * * * *, which his highness has promised to attend?" "Just so: since the absence of Colonel Varner and Count d'Harneim, I forget that I fulfil at the same time the functions of chamberlain and aid-de-camp." "But, apropos of the count and colonel; when will they return? Will their missions be soon fulfilled?" "My lord, you know, keeps them away as long as possible, so that he can be more at liberty. As to the mission which he has given them, sending one to Strasbourg and the other to Avignon, I will confide it to you some of these days when we shall be out of spirits; for I shall defy the most gloomy hypochondriac to refrain from laughing at certain passages of the despatches of these worthy gentlemen, who took their pretended missions with incredible gravity." "To be frank, I never could comprehend why his highness had placed the colonel and count in his private service." "How! Colonel Varner! is he not an admirable specimen of a soldier? Is there in the whole Germanic Confederation a finer figure or handsomer mustaches? and when he is girded, caparisoned, bridled, plumed, can there be seen a more triumphant, glorious—a prouder, a finer

—animal?" "It is true: but this beauty prevents him from having a very excessively knowing look." "True; my lord says, thanks to the colonel, he is accustomed to find quite tolerable the most stupid people in the world. Before holding certain audiences, he shuts himself up for a half hour with the colonel, and he comes out all wise, all gay, and ready to defy 'ennui' in person."

"Just like the Roman soldier before a forced march, shoes himself with sandals of lead, so as to find all fatigue light in throwing them off. I appreciate now the utility of the colonel. But the Count d'Harneim—" "Is also of great utility to my lord; in hearing without cessation rattle at his side this old empty toy, brilliant and sonorous; in seeing this soap-bubble, so inflated with nothing, so magnificently variegated, who represents the theatrical and weak side of sovereign power, my lord feels more vividly still the vanity of this empty pomp; and from contrast, he has often been indebted to the sight of the useless and reflecting chamberlain for the most serious and fertile ideas." "Yet still, to be just, my dear Murphy, in what can be found a more perfect model of a chamberlain? Who knows better than the excellent D'Harneim the innumerable rules and traditions of etiquette? Who knows better how to wear an enamelled cross on the collar, or more majestically a golden key on the back?"

"Speaking of this, baron, monseigneur pretends that the back of a chamberlain has quite a particular look; that is to say, an expression at the same time constrained and revolting; for, oh grief! it is always on the back of a chamberlain where is displayed the insignia of his office; and, assenting to his opinion, this worthy D'Harneim seems always to be trying to present himself back foremost, so that his importance can be at once seen." "The fact is, the constant subject of the count's meditations is to find out what fatal imagination could have placed the key of the chamberlain on his back; for, as he has said with much sensitiveness, a sort of passionate grief, 'The devil! one does not open a door with his back!'"

"Baron, the courier, the courier!" said Murphy, showing the hour to the baron. "Bad man, who made me talk! it is your fault. Present my respects to his highness," said M. de Graün, taking his hat; "à ce soir, my dear Murphy." "A ce soir, my dear baron; a little late, for I am sure that my lord will wish to visit to-day even, the mysterious house of the rue du Temple.

CHAPTER V.

A HOUSE OF THE RUE DU TEMPLE.

To avail himself of the information that the Baron de Graün had collected concerning La Goualeuse and François Germain, Rodolphe would have to go to the Ru due Temple and to the house of the notary Jacques Ferrand. To the latter, to endeavour to obtain from Madame Séraphin some indications of the parents of Fleur de Marie; to the house in the Rue du Temple, recently inhabited by François Germain, to try to discover the retreat of this young man by means of Mlle. Rigolette: a task sufficiently difficult, this grisette knowing, perhaps, that the son of the Maître d'Ecole had the greatest interest to keep his new abode a profound secret. By hiring in this house the room formerly occupied by Germain, Rodolphe would thus facilitate his researches, and place himself in a situation to observe the different kind of people who occupied the house.

The same day of the conversation between the Baron de Graün and Murphy, a gloomy winter's day, Rodolphe went about three o'clock to the Rue du Temple. Situated in the centre of a populous and busy quarter, this house offered nothing in its aspect any way peculiar; it consisted of a ground floor, occupied by a "rogomiste," and four stories, surmounted by a garret. A dark, narrow alley led to a little court, or, rather, a kind of yard, five or six feet broad, completely deprived of air and light, an infected receptacle of all the filth and dirt of the house, which rained down, as it were, from each story. At the foot of a damp and black staircase, a reddish light indicated the lodge of the porter; a room very much smoked, from the continual burning of a lamp, which was necessary, even at midday, to illuminate this obscure hole, where we will follow Rodolphe, who was dressed as a shopkeeper's clerk in his every-day clothes.

He wore a paletôt of a doubtful colour, a hat not very new, a red cravat, and heavy shoes. To complete the illusion of his part, Rodolphe had under his arm a package of goods carefully tied up. He entered the lodge, to ask to look at the vacant room. A lamp placed behind a globe filled with water, lighted the lodge; at the farther end was a bed covered with a harlequin counterpane, formed of sundry bits of stuffs of all kinds and colours; at the left, a commode of walnut with a marble top, by way of ornament; a little Saint John, of wax, with his white lamb and his white wig, the whole placed under a cage of cracked glass, most ingeniously mended with strips of blue paper; two plated candlesticks, very much tarnished, bearing, instead of candles, a couple of oranges, no doubt recently presented to the porter's wife as a New-year's gift; and two boxes, one of straw of variegated colours, and the other covered with small shells. Between the two boxes, and under a glass globe, one could admire a small pair of boots of red morocco, real boots for a puppet, but most carefully and artistically confectioned. This "chef-d'œuvre," as the artisans say, joined to an abominable odour of rancid leather and fantastical arabesques, delineated on the wall by means of an innumerable quantity of old shoes, plainly indicated that the porter of this house had been a maker of new shoes before he had descended to the operation of mending old ones.

When Rodolphe ventured into this den, Monsieur Pipelet, the porter, momentarily absent, was represented by Madame Pipelet: seated near an iron stove, which was in the middle of the room, she appeared to be listening to the boiling of the pot. The French Hogarth, Henri Monnier, has so admirably stereotyped *la portière*, that we will content ourselves by begging the reader, if he wishes to figure to himself Madame Pipelet, to recall to his mind the most wrinkled, the most pimpled, the most niggardly, the most ragged, the most quarrelsome, the

most venomous of "portières" immortalized by this eminent artist. The only addition we will permit ourselves to make to this "idéal," which cannot fail to be of marvellous reality, shall be a strange "coiffure," composed of a periwig "à la Titus," originally blonde, but changed by time to an agreeable mixture of red, yellow, brown, and fawn colour, enamelling, as it were, an inextricable profusion of coarse, bristling, tangled locks. Madame Pipelet never went without this unique and everlasting ornament of her sexagenary cranium.

At the sight of Rodolphe, the "portière" pronounced in a surly tone these decisive words: "Where are you going to?" "Madame, there is a chamber and a cabinet, I believe, to be let in this house?" asked Rodolphe, emphasizing the word madame; which flattered Madame Pipelet not a little. She answered less sharply, "There is a room to be let on the fourth story, but it cannot be seen. Alfred is gone out!" "Your son, without doubt, Madame; will he soon return?" "No, sir, he is not my son; he is my husband. Pray, why should not Pipelet be called Alfred?" "He has the most perfect right, madame; but if you will permit, I will await his return. I wish to hire this chamber; the quarter and street suit me, the house pleases me, for it appears to be admirably well kept. However, before looking at the apartment, I should like to know if you could, madame, take charge of my room? I am always accustomed to employ the 'concierges;' that is, when they are willing."

This proposition expressed in such flattering terms, "concierge!" completely gained Madame Pipelet. She answered, "Most certainly, sir. I will take charge of your chamber. I flatter myself, for six francs a month, you shall be served like a prince."

"Agreed, for the six francs. Madame, your name?"

"Pomona-Fortunée-Anastasia Pipelet."

"Well, Madame Pipelet, I'll allow you six francs per month for your wages If the chamber suits me—what is the price?"

"With the cabinet, 150 francs; not one sous less. The principal tenant is a dog—a dog who would skin an egg."

"And you call him—" "Monsieur Bras-Rouge." The name and the recollections it awakened made Rodolphe shudder. "You say, Madame Pipelet, that the principal tenant is called—" "M. Bras-Rouge. Well!" "And he lives?" "Rue aux Fèves, No. 13; he has also a tavern in the moats of the Champs Elysées." There was no longer any doubt it was the same man. This rencounter seemed strange to Rodolphe. "If M. Bras-Rouge is the chief tenant," said he, "who is the proprietor of the house?" "M. Bourdon; but I arrange affairs altogether with M. Bras-Rouge." Wishing to inspire the "portière" with confidence, Rodolphe replied, "Look here, my dear Madame Pipelet, I am quite tired; I am almost frozen with cold. Do me the favour to go the Rogomiste who lives in this house, and bring me a bottle of Cassis and two glasses, or rather three, for your husband will soon return," and he gave her five francs. "Ah! now, monsieur, you wish, then, from the first, one shall adore you," cried the "portière," whose pimpled nose seemed to be illuminated with all the fires of an anticipated debauch. "Yes, Madame Pipelet, I wish to be adored." "'Ca me chausse, ça ma chausse,' but I will only bring two glasses; Alfred and I, we always drink out of the same. Poor dear, he is so dainty for all that concerns women!" "Go, Madame Pipelet, we will await Alfred." "Ah! now, if some one comes, you will take care of the lodge?" "Be easy." The old woman went out.

Remaining alone, Rodolphe reflected on the singular circumstance that again brought him in contact with Bras-Rouge; what astonished him the most was, that François Germain could have remained three months in this house, before he was discovered by the accomplices of the Maître d'Ecole, who were in concert with Bras-Rouge. At this moment, a postman knocked against the window of the lodge, and passing through his arm, holding two letters, said, "Three sous!" "Six sous, since there are two letters," said Rodolphe. "One is paid," answered the man. After having paid it, Rodolphe at first regarded the two letters mechanically, but soon they seemed to him to be worthy of closer examination. The one addressed to Madame Pipelet exhaled from within its envelope of satin paper, a strong smell of a "sachet" of Spanish leather. On its seal of red wax was the cipher C. R., surmounted by a helmet, with, for support, a cross of the legion of honour. The address was in a bold hand; the heraldic pretensions of the helmet and legion of honour made Rodolphe smile, and confirmed him in the opinion that this letter was not written by a woman. But who was the correspondent, perfumed, emblazoned, of Madame Pipelet? The other letter, of a common gray paper, sealed with a wafer, and stamped with a thimble, was for M. César Bradamanté, surgeon dentist. Evidently a counterfeit, the writing of this subscription was in capital letters. Was it a presentiment, a fantasy of his imagination, or reality, this letter appeared to Rodolphe to have a sorrowful appearance. He remarked some letters of the address, half effaced, in a place where the paper was slightly tumbled. A tear had fallen there. Madame Pipelet re-entered, bringing the bottle of cassis and two glasses. "I have been very slow, have I not, sir? But when one once gets into the shop of père Joseph, there is no way to get out. Ah! the old possessed! would you believe, with an old woman like myself, he wishes to play the fool?" "The devil! if Alfred knew that!" "Don't speak of it, my blood boils when I think of it. Alfred is as jealous as a Bedouin; and yet, on the part of the Père Joseph, it is only a joke—a joke, on my honour." "Here are two letters the postman has left," said Rodolphe. "Ah! 'mon Dieu'—excuse me: and you have paid?" "Yes." "You are very kind; then I'll account to you for it when we make our settlement. How much is it?" "Three sous," answered Rodolphe, smiling at the singular method of reimbursement adopted by Madame Pipelet. "How! three sous?" "It is six sous; there are two letters." "I could abuse your confidence by saying it was six sous, but I am incapable of such conduct, Madame Pipelet. One of the two letters, addressed to you, is franked; and, without being indiscreet, I take the liberty of observing

that you have a correspondent there, whose 'billets doux' smell furiously good." "Let us see," said the "portière," taking the perfumed billet. "'Ma foi,' it is true, it has the air of a 'billet doux;' say now, monsieur, a billet doux! ah! well! for instance—a billet doux! who is then the blackguard who dares?" "And if Alfred was here, Madame Pipelet?" "Don't speak of it, or I shall faint in your arms." "Oh! I shan't say another word, Madame Pipelet!" "But an't I a fool? I see," said the "portière," shrugging her shoulders. "I know—I know it's from the commandant. Ah! what a sudden fright, I had. But that don't hinder one from reckoning: let's see, it is three sous for the other letter, is it not? Thus we say: fifteen sous for the cassis and three sous for the letter—I hold that makes eighteen; eighteen and these two that you see make twenty, and four francs make one hundred sous; short accounts make long friends." "And here is a franc for you, Madame Pipelet. You have such a miraculous manner of reimbursing the advances that one makes for you, that I must encourage you." "Twenty sous! you give me twenty sous! And for what?" cried Madame Pipelet, at once surprised and alarmed at this wonderful generosity. "It shall be on account of the earnest money, if I take the room." "As such I accept it; but I shall tell Alfred." "Certainly; but here is another letter, addressed to M. César Bradamanté." "Ah! yes; the dentist of the third. I'll put that in the letter-*boot*."

Rodolphe thought he had misunderstood her, but he saw Madame Pipelet gravely throw the letter in an old boot nailed against the wall. "How?" said he, looking at her with surprise. "You put that letter—" "Well, sir, I put it into the letter-boot. In that way nothing is lost. When the lodgers enter, Alfred or I shake the boot, and each one picks and chooses for himself." "Your house is so perfectly well kept, that I am only more and more eager to be an inhabitant; this letter-boot, above all, charms me." "Mon Dieu! it is very simple," answered Madame Pipelet, modestly. "Alfred had this old odd boot; so he thought he would make it of use to the tenants." Saying this, the "portière" had unsealed the letter which was addressed to her. She turned and twisted it about, and, after a moment's hesitation, she said to Rodolphe, "It is always Alfred who reads my letters, because I don't know how. If you would, monsieur, take Alfred's place—" "To read the letter? willingly," said Rodolphe, very curious to know who was the correspondent of Madame Pipelet. He read as follows: "To-morrow, Friday, at eleven o'clock, you will have a large fire made in the two saloons, have the glasses well cleaned, take all the coverings off the furniture, and be careful not to injure the gilding in dusting. If by chance I have not arrived, and a lady should come and ask for M. Charles at about one o'clock, show her up to the apartment, lock the door, and keep the key until I come." Notwithstanding the singular "redaction" of this billet, Rodolphe understood perfectly its import, and said to the "portière," "Who lives on the first floor?" The old woman placed her yellow and wrinkled finger on her lower lip, and answered with a malicious chuckle, "Hush! It is an intrigue."

"I ask you this, my dear Madame Pipelet, because, before one takes room in a house, one likes to know." "Oh yes! quite plain, 'tell me the company, I'll tell you the man;' is it not so?" "Just what I was going to say." "However, I can tell you what I know about it—not a long story. About six weeks ago, an upholsterer came here to look at the first floor, which was to let, and to ask the price; the next morning he came with a fine young fair-haired man, small mustachies, cross of honour, fine linen. The upholsterer called him 'commandant.'" "He was a soldier, then?" "Soldier!" answered Madame Pipelet, shrugging her shoulders; "oh, go away! Alfred might as well call himself a 'concierge.'"* "How?" "He only belongs to the national guard—to the staff. The upholsterer called him so, just to flatter him—just as it flatters Alfred to be called a 'concierge.' In fine, when the 'commandant' had seen all, he said to the upholsterer, 'It is good; it suits me; arrange for me; see the proprietor.' 'Yes, commandant,' replied the other. And the next day the upholsterer signed the lease, in his own name, with M. Bras-Rouge, paying him six months in advance, because, it appears, the young man did not wish to be known. Right away came the workmen, bringing sofas, silk curtains, gilt glasses, superb furniture; it is as handsome as any café on the boulevards! without speaking of carpets everywhere, and so thick and soft that one would really think they were walking on velvet. When it was all finished, the commandant came to take a look; he said to Alfred, 'Can you take charge of this apartment, where I shall not come often; make the fires from time to time, and prepare everything to receive me, when I advise you by the post?' 'Yes, commandant,' said the flatterer of an Alfred. 'And how much will you charge for this?' 'Twenty francs a month, commandant.' Twenty francs! oh, come now! you joke, porter?' Now just imagine this fine gentleman, bargaining like a miser with poor people, for one or two pieces of five francs, when he had been at an abominable expense for an apartment which he did not occupy? However, by force of battling, we got twelve francs. Twelve francs! now tell me, don't it make you sweat? Two-penny commandant, get out! How different from you, monsieur," added the "portière," addressing Rodolphe in a pleasant manner; "you do not wish to be called 'commandant;' you have the appearance of a nobody, yet you agree with me for the six francs at once." "And has this young man returned since?" "You shall see; that is the funniest part of it; it appears that some one doses him too much. He has already written three times, like to-day, 'light the fire, arrange everything, and a lady would come.' Oh yes! go and see if she will come!" "Nobody came?" "Listen! The first of the three times, the 'commandant' arrived in great snuff, humming to himself, and playing the lord; he waited two mortal hours—nobody. When he passed out, we, Pipelet and myself, watched for him, to see his face and vex him, saying to him, 'Commandant, there has no one come at all—no one; no little lady to ask for you.' 'Very well, very well,' he answered in a rage,

* The porters of a better class of houses are so called.

and away he went in a huff, biting his nails for consolation. The second time, before he had arrived, a porter brought a little note addressed to M. Charles. I suspected that he was once more physicked. We, Pipelet and myself, were bursting with laughter when the commandant arrived. 'Commandant,' said I, carrying the outside of my left hand to my periwig, like a real trooper, 'here is a letter: it appears there is counter-march again to-day.' He looked at me as proud as a peacock, opened the letter and read it, became as red as a crab, then said to us, pretending not to be put out, 'I knew no one would come; I only came to tell you to take good care of everything.' It wasn't true; it was only to conceal from us that he had been tricked that he said that; and thereupon he went shuffling off, singing; but he was vexed, I tell you. It is well done, well done! two-penny commandant; that will teach you another time to give only twelve francs for taking charge of your rooms." "And the third time?"

"Ah! the third time, I believe it was for good. The commandant arrived—a very fine young man, notwithstanding, and well dressed, and scented like a musk-rat. He hardly touched the ground, he was so much puffed up. He took the key, and said to us, as he went up stairs, in a lively and proud tone, 'You will inform this person that the door is very near.' Good! us two Pipelets, we were so curious to see this person, although we didn't reckon on her coming, that we went out of the lodge, to watch at the steps of the door of the alley. This time a little blue hack, with the blinds down, stopped before the house. 'Good! it is she' said I to Alfred; 'let us fall back a little, so as not to frighten her.' The coachman opened the door. Then we saw a little lady with a muff on her lap, and a black veil which concealed her face, and a handkerchief which she held over her mouth; for she appeared to be weeping; but no sooner were the steps let down, than, instead of getting out, the lady said a few words to the coachman, who, quite astonished, shut the door."

"This woman did not get out?" "No, monsieur; she threw herself back in the carriage, and placed her hands before her eyes. I rushed out, and before the man had time to mount to his seat, I said to him, 'Well, my good fellow, where do you come from?' 'From the Rue Saint Dominique, at the corner of the Rue Belle-Chasse.'

At these words Rodolphe shuddered. The Marquis d'Harville, one of his best friends, overwhelmed by some secret grief, as we have stated before, lived just in this place. Was it the marchioness who was thus rushing to her ruin? Had her husband any suspicions? perhaps the sole cause of his secret grief. These doubts rushed to the mind of Rodolphe. Yet he well knew all the intimate friends of the marchioness, and he could not recall any one to mind that in any way resembled the commandant. After all, this young woman might have taken a hack at this place, without living there: nothing proved it to be the marchioness; nevertheless, he retained vague and painful suspicions.

His unquiet and absorbed manner had not escaped the portière.

"Well, monsieur, what are you thinking about?" said she. "I was thinking why this woman came to the door, and then suddenly changed her mind." "What would you have, monsieur; an idea, a fright, a superstition! We poor women are so weak, so cowardly," said the horrible old woman, with an affected air of timidity. "It seems to me that if I were secretly—Alfred—I should be obliged—take courage—several times before—but never, never, everlastingly never! poor dear. There is not an inhabitant of this earth that can boast—" "I believe you, Madame Pipelet; but this young person—" "I don't know she was young, for I only saw the end of her nose. Certain it is, that she went away as she came, without drum or trumpet. If some one had given us ten francs, we could not have been more pleased." "How is that?"

"In thinking how the commandant would act there would certainly be something to laugh at—certainly. In the first place, instead of going at once and telling him that the lady was gone, we let him dance for an hour. Then I went up—I had on my list shoes; I reached the door; I pushed it—it squeaked; the staircase is as dark as a furnace, and so is the entrance to the apartments. Just as I entered, the commandant took me in his arms, saying in an indolent manner, 'Mon Dieu! my angel, how late you come.'"

Notwithstanding the gravity of his thoughts, Rodolphe could not keep from smiling; above all, in looking at the grotesque periwig and the horribly wrinkled and pimpled face of the heroine of this ridiculous mistake.

Madame Pipelet continued laughing and making wry faces, which made her still more hideous. "Ha! ha! ha! but you shall see. I answered not a word, I held my breath, I abandoned myself to the commandant; but all of a sudden he cried out, pushing me off, the beast! as much disgusted as if he had touched a spider: 'But who the devil are you?' 'It's me, commandant; Madame Pipelet, the "portière;" that is the reason you ought to keep your hands off, and not take me by the waist, and call me your angel, and say I come too late. If Alfred was only here.' 'What do you want?' said he to me, furiously. 'Commandant, the little lady came just now in a carriage.' 'Well! show her up; are you a fool? did I not tell you to send her up?' I let him go on—did not undeceive him. 'Yes, commandant, it is true, you told me to send her up stairs.' 'Well!' 'It is that the little lady—' 'Speak then!' 'It is that the little lady went away again.' 'Get out; you have said or done something foolish,' cried he, still more furious. 'No, commandant; the little lady did not get out of the carriage; when the coachman opened the door she told him to take her back again.' 'The carriage can't be far off,' cried the commandant, rushing towards the door. 'Oh yes! yes! it has been gone more than an hour,' I answered. 'An hour—an hour! And why did you not come and tell me before?' cried he with renewed rage. 'Marry, because we thought you would be so much put out because you have not made your expenses, even this time. Caught!' said I. 'Mirliflor,' that will teach you to feel so sick at your stomach another time when you touch me.' 'Get out;

you only say and do "Sottisés,'" cried he in a rage, in taking off his robe de chambre à la tartare, and throwing on the ground his Greek cap of velvet, embroidered with gold—fine cap I tell you—and the robe de chambre! it almost blinded one; the commandant looked like a glow-worm." "And since that time, neither he, nor the lady have returned!" "No; wait for the end of my story," said Madame Pipelet.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THREE FLOORS.

"THE end of the story—this is it," continued Madame Pipelet. "I ran down stairs to find Alfred. Who should be in the lodge but the 'portière' of No. 19, and the oysterwoman who stands at the door of the 'rogomiste.' I related to them how the commandant had taken me by the waist. Such shouts of laughter! and Alfred, although he is very melan—yes, melancholy, as he calls it—although he is very melancholy from the treatment of that monster Cabrion." Rodolphe looked at the woman with astonishment. "Yes, some day, when we shall be better acquainted, I will tell you about it. However, to go on, even Alfred laughed, and began to call me his angel. At this moment the commandant came out of his room, and shut his door to go away; but as he heard us laugh, he didn't dare to come down for fear we should make fun of him; we suspected the cause, and you should have heard the oysterwoman, crying out in her harsh voice, 'Pipelet, you come late, my angel!' Thereupon, the commandant went back to his room, slamming the door with a great noise, like a great tiger as he is—for he must be a tiger—the end of his nose is white. Finally, he opened his door more than ten times to listen if there was any one at the lodge. There we were; we hadn't budged. At last, seeing that we would not go away, he made up his mind what to do—came down the stairs four steps at a time, threw me the key without saying a word, and ran out in a violent rage in the midst of our shouts of laughter, while the oysterwoman sung out, 'You come very late, my angel!'" "But you ran the risk of the commandant's no longer employing you." "Oh, yes! he did not dare—we had him. We knew where his magpie lived; and if he said anything to us, we would threaten to expose him; and, besides, for his mean twelve francs who would take charge of his rooms? Some woman out of the house? She had better try it; we'd lead her a pretty dance. Miserable curmudgeon! Would you think, monsieur, he had the meanness to pick out the sticks of wood that we should burn while waiting for him? He is surely some parvenu, some nobody, rich of a sudden—head of a lord and body of a beggar; spends at one end and pinches at the other. I don't wish him any other harm; but it does amuse me to see him made a fool of. I'll bet to-morrow 'twill be the same thing. I'll go and tell the oysterwoman; she'll come; we'll have some fun. If the little lady comes, we'll see if she is a blonde or a brunette, and if she is pretty. I say, monsieur, when one thinks of the ninny of a husband! a fine farce, is it not? But that's his business, poor dear man. Well, to-morrow we shall see the little lady; and in spite of her veil, she will have to hold her nose pretty low if we don't see the colour of her eyes. But pardon me a moment, while I take my pot from the fire; it don't sing any more: it is that the 'fricot' demands to be eaten. It was of double tripe; it will cheer up Alfred a little; for, as he has said himself, 'For double tripe he would betray France—his belle France!' the old dear."

* * * * * *

While Madame Pipelet busied herself with her domestic affairs Rodolphe gave himself up to the most sad reflections.

The woman in question (whether it was the marchioness or not) had, without doubt, for a long time hesitated before granting a first and second rendezvous; then, alarmed at the consequences of her imprudence, a salutary remorse had probably prevented her from accomplishing her dangerous promise. At length, conceding to an irresistible "entrainement," she arrived all in tears, agitated by a thousand fears, at the door of this house; but at the moment of being lost for ever, the voice of duty made itself heard: once more she escaped dishonour. And for whom had she braved so much shame, so many dangers? Rodolphe knew the world and the human heart; he prejudged with almost a certainty the character of the commandant, from the sketch given of him by the 'portière' with a coarse naïveté. Was not this man ridiculously proud enough to be vain of a title taken from a grade absolutely insignificant in a military point of view? a man sufficiently devoid of all tact not to shroud himself in the most profound incognito—not to surround with mystery the culpable actions of a woman who risked everything for him? a man such a fool, and so mean that he could not comprehend, that by economizing some 'louis' he exposed her to the insolent and shameful jokes of the people of this house?

Thus the next day, impelled by a fatal influence, but conscious of the gravity of her fault, having for her whole support in her terrible anguish but a blind faith in the discretion and honour of this man, this unfortunate young woman would come to this rendezvous lost; and she would be obliged to confront the curious and bold regards of some miserable wretches, and perhaps hear their foul and vulgar jokes.

What disgrace! what a lesson! for a poor misguided woman who, until then, had only lived in the most charming, the most poetic illusions of love! And the man for whom she braved so much opprobrium, so many perils, would he be the least touched by the heart-rending anxieties he had caused? No! Poor woman! a blind passion had once more brought her to the borders of the abyss, from which a courageous effort of virtue saved her again. And what were the feelings of this man at the thought of this holy and sorrowful struggle? He was seized with rage and anger, in thinking that he had been inconvenienced three times for nothing, and that his ridiculous fatuity is gravely compromised in the eyes of—his porter. "Oh!" thought Rodolphe, "what a terrible lesson if this woman (who is unknown to me, I hope) could have heard in what a vulgar manner they had spoken of a step, culpable without doubt, but which had cost so much love, so many tears, so many fears, so much remorse!"

And then, in thinking that perhaps the Marchioness d'Harville might be the heroine of this adventure, Rodolphe asked himself, "By what aberration of mind, by what fatality, M. d'Harville, young, sensible, devoted, generous, and, above all, tenderly attached to his wife, could be

sacrificed by a being necessarily silly; an egotistical and contemptible miser. Could the marchioness be taken with the man's appearance alone? for he was said to be very handsome."

Rodolphe knew, however, Madame d'Harville to be a woman of good feeling, mind, and taste, and of great elevation of character; never had there been the slightest whisper about her reputation. Where could she have known this man? Rodolphe saw her frequently, and he could not remember of ever having met any person at the Hotel d'Harville that at all reminded him of the commandant. After long reflection, he came almost to the conclusion that the marchioness had nothing to do with this affair.

Madame Pipelet, having finished her culinary duties, resumed her conversation with Rodolphe.

"Who lives on the second floor?" demanded he.

"It is the Mère Burette, a great woman for cards. She can read in your hands just like a book. There are some people very 'comme il faut,' who come to have their fortunes told, and she gains more money than she is worth; and, besides, fortune-telling is not her only trade."

"What does she do besides?"

"She keeps a little private pawnbroker's shop."

"How?"

"I tell you this because you are a young man, and it cannot but help to strengthen your notion for living here."

"And why then?" "The season is coming when even the most cautious are sometimes pressed. Well, it is always convenient to have a resource in one's own house, instead of being obliged to run to my *aunt's*, where it is much more humiliating; for one goes there seen and known by the whole town."

"To your *aunt's?* She lends, then, upon pawn?"

"How! don't you know? Come, come, *farceur!* You playing the innocent at your age?"

"I play the innocent? In what manner, Madame Pipelet?"

"In asking me if my *aunt* lends upon pawn."

"Because—" "Because all young men arrived at the age of reason know that going to place anything at a pawnbroker's is called *going to see my aunt.*"

"Oh! I understand: your second-floor lodger is a pawnbroker?" "Come, come, Monsieur Know-nothing; certainly she is a pawnbroker, and not so dear as at the grand shops; and, besides, there is no trouble at all—no papers, tickets—not at all, at all. For instance, you take to the Mère Burette a shirt which is worth three francs: she'll lend you ten sous on it; at the end of eight days you'll bring her twenty: if not, she keeps the shirt. It is very plain, *heiu?* always even money: a child can understand it."

"It is very clear, in effect; but I thought this kind of trade was forbidden." "Ah! ah! ah!" cried Madame Pipelet, screaming with laughter; "you have just come to town, ain't you, young man? excuse me, but I speak to you like a mother, and as if you were my child."

"You are very kind."

"Without doubt this is forbidden; but if one only did what the law allowed, one would sit very often with their arms folded. The Mère Burette does not write, gives no receipts; there are no proofs against her; she laughs at the police. It is funny enough, I tell you, to see what is brought to her. You wouldn't believe what she lends on sometimes! I have seen her advance money on a gray parrot, who swore like a trooper, the rogue."

"On a parrot? But what amount?"

"Stop a bit. He was known; it was the parrot of a postman's widow, who lives near here, in the Rue Sainte Avoie, Madame Herblot; every one knew that she thought as much of her parrot as she did of her skin. The Mère Burette said to her, 'I'll lend you ten francs on your beast; but if in eight days, at twelve o'clock, I haven't my twenty francs—'"

"Her ten francs."

"With the interest it made just twenty francs—always even money. 'If I haven't my twenty francs, and cost of feed, I give Jacquot a little sallad of parsley, seasoned with arsenic.' She knew her customer well, I tell you. With this threat, the Mère Burette had her twenty francs at the end of seven days; and Madame Herblot carried off her horrid beast, who had bored our ears every day with his vulgar oaths, so much that Alfred blushed, for he is very modest. It is not strange, for his father was a priest. In the revolution, you know, there were some priests who married nuns."

"And the Mère Burette has no other trade, I suppose?"

"She has no other, if you please. And yet I don't know what kind of business she carries on in a little room where no one enters except M. Bras Rouge and old *Borgnesse*, that is called La Chouette."

Rodolphe looked at the portière with astonishment. She, mistaking the look of surprise, said, "It is a funny name, ain't it, La Chouette?"

"Yes; and does this woman come here often?"

"She has not made her appearance for six weeks; but the day before yesterday we saw her; she limped a little."

"And what did she come to do with the fortune-teller?"

"Just what I don't know; but I have always remarked that on the days they have the secret conference in the little room, the *Borgnesse* always brings a bundle in her *cabas*, and M. Bras Rouge one under his cloak, but that they take nothing away."

"And these bundles, what do they contain?"

"I know nothing about it, except that they make with all this a *ratatouille* of the devil; for you can smell, in passing on the staircase, an odour of sulphur, and charcoal, and melted tin; and then you can hear them blow, blow, blow, like blacksmiths. Certain it is that the Mère Burette prospers either by her fortune-telling or magic; at least, that is what M. César Bradamanté told me, the lodger on the third floor. He is a learned individual, this M. César. When I say individual, I mean Italian, although he speaks French as well as you and I do, only he has a good deal of accent; but never mind, he is a nice man, who knows the simples, and who will take out your teeth, not for money, but for the honour. Yes, monsieur, for pure honour. If you have six bad teeth, he says it himself, to whoever will hear him, he will take out the first five for nothing; you must only pay for the sixth. It is not his fault if you only have the sixth."

"It is very generous."

"He sells, besides, a very good liquid, which keeps the hair from falling out, cures weakness of the eyes, corns on your feet, weakness of the stomach, and destroys rats without arsenic."

"This same liquid which cures weakness of the stomach?"

"The very same."

"It destroys rats also?"

"Without fail; because what is very wholesome for man is unwholesome for beasts."

"True, Madame Pipelet; I did not think of that."

"And the proof that it is a good liquid is, that it is made from simples that M. César collected in the mountains of Lebanon, among a tribe of a kind of Americans who live there, and from whence also he has brought his horse, which looks so much like a tiger; he is all white, with brown spots. I tell you, when M. César Bradamanté mounts this beast, in his red dress, lined with yellow, and his hat and feathers, you'd pay to see him; for, speaking with respect, he looks like Judas Iscariot, with his long red beard. For a month past, he has hired the son of M. Bras Rouge, the little Tortillard, whom he has dressed like a troubadour, with a black cap and an apricot-coloured jacket and collar. He beats the drum to attract customers around M. César; and, besides this, he takes care of the tiger horse of the dentist."

"It seems to me that the son of the principal tenant has a very modest employment."

"His father says he wishes this child to be held with a taught rein, otherwise he will dance on the scaffold; and truly it is a most wicked imp—wicked! He has played more than one trick on this poor M. César Bradamanté, who is the cream of honest people. Since he cured Alfred of the rheumatism we like him much. Well! monsieur, there are some persons ill-natured enough for—but no—it would make the hair raise on your head! Alfred says if it was true, it is a galley offence."

"Well?" "Ah! I dare not: I never shall dare to."

"Don't say another word." "It is on the faith of an honest woman to say that to a young man."

"Let us talk no more about it, Madame Pipelet."

"Yet, as you are to be a lodger, it is better that you should be advised that they are falsehoods. You are in a position to become a friend and neighbour of M. César; if you believe these stories, you would look upon his acquaintance with disgust."

"Speak; I listen to you."

"They do say when—when once a young person has committed a fault—you understand, don't you? and the consequences are feared—" "Well?" "Stop, I declare I can't tell any more." "But again." "No, no; and besides it is a malicious report." "Go on." "Lies." "Go on." "Slander." "But again." "People who are envious of the tiger horse of M. César." "Very well; but what do they say?" "I am ashamed to tell."

"But what relation is there between a young person who has committed a fault and the quack?"

"I don't say that it is true." "But in the name of Heaven, what then?" cried Rodolphe, becoming impatient at the shuffling of Madame Pipelet.

"Listen, young man," continued the "portière," in a solemn manner; "you must swear to me on your honour that you will never repeat this to any one?"

"When I know what it is, I will tell you, yes or no, to this oath."

"If I tell you this, it is not on account of the six francs you have promised me, nor on account of the cassis."

"Well, well." "It is on account of the great confidence I have in you." "Well." "And to serve this poor M. César Bradamanté in exculpating him."

"Your intentions are excellent, I don't doubt it; well?"

"It is said, then—but this must not go out of the lodge, at least." "Certainly: it is said, then—"

"Once more I say, I dare not; but stop; I'll whisper it in your ear; it will have less effect. What a child I am!" And the old woman whispered some words in the ear of Rodolphe, who shuddered with affright.

"Oh! but this is horrible," cried he, rising by an involuntary movement, and looking around him with terror, as if the house had been accursed.

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" murmured he, in a low voice; "are they possible—such horrid crimes! and this hideous old woman, who is almost indifferent to the dreadful revelation she has just made!"

The portière did not hear Rodolphe, but went on, continuing to occupy herself with her household affairs.

"Is it not a heap of slanders? What! a man who has cured Alfred of the rheumatism, a man who has brought a spotted horse from Lebanon, a man who proposes to take out five teeth gratis provided you pay for the sixth, a man who has certificates from all parts of Europe, and pays his rent to a farthing. Ah, well, yes; rather die than believe that!"

During the time that Madame Pipelet manifested her indignation against the calumniators, Rodolphe recalled to his mind the letter addressed to this man. An involuntary presentiment told him that these atrocious rumours were well founded.

"Ah, here is Alfred!" cried the "portière;" "he will tell you, as I do, that they are slanderers who accuse him of such horrors, this poor M. César Bradamanté, who cured him of the rheumatism."

CHAPTER VII.

MONSIEUR PIPELET.

We recall to our readers' recollection that these events occurred in 1838.

M. Pipelet entered the lodge with a grave and majestic air. He was about sixty years of age, with an enormous nose, a respectable "embonpoint," a large face, shaped and coloured like a pair of nutcrackers of the Nuremburg pattern.* This strange-looking head was covered with a "chapeau tromblou," with a broad brim, and red from age.

Alfred, who never went without this hat, any more than his wife went without her fantastic periwig, strutted about in an old green coat with immensely long skirts, the facings of which looked almost gray, so much were they covered with stains and dirt. Notwithstanding his "chapeau tromblou" and his green coat, which gave him a certain air of dignity, M. Pipelet had not laid aside the emblem of his calling. An apron of leather half concealed a long waistcoat, variegated with as many colours as the harlequin counterpane of Madame Pipelet. The saluta-

* These are made shaped like a little man.

tion that the porter made to Rodolphe was not wanting in a certain affability; but, alas! the smile of this man was bitter.

An expression of profound melancholy could be traced there, as Madame Pipelet had said to Rodolphe.

"Alfred, monsieur is an applicant for the chamber and cabinet of the fourth," said Madame Pipelet, presenting Rodolphe to her husband, "and we have only waited for you to drink a bottle of cassis, which he has ordered."

This delicate attention inspired M. Pipelet with confidence in Rodolphe; the porter carried his hand to the front part of his hat, and said in a bass voice, worthy of a cathedral chorister,

"We will satisfy you, monsieur, as porters, in the same way that you satisfy us as lodger; those who resemble assemble — at least, monsieur, if you are not a painter?"

"No; I am a shopkeeper's clerk."

"Then, monsieur, I tender you my humble duties. I felicitate nature for not having placed you on a level with these monsters of artists!"

"Artists! monsters?" asked Rodolphe. M. Pipelet, instead of answering, lifted his two hands towards the ceiling of the lodge, and uttered a sort of angry moan.

"These are the people that have impoisoned the life of Alfred; who have rendered him so melancholy," whispered Madame Pipelet to Rodolphe. Then, speaking loud and in a careless manner, she said, "Come, Alfred, be reasonable; don't think about that blackguard; you'll make yourself sick; you won't be able to eat any dinner."

"No; I will have courage and reason," answered M. Pipelet, with a resigned and sorrowful dignity. "He has done me much harm; he has been my persecutor, my executioner, for a long time; but now I despise him. Painters!" added he, turning to Rodolphe, "oh! monsieur, they are the pest of a house; they are its 'bacchanal,' its ruin."

"You have had a painter for a lodger?"

"Alas! yes, monsieur; we had one!" said M. Pipelet, with bitterness, "a painter who called himself Cabrion!" At this recollection, notwithstanding his apparent moderation, the porter clinched his fists convulsively.

"Was this the last person who occupied the room that I am about to hire?" asked Rodolphe.

"No, no; the last lodger was a good, worthy young man, called M. Germain; but before him was this Cabrion. Ah! monsieur, since his departure, this Cabrion has almost made me mad, stupid."

"Did you regret him so much?" asked Rodolphe.

"Cabrion! regret!" answered the porter, in a stupor; "regret Cabrion! Why, now, just imagine, monsieur, that M. Bras-Rouge paid him two terms to get him away; for we had been unfortunate enough to give him a lease. What a wretch! You can have no idea, monsieur, the horrible jokes he played to us, and to the other occupants. To speak but of one of these jokes, there is not a wind instrument of any description that he has not most basely made his accomplice to demoralize the lodgers! Yes, monsieur, from the hunting-horn to the serpent, monsieur! he has abused with all, pushing his villany so far as to play false, and to blow one note for hours together. Oh, it was enough to make one crazy. There were more than twenty petitions sent to M. Bras-Rouge, that he should turn the wretch out. Finally, monsieur, they got rid of him by paying two terms. It is droll, is it not? a lodger to whom one pays terms! But they'd have paid him three to shake him off. He went. Perhaps you think we are done with Cabrion? You shall see! The next evening at eleven o'clock I had gone to bed. Pan! pan! pan! I drew the cord. Some one came to the lodge. 'Good-evening, porter,' said a voice; 'will you give me a lock of your hair, if you please?' My wife said to me, 'It is some one who has mistaken the door.' I answered the unknown: 'It is not here; ask next door.' 'Yes, an't this No. 17? The porter's name Pipelet?' asked the voice. 'Yes,' I said, 'my name is Pipelet.' 'Well! Pipelet, my friend, I have come to ask for a lock of your hair for Cabrion; it is a notion he has got; he sticks to it, he will have it.'"

M. Pipelet looked at Rodolphe, letting his head fall, and crossing his arms in a sculptural attitude.

"You comprehend, monsieur? It is to me, his mortal enemy, whom he had covered with outrages, that he impudently comes and demands a lock of my hair, a favour that even ladies often refuse to their well-beloved."

"Yet if this Cabrion had been as good a lodger as M. Germain, perhaps—" said Rodolphe, with great gravity.

"Even if he had, I would not have granted him the lock," said the man with a "chapeau tromblon," majestically; "it is neither according to my principles nor my custom; but I should have made it my duty, my law, to refuse him politely."

"And this is not all," said the portière; "just figure to yourself, monsieur, that since that day, morning, noon, and night, at all hours, this frightful Cabrion set on a host of ruffians, who came one after the other, to ask Alfred for a lock of his hair, always for Cabrion." "And do you think I granted it?" said M. Pipelet, with a determined air; "they should have dragged me to the scaffold sooner, monsieur! After three or four months' obstinacy on their part, and resistance on mine, my energy triumphed over the brutality of these wretches. They saw they were attacking a bar of iron, and they were forced to renounce their insolent pretensions. But it is all the same, monsieur; I have been wounded here!" (Alfred laid his hand upon his heart.) "If I had committed a horrid crime, I could not have had a more tortured sleep. At each moment I awoke, starting, thinking I heard the voice of the cursed Cabrion. I was suspicious of the whole world; in every one I saw an enemy; I lost my amenity. I could not see a strange face at my window without shuddering to think it might be one of the band of Cabrion; and besides, moreover, monsieur, even now I am suspicious, 'renfrogne,' gloomy, 'épiloguer,' as a criminal. I fear to cheer myself up with a new acquaintance, from the dread of seeing start up some of the band of Cabrion; I have no enjoyment for anything."

Here Madame Pipelet carried her finger to her left eye, as if to chase away a tear, and made an affirmative sign with her head.

Alfred continued in a tone more and more sorrowful. "In fine, I am shrivelling up; and it is thus I see flow the river of life. Was I wrong, monsieur, to tell you that this infernal Cabrion had impoisoned my existence?" And M. Pipelet, breathing a profound sigh, bent his "cha-

peau tromblou" under the weight of this immense misfortune.

"I conceive, now, that you cannot like painters," said Rodolphe; "but this M. Germain at least, of whom you have spoken, must have made amends for M. Cabrion?"

"Oh! yes, monsieur; he is a good and worthy young man, true as gold, ready to serve one, not proud and gay, but the right kind of gayety, which does harm to no one, instead of being insolent and jeering, like this Cabrion, whom the devil confound!"

"Come, calm yourself, my dear M. Pipelet; don't pronounce that name. And now, who is the proprietor so happy as to possess this jewel of a lodger, M. Germain?"

"Neither seen nor known; nobody knows, nor will know, where, at this moment, lives M. Germain. When I say nobody—except Mademoiselle Rigolette."

"And who is Mademoiselle Rigolette?" asked Rodolphe.

"A little seamstress; the other lodger on the fourth story," said Madame Pipelet. "Here is another jewel! paying her term in advance; and so neat in her little room, and so good to everybody, and so gay—a true bird of heaven, so joyous, so lively; and, with all that, industrious as a little beaver, earning sometimes as much as two francs a day; but, forsooth! with much—"

"But how is it that Mademoiselle Rigolette alone knows the residence of M. Germain?"

"When he left the house," said Madame Pipelet, "he said to us, 'I don't expect any letters; but if by chance any should arrive, you will give them to Mademoiselle Rigolette;' and in that she was worthy of his confidence, even if the letter was charged; an't she, Alfred?"

"The fact is, there is absolutely nothing to say against Mademoiselle Rigolette," said the porter, severely, "if she had not had the weakness to suffer herself to be cajoled by that infamous Cabrion."

"However that may be, Alfred," continued the "portière," "you know how well it was no fault of Mademoiselle Rigolette; that comes from the locality; for it was just the same with the travelling clerk who occupied the room before Cabrion as it was after this wicked painter with M. Germain, who cajoled her. Once more I say, it cannot be otherwise; it comes from the locality."

"Thus," said Rodolphe, "the occupants of the chamber that I wish to hire necessarily pay their court to Mademoiselle Rigolette?"

"Necessarily, monsieur; you can easily comprehend it. You are a neighbour of Mademoiselle Rigolette; the two rooms join. Well, among young folks there is a candle to be lighted, a little coal to borrow, or perhaps some water. Oh, as to water, you are sure to find plenty at Mademoiselle Rigolette's; she is never without it; it is one of her luxuries; she is a real little duck. As soon as she has a moment's leisure she is right at washing her floor and hearth. Thus it is always so neat and clean; you'll see."

"So, M. Germain, in consequence of his locality, has been, as you say, a good neighbour with Mademoiselle Rigolette?"

"Yes, monsieur; you might say they were born for each other. So good, so young, it was a real pleasure to see them come down stairs on Sunday, the only holyday for these poor children, she dressed in a pretty bonnet and robe at twenty-five sous the 'aune,' which she made herself, but which fit her like a little queen; he looking like a real beau!"

"And M. Germain has never seen Mademoiselle Rigolette since he has left this house?"

"No, monsieur; unless it might have been on a Sunday, for on other days Mademoiselle Rigolette has no time to think of sweethearts, I tell you! she gets up at five or six o'clock, and works until ten, sometimes eleven, at night; she never leaves her room except in the morning when she goes to buy food for herself and her two canary birds; and the three don't want much, I tell you! Let's see? two sous for milk, a little bread, some chick-weed, sallad, millet, and fine, clear water; this does not prevent them from chattering and chirping, all three of them, the little girl and her birds; oh, it is a benediction! With all this, good and charitable as in her power; that is to say, with her time, sleep, and assistance; for, in working sometimes more than twelve hours a day, she just earns enough to live. Now, only think, those poor unfortunates in the garret that M. Bras-Rouge will put out on the pavement in three or four days, Mademoiselle Rigolette and M. Germain have set up with their children for several nights!"

"There is, then, an unfortunate family here?"

"Unfortunate, monsieur! 'Dieu de Dieu,' I think so. Five small children, the mother in bed, almost dying, the grandmother an idiot; and to feed all these, a man who does not have even bread enough, although he works like a negro, for he is a famous workman! Three hours' sleep out of the twenty-four is all he takes; and then, what sleep! when one is awakened by children who cry for bread; by a sick wife who is groaning on her straw bed; or by the old idiot, who sometimes begins to howl like a wolf, with hunger also, for she has no more reason than a beast. When she is very hungry, you can hear her on the staircase—she roars."

"Ah! this is frightful!" cried Rodolphe; "and does no one succour them?"

"Marry! monsieur, one does what can be done among poor people. Since the commandant has given me twelve francs a month to take care of his room, I make soup once a week, and these poor folks always have a taste. Mademoiselle Rigolette sits up at night; and, marry! that always costs light, to make, with shreds of stuff, caps and jackets for the little ones. This poor M. Germain, who hadn't much to spare neither, pretended to receive now and then a bottle of wine; and Morel (it is his name) drank one or two glasses, which warmed him famously, and for the time raised his spirits."

"And did the quack do anything for these poor people?"

"M. Bradamantié?" asked the portière.

"He cured me of my rheumatism, it is true; I am grateful; but since that day I said to my wife, 'Anastasia, M. Bradamanté'—Hum! hum! didn't I say so, Anastasia?"

"It is true, you did say so: but he likes to laugh, 'this man,' at least after his manner; for he doesn't open his teeth when he does it."

"What did he do?"

"Well, now see, monsieur: when I spoke to him of the misery of the Morels, because he complained to me that the old idiot had howled with hunger all night, and had prevented him from sleeping, he said, 'Since they are so unfortunate, if they have any teeth to pull, I will not make them pay for the sixth; and, besides, I

will give them a bottle of my lotion at half price."

"Well!" cried M. Pipelet, "although he has cured me of my rheumatism, I maintain that is indecent pleasantry. But he always acts so; and, besides, if they were only indecent."

"Only think, Alfred, he is an Italian; and this is, perhaps, the way they joke in his country."

"Decidedly, Madame Pipelet," said Rodolphe, "I have a bad opinion of this man. I will not have any acquaintance with him. And the pawnbroker, has she been any more charitable?"

"Hum! after the manner of M. Bradamanté, she loaned them on their poor clothes. Everything went into her hands, even their last mattress! No great embezzlement; they never had but two."

"And now she does not help them?"

"The Mère Burette? Ah! well, yes. She is as mean in her way as her lover is in his; for, look here! M. Bras-Rouge and the Mère Burette," added the portière, with a winking of the eye and shaking of the head extraordinarily malicious. "Truly?" said Rodolphe.

"I believe it, to the death! And go along! The summers of Saint Martin's are as warm as any others; ain't it so, old darling?"

M. Pipelet, for answer, shook his "chapeau tromblou" in a melancholy manner.

Since Madame Pipelet had shown a sentiment of charity on account of the poor wretches of the garret, she seemed less repugnant to Rodolphe. "And what trade does the poor workman follow?"

"Workman in false jewels; he works by the piece. You'll see all; a man is but a man; he can only do what he can do; ain't it so? And when there are seven mouths to fill without counting one's own, it is a dead drag; and, besides, his eldest daughter does what she can; but it is not much!"

"And how old is this daughter?"

"Seventeen, and beautiful, beautiful as daylight; she is a servant to an old miser, rich enough to buy all Paris—a notary, M. Jacques Ferrand."

"M. Jacques Ferrand?" said Rodolphe, astonished at this encounter, for it was at this notary's, or, at least, from his housekeeper, that he was to seek information respecting the friends of La Goualeuse. "M. Jacques Ferrand, who lives in the Rue du Sentier?" continued he.

"Exactly so! Do you know him?"

"He is the notary of the commercial house to which I belong."

"Ah well! then you must know that he is a famous miser; but to be just, honest, and devout—every Sunday to mass and vespers, taking communion and going to confession. If he does frolic, it is only with the priests, drinking holy water and eating holy bread—a holy man!—the saving's bank for poor people, who deposite their economies in his hands; but, 'dame,' miserly, and as tough for others as for himself. It is now eighteen months since this poor Louise is his servant. She is a lamb in disposition, but a horse for work. She does everything, and eighteen francs is all she gets—not a cent more or less; she keeps six francs for her own support, and gives the rest to her family; she always does so; but what is that for seven persons to gnaw on!"

"But the father's labour—if he is industrious?"

"If he is industrious! He is a man that has never been drunk; correct, quiet as a lamb; who only prays the 'bon Dieu' to make the days forty-eight hours long, so that he can get a little more bread for his brats."

"His labour produces so little, then?"

"He kept his bed for three months; that's what got him behindhand; his wife ruined her own health in attending him, and at this moment she is in a dying condition; during these three months they had to live on the twelve francs of Louise, and on what they pawned with Mère Burette, and also some 'écus' lent them by the 'courtière'* in mock jewelry, for whom he worked. But eight people! I always think of that; and if you could see their den! But stop, nonsense, don't let's talk any more about this; our dinner is ready, and only to think of that garret; it turns my stomach. Happily, M. Bras-Rouge is going to rid the house of them. When I say happily, it is not from hard-heartedness, at least. But, if they must be wretched, these poor Morels, and we can't do anything to help them, let them go and be wretched somewhere else. It will be a heart-ache the less for us."

"But if they are turned away from here, where will they go?"

"Marry, I don't know."

"And how much can he earn a day, this poor workman?"

"If he was not obliged to take care of his mother, his wife, and children, he would earn perhaps four to five francs; but as he loses three quarters of his time, at the very most he makes but forty sous."

"Truly, little enough. Poor people!"

"Yes, poor people, 'allez!' it is well said. But there are so many poor people, that when one can do nothing, they must comfort themselves; ain't it so, Alfred? But speaking of comfort and the 'cassis,' we haven't said a word to it!"

"Frankly, Madame Pipelet, what you have told me has touched my heart; you must drink my health with M. Pipelet?"

"You are very kind, monsieur," said the porter; "but do you wish to see the room."

"Yes; if it suits me I'll take it."

The porter came out of his "antre," and Rodolphe followed him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FOUR FLOORS.

The dark and humid staircase appeared still more obscure on this gloomy winter's day. The entrance to each apartment of this house presented, to the eye of an observer, a most distinct and different appearance. Thus, the door which opened into the rooms of the commandant was freshly painted a brown colour, in imitation of satin wood; a gilt handle shone at the lock, and a fine bell-rope, with a crimson silk tassel, made a strange contrast with the dirty and ancient walls. The door of the second floor, which was occupied by the pawnbroker and fortune-teller, presented a still more singular appearance: a stuffed owl, a bird supremely symbolical and cabalistic, was nailed by the feet and wings over the doorway; a little window, strongly grated with wire, allowed the visiters to be reconnoitered before opening the door. The apartment of

* A female broker or agent.

the Italian quack was also distinguished by its singular entrance. His name, traced with horses' teeth on a black ground, was fastened against the door. Instead of terminating in a classical manner, with a deer's foot, the bellrope was fastened to the arm and paw of a dried monkey. This withered arm, this little hand, with its fine outstretched fingers, was hideous to behold. It looked like a child's.

As Rodolphe passed before this door, which to him had a mysterious look, he thought he heard stifled sobs; then all at once burst forth a sad, convulsive, horrible cry—a cry that appeared to be wrung from the heart resounded throughout the quiet house.

Rodolphe shuddered. With a movement quicker than thought, he ran to the door and pulled the bell violently.

"What is the matter with you, monsieur?" said the surprised porter. "That cry!" said Rodolphe, "did you not hear it? "Yes, monsieur. No doubt it is some patient from whom M. César Bradamanté is pulling a tooth—perhaps two."

This explanation was probable; yet it did not satisfy Rodolphe. This terrible cry, which he had just heard, did not seem to him only an exclamation of physical suffering, but also, if it may be said, "a cry of moral suffering." His pull at the bell had been of great force; at first it was not answered. Then many doors were shut with violence; and behind the glass of an "œil-de-bœuf," placed near the door, on which Rodolphe had mechanically fixed his eye, a thin face of ghastly paleness appeared; an immense mass of red and gray hair crowned this hideous visage, which was terminated by a long beard of the same colour. This vision disappeared at the end of a second. Rodolphe remained petrified. While this apparition appeared, he thought he had some remembrance of such a face.

Those green eyes sparkling like emeralds under their heavy, bristling, and red eyebrows; that livid paleness, that thin nose, prominent and curved like the beak of an eagle, with wide and distended nostrils, all recalled to his mind a certain Abbé Polidori, whose name had been cursed by Murphy during his conversation with the Baron de Graün.

Although Rodolphe had not seen the Abbé Polidori for sixteen or seventeen years, he had a thousand reasons for not forgetting him; but that which rather puzzled him, which made him rather doubt the identity of these two personages, was, that the priest whom he thought he had found under the disguise of this quack, was of very dark hair and complexion.

If Rodolphe (in supposing that his suspicions were well founded) was not much astonished to see a man invested with a holy calling, whose high intelligence, vast learning, rare mind he perfectly knew, fallen to this point of degradation, perhaps of infamy, it is that he knew that this high intelligence, this vast learning, were allied to a perversity so profound, conduct so disorderly, habits so intemperate, and, above all, such impudent quackery and outrageous contempt of men and things, that this man, reduced to merited misery, must have, we had almost said, ought to have, sought out resources the least honourable, and found a sort of ironical and unholy satisfaction to see himself (when himself, really distinguished by gifts of the mind and clothed with a sacred calling) exercising the vile trade of an impudent mountebank. But we repeat, that although he had last seen the Abbé Polidori in the flower of his days, and that he should now be about the age of the quack, yet there was between these two personages such a notable difference, that Rodolphe doubted extremely their identity; nevertheless, he said to M. Pipelet, "How long is it since M. Bradamanté came to live in this house?" "About one year, monsieur. Yes, about that; he came for the January term. He is a very punctual lodger; he has cured me of a famous rheumatism. But, as I told you just now, he has a fault: he is too much of a 'gouailleur;' he respects no one in his conversation." "How is that?" "In fine, monsieur," said M. Pipelet, gravely, "I am not a rose-bud, but there is too much joking." "He is very gay then?" "It is not that he is so very gay; on the contrary, he looks like a dead man. But he never laughs in his mouth; he laughs always in his words; for him, he respects no one, father nor mother, the 'bon Dieu' nor the devil: he jokes about all—even about his own lotion, monsieur—even about his own lotion! But I cannot conceal from you that these jokes sometimes make me afraid—make me creep all over. After he has jabbered indecently for a quarter of an hour in the lodge about the women, half clothed, of the different countries he has travelled through, and I find myself alone with Anastasia, well! monsieur, I, who have for thirty-seven years been accustomed to make it a law to cherish her—Anastasia—well! it seems to me that I cherish her less. You will laugh; but sometimes again, when M. César has departed, after having talked about the festivals of princes, where he has been present, to see them try the teeth he has made, well! it seems that my food is bitter—I have no more hunger. However, I love my trade, monsieur, and I pride myself on it—I might have been a boot maker if such had been my ambition; but I think I render as much service by mending old ones—well! monsieur, there are some days when this devil of a M. César, with his jokes, makes me regret that I am not a maker instead of a mender, on my word and honour. And then, besides, he has such a way of talking about these lady savages that he has known—now look here, monsieur, I repeat to you, I am not a rose-bud, but sometimes, 'saperlotte!' I blush like a girl," added M. Pipelet, with an air of revolted chastity. "And does Madame Pipelet tolerate this?" "Anastasia is a giddy creature; and M. César, notwithstanding his 'mauvais ton,' has, certainly, too much: so she passes it all over." "She has told me of certain rumours." "She has told you?" "Be quite easy; I am discreet." "Well, monsieur, that rumour I don't believe, never will believe it; and yet I can't keep from thinking about it; and that augments the singular effects of the droll jokes of M. Bradamanté: in fine, monsieur, in a word, I certainly hate M. Cabrion: it is a hatred that I shall carry to the tomb. Well! sometimes it appears to me that I prefer the ignoble farces that he had the effrontery to play in this house, to the jokes M. César favours us with, in his *pinch-without-laughing* manner, in bridling his lips with a disagreeable movement, which always creates to my mind the death-bed of my uncle Piousselot, who, with the rattles in his throat, bit his lips just like M. Bradamanté."

Some words of M. Pipelet, on the perpetual sneer with which the quack spoke of all and everybody, and branded joys the most pure and

modest with his infamous jeering, quite confirmed the first suspicions of Rodolphe; for the abbé, when he threw off his mask of hypocrisy, had always affected a skepticism the most audacious and the most revolting. Quite decided to clear up his doubts, the presence of this priest in this house troubling him, and feeling more and more disposed to interpret this terrible cry differently from the porter, he followed him to the floor above, where he found the room he wished to hire.

The dwelling place of Mademoiselle Rigolette, next to this chamber, was easily to be recognised, thanks to a charming gallantry of the painter, the mortal enemy of M. Pipelet. A half dozen chubby-cheeked little loves, very prettily and neatly painted in the style of Wateau, were grouped around a kind of work box, and bore, allegorically, one a thimble, another a pair of scissors; this one a smoothing iron, that one a small mirror. In the middle of the box, on a clear blue ground, was written in rose-coloured letters, *Mademoiselle Rigolette, mantua-maker.* The whole was enclosed by a garland of flowers, which stood out in bold relief with the sea-green colour of the door. This little affair was very pretty, and formed a striking contrast to the black staircase. At the risk of irritating the bleeding wounds of Alfred, Rodolphe said to him, pointing to the door of Mlle. Rigolette, "This, without doubt, is the work of M. Cabrion?" "Yes, monsieur; he took the liberty of spoiling the paint of this door with these indecent daubings of naked children, which he calls loves. If it had not been for the entreaties of Mlle. Rigolette and the weakness of M. Bras-Rouge, I would have scratched it all off, as well as this palette with which the same monster has obstructed the door of your chamber." And truly, a palette charged with colours, appearing to be suspended to a nail, was painted on the door, so as to be quite deceptive. Rodolphe followed the porter into this room, of sufficient size, preceded by a cabinet, and lighted by two windows which looked into the Rue du Temple; some fantastic sketches, painted on the second door, had been scrupulously respected by M. Germain.

Rodolphe had too many reasons for occupying this room, not to engage it at once; he gave then, modestly, forty sous to the porter, and said, "This chamber suits me perfectly; here is the advance; to-morrow I shall send some furniture; I suppose it is not necessary that I should see the principal tenant, M. Bras-Rouge?"

"No, monsieur; he only comes here from time to time, except for his dealings with Mère Burette. It is always with me that this is arranged; I shall only ask you your name."

"Rodolphe." "Rodolphe what?"

"Rodolphe; nothing else, Monsieur Pipelet."

"That's indifferent, monsieur; it is not for curiosity I insisted: names and inclinations are independent."

"Tell me, Monsieur Pipelet, ought I not to-morrow, as a new neighbour, go and ask the Morels if I can be of any service to them, since my predecessor, M. Germain, assisted them according to his means?" "Yes, monsieur, you can do that; it is true, it will be of no great service to them, notwithstanding." Then, as if struck with a sudden idea, M. Pipelet cried, looking at his companion in a very cunning manner, "I understand, I comprehend; it is a commencement which will end in your playing the good neighbour to the little neighbour alongside." "But I certainly do count on it!"

"There's no harm, monsieur; it is the custom; and stop, I am sure that Mlle. Rigolette has heard that some one was looking at the apartment, and that she is on the watch to see us go down. I'll make a noise on purpose, when I turn the key; look sharp as you pass along."

In effect, Rodolphe perceived that the door, so prettily embellished with the little "amours," was ajar, and he saw indistinctly, through the narrow opening, the rosy end of a little turned-up nose, and a large black eye, sparkling and curious; but as he slackened his pace, the door was shut quickly.

"Now I told you that she was watching us," continued the porter; then he added, "Pardon, excuse me, monsieur, I am going to my little observatory."

"What is that?" "At the top of the ladder is the landing-place on which opens the door of Morel's garret; and behind the wainscot there is a little black hole where I keep some rubbish. As the wall is very much cracked, when I am in my hole I can see and hear them just as if I was in the room. It is not as a spy; just heavens! But I go to look at them sometimes, just as one goes to see a bloody melo-drame, and when I descend to my lodge, I find it like a palace. But say now, monsieur, if your heart will permit, would you like to—before they go? It is very sad, but it is curious; for when they see you, they are like savages—it annoys them."

"You are very good, Monsieur Pipelet; another day, to-morrow, perhaps, I will profit by your offer.

"At your convenience, monsieur; but I must go up to my observatory, for I have need of a piece of leather. If you wish to go down I will rejoin you." And M. Pipelet began to ascend the ladder, an undertaking sufficiently perilous at his age.

Rodolphe cast a parting glance at the door of Mlle. Rigolette, thinking that this young girl, the former companion of the poor Goualeuse, knew, without doubt, the retreat of the son of the Maître d'Ecole, when he heard in the lower story some one come out of the quack's room; he recognised the light step of a woman, and distinguished the rustling of a silk dress. For a moment he stopped, for discretion's sake, and then, hearing nothing farther, descended. When he reached the second floor, he picked up a handkerchief on the last steps, belonging, no doubt, to the person who had just left the apartment of M. Bradamanté. Rodolphe approached one of the narrow windows which lighted the staircase, and examined this handkerchief, magnificently trimmed with costly lace; in one of the corners was embroidered an L. and an N., surmounted with a ducal coronet. This handkerchief was literally soaked with tears. The first thought of Rodolphe was to hasten that he might deliver it to the person who had lost it; but he reflected that this might be considered, under the circumstances, an inconvenient curiosity; he kept it, thus finding himself, without wishing it, on the trace of a mysterious, and, without doubt, sinister adventure. When he reached the lodge, he said to the portière,

"Wasn't there a woman who came down stairs just now?"

"No, monsieur. It was a fine lady, tall and slender, in a black veil. She came out of M. César's. The little Tortillard went to get a hack, which she got into. What astonishes me is, that

the little rascal got up behind the carriage, perhaps to see where the lady goes to; for he is as curious as a magpie, and quick as a ferret, notwithstanding his lame foot."

"Thus," thought Rodolphe, "the name and address of this woman will be known by the quack, if he has ordered Tortillard to follow the unknown."

"Well, monsieur, does the room suit you?" asked the portière.

"It suits me exactly; I have taken it, and to-morrow I will send some furniture." "May the 'bon Dieu' bless you for having passed before our door, monsieur! we shall have one famous lodger the more. You, like a good boy, Pipelet will love you at once. You will make him laugh like M. Germain, who always had something funny to tell him, for he likes a laugh, the poor dear man; thus, I think before a month is passed, you will make a pair of friends." "Come, come, Madame Pipelet, you flatter me." "Not at all; what I say to you now is as if I opened my heart to you. And if you are kind to Alfred, I shall be grateful: you shall see your little room; I am a lion for neatness; and if you wish to dine at home on Sundays, I'll cook you up a dish that'll make you lick your fingers." "Agreed; Madame Pipelet, you shall take care of my room. To-morrow they will bring you some furniture, and I'll come and see it put it in order."

Rodolphe took his departure. The results of his visit to the house of the Rue du Temple were sufficiently important for the solution of the mystery which he wished to discover, and for the noble curiosity with which he sought the occasion to do good, and to prevent evil. Such were these results.

Mademoiselle Rigolette necessarily knew the residence of François Germain. A young woman, who, according to some indications, might unfortunately be the Marchioness d'Harville, had given to the commandant a new rendezvous, which would perhaps ruin her forever. And for a thousand reasons, Rodolphe had the most lively interest in M. d'Harville, whose repose and honour seemed so cruelly compromised. An honest and laborious artisan, crushed by the most fearful misery, was about to be, he and his family, turned into the street by the orders of M. Bras-Rouge.

Finally, Rodolphe had involuntarily discovered some traces of an adventure, of which the quack César Bradamanté (perhaps the Abbé Polidoré) and a woman who belonged, without doubt, to the highest circles, were the principal actors. Besides, La Chouette, recently discharged from the hospital, where she had been sent after the affair of the Allée des Veuves, had some private dealings with Madame Burette, pawnbroker and fortune-teller, who occupied the second floor of the mansion. Having collected this varied information, Rodolphe returned to his own house, Rue Plumet, putting off to the next day his visit to the notary, Jacques Ferrand. The same evening, as the reader knows, Rodolphe was to go to a grand ball at the Embassy of * * *.

Before we follow our hero in this new excursion, we will cast a retrospective glance on Tom and Sarah, important personages in this history.

CHAPTER IX.

TOM AND SARAH.

Sarah Seyton, at that time widow of the Count M'Gregor, and about thirty-seven years of age, was of an excellent Scotch family, and daughter of a baronet.

Of a finished beauty, orphan at sixteen, Sarah had left Scotland with her brother Tom Seyton, of Halsburg.

The absurd predictions of an old Highlander, her nurse, had aroused to madness the two great faults of Sarah—pride and ambition—in promising her, with an incredible persistence of conviction, the highest destiny—why not say it? the destiny of a sovereign! The young girl lent a willing ear to the predictions of her nurse, and constantly repeated to herself, to corroborate her ambitious folly, that a fortune-teller had also promised a crown to the beautiful and excellent Creole, who was once seated on the throne of France, and who was queen by her charms and goodness, as others are by their grandeur and majesty. Strange thing! Tom Seyton, just as superstitious as his sister, encouraged these foolish hopes, and had resolved to dedicate his life to the realization of Sarah's dream—this dream as dazzling as it was foolish.

Nevertheless, the brother and sister were not blind enough to believe rigorously in the prophecies of the old Scotchwoman, and only to look for a throne of the first rank, in their haughty disdain of secondary royalties, or reigning princes: no, as long as the handsome Scotch girl could place on her imperial brow a sovereign crown, the proud couple would shut their eyes on the possessor of this crown.

With the assistance of the Almanac of Gotha for the year of grace 1819, Tom Seyton, made, just before quitting Scotland, an alphabetical list, with their ages, of all the unmarried kings and sovereign highnesses of Europe. The ambition of the brother and sister was pure of all ignoble means to attain their object; Tom was to assist Sarah in contriving the conjugal plot, by which she hoped to catch a crown. Tom was to be half concerned in all the stratagems, in all the intrigues which might bring about this result; but he would sooner have killed his sister than to have seen her the chère amîé of a prince, even with the certainty of a marriage of reparation.

The kind of matrimonial inventory which resulted from the researches of Tom and Sarah in the Almanac of Gotha was satisfactory. The Germanic Confederation furnished, above all, a numerous contingency of young presumptive sovereigns. Sarah was a Protestant; Tom was not ignorant of the facility of the left-handed German marriages, marriages otherwise legitimate, and to which he would be resigned for his sister, in the last extremity. It was, then, determined between them that Germany should be the first field of their operations.

If this project appears impossible, these hopes insensate, we answer, that an unbounded ambition, much increased by a superstitious belief, is very rarely reasonable in its views, or staggered by impossibilities; besides, in recalling to mind certain contemporaneous facts from the august and "morganatique" marriages between sovereigns and subjects, to the "amoureuse odysée" of Miss Penelope Smyth and the Prince of Capua, one cannot but allow some probabilities of success to the views of Tom and Sarah.

We will add, that the latter joined to wonderful beauty great aptitude for the most varied accomplishments, and a power of seduction so much the more dangerous, as, with a hard and selfish heart, a cunning and wicked mind, a profound dissimulation, a determined and wilful disposition, she united all under the appearance of a generous, ardent, and impassioned nature. Her physical organization was quite as deceptive. Her large black eyes, now sparkling, now languishing under her ebony eyebrows, could feign the ardent gaze of the voluptuary, yet the burning aspirations of love never caused her heart to beat in her frozen bosom; no surprise of the heart or the senses ever could derange the merciless calculations of this cunning, egotistic, ambitious woman.

In arriving on the Continent, Sarah, from the counsels of her brother, did not wish to commence her undertaking without first making a visit to Paris, where she desired to finish her education, and to soften down her English roughness, by mixing with the most polished society. She was introduced into the best and most fashionable circles of the "grand mondé," thanks to the letters and kind patronage of the English ambassadress and the old Marquis d'Harville, who had known in England the father of Tom and Sarah.

After a sojourn of six months in Paris, Sarah could compete with the Parisienné, the most "Parisienne" in the world, for the "grace piquante of her mind, the charm of her gayety, and the provoking naïveté of the glance of her eye, the ingenuity of her coquetry, at once chaste and passionné.

Finding his sister sufficiently armed, Tom set out with her for Germany, furnished with excellent letters of introduction.

The first state of the Germanic Confederation which was found on the itinerary of Sarah was the Grand-duchy of Gerolstein, thus designated in the diplomatic and infallible Almanac of Gotha, for the year 1819:

Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Europe and of their Families.

GEROLSTEIN.

Grand-duke Maximilian Rodolphe, born the 10th December, 1764. Succeeded his father Charles Frederic Rodolphe, the 21st April, 1785. Widower, January, 1808, of Louisa, daughter of the Prince John Augustus, of Burglen.

SON,

Gustavus Rodolphe, born 17th April, 1803.

MOTHER,

Grand-duchess Judith, dowager widow of the Grand-duke Charles Frederic Rodolphe, the 21st April, 1785.

Tom had sense enough to inscribe first on his list the youngest of the princes whom he desired for his brother-in-law, thinking that extreme youth was more easily seduced than riper age. And, besides, as we have said, Tom and Sarah had been particularly recommended to the reigning Grand-duke of Gerolstein by the old Marquis d'Harville, infatuated, like everybody else, with Sarah, whose beauty, grace, and charming manners he never could sufficiently admire.

It is useless to say that the heir-presumptive of the Grand-duchy of Gerolstein was Gustavus Rodolphe; he was scarcely eighteen, when Tom and Sarah were presented to his father.

The arrival of the young Scotch girl was quite an event in this little German court, calm, simple, serious, and thus to speak, patriarchal. The grand-duke, the best of men, governed his state with paternal kindness; nothing could be more materially, more morally happy, than this principality; its population, industrious and sedate, frugal and religious, presented "the type idéal" of the German character.

These good people enjoyed a happiness so profound, they were so completely satisfied with their condition, that the enlightened solicitude of the grand-duke had but little to do to preserve them from the mania of constitutional innovations.

As to modern discoveries, as to practical ideas, which might have a salutary influence on the well-being, and on the morality of the people, the grand-duke kept himself well advised, and applied them immediately, his ministers resident at the different courts of Europe having, as it were, no other mission than to keep their master well advised of the progress of science, in a point of view of public and practical utility.

We have already said that the grand-duke felt as much affection as gratitude for the old Marquis d'Harville; thanks to the letters of this last, Tom and Sarah Seyton, of Halsbury, were received at the court of Gerolstein with a very marked and kind distinction. Fifteen days after her arrival, Sarah, endowed with a profound spirit of observation, had easily penetrated the firm, loyal, and open character of the grand-duke. Before she vanquished the son, an infallible business, she had wisely resolved to assure herself of the disposition of the father, who appeared to love his son so blindly, that for a moment Sarah believed him capable of consenting to a misalliance, rather than see his dear son eternally unhappy. But soon she was convinced that this affectionate parent would never depart from certain principles, certain ideas on the duties of princes. It was not on account of his pride; it was conscience, reason, dignity. Now a man of this energetic temperament, so much the more affectionate and good, as it is firmer and stronger, never accedes to anything that touches his conscience, his reason, his dignity.

Sarah was on the point of renouncing her undertaking, in face of these obstacles almost insurmountable; but reflecting, on the other hand, that Rodolphe was very young, that they praised, generally, his sweetness, his kindness of disposition, his character, at once timid and pensive, she thought the young prince weak and irresolute: so she persisted, then, in her projects and hopes. On this occasion, the conduct of her brother and herself was a model of generalship.

The young girl sought to conciliate everybody, and, above all, those who might be jealous of her advantages; she made her beauty and grace forgotten by the modest simplicity with which she concealed them. Soon she became the idol, not only of the grand-duke, but of his mother the grand-duchess dowager, who, in spite of, or on account of her ninety years, loved all that was young and charming.

Several times Tom and Sarah had spoken of their departure, but never would the sovereign of Gerolstein listen to the proposal; and to keep near him both the brother and sister, he begged the baronet, Tom Seyton, of Halsbury, to accept the vacant situation of first master of the

horse, and he instructed Sarah not to leave the grand-duchess, who could not exist without her. After a long hesitation, combated by the most powerful influence, Tom and Sarah accepted these brilliant propositions, and established themselves at the court of Gerolstein, where they had been about two months.

Sarah, an excellent musician, knowing the taste of the grand-duchess for the old masters, and among others for Gluck, sent for the works of this illustrious man, and fascinated the princess by her inexhaustible "complaisance," and by the remarkable talent with which she sang these old airs, of a beauty so simple and touching.

Tom, on his part, knew how to render himself very useful in the employment the grand-duke had confided to him. The Scotchman was perfectly familiar with horses; he had much method and firmness, and in a short time completely reorganized the service of the stables, a service heretofore much neglected.

The brother and sister were soon equally loved, fêted, and caressed in this court. The preference of the master commanded the secondary preferences. Sarah had, besides, need, for her future projects, of too many "points d'appui" not to employ all her arts to make partisans. Her hypocrisy, clothed in the most attractive garb, easily deceived the most of these loyal Germans, and the general affection of all soon sealed the excessive benevolence of the grand-duke.

And now behold our couple established at the court of Gerolstein, and honourably placed, without, as yet, anything said about Rodolphe. By a lucky chance, some days after the arrival of Sarah, he had set out on a tour of inspection, accompanied by an aid-de-camp and the faithful Murphy. This absence, doubly favourable to the views of Sarah, permitted her to dispose at her ease of the principal threads of the net that she was warping without being restrained by the presence of the young prince, whose admiration, too open, might have awakened the fears of the grand-duke. On the contrary, in the absence of his son, unfortunately he never thought that he had admitted to his intimacy a young girl of rare beauty and charming mind, who naturally would associate with Rodolphe every hour in the day. Sarah remained insensible to this reception so touching so generous, to this noble confidence with which she was introduced to the bosom of this sovereign family. Neither this young girl nor her brother drew back a moment from their evil designs; they came knowingly to bring trouble and sorrow into this peaceable and happy court. They coldly calculated the probable results of the cruel divisions which they were about to sow between a father and son until then tenderly united.

CHAPTER X.

SIR WALTER MURPHY AND THE ABBE POLIDORI.

Rodolphe during his childhood had been of a very frail constitution. His father reasoned thus, strange in appearance, but in reality very sensible:

The English country gentlemen are generally remarkable for robust health. This advantage is derived from their physical education; plain, rugged, rustic, it develops their strength. Rodolphe will soon be out of the hands of his nurses; his temperament is delicate; perhaps, in accustoming this child to live like the son of an English farmer (saving some attentions), I shall strengthen his constitution. The grand-duke sent to England for a man worthy and capable to direct this kind of physical education. Sir Walter Murphy, a fine specimen of a Yorkshire country gentleman, was intrusted with this important task. The course he pointed out to the young duke answered perfectly to the views of the father. Murphy and his pupil lived for several years on a small farm, situated in the midst of woods, at some leagues distant from the city of Gerolstein, in a most salubrious and picturesque position. Rodolphe, free from all restraints of etiquette, engaged with Murphy in agricultural pursuits suitable to his age, living a quiet, sober, regular life, having for pleasure and relaxation the manly exercises of the chase, pugilism, hunting, and shooting. In the pure air of the meadows, woods, and mountains, the young prince seemed regenerated, shooting upward like a young oak: the unhealthy pallor of his cheeks gave place to the robust colours of health; although light and slender, yet he always endured the greatest fatigues. By his address, energy, and courage, he was soon able to wrestle, with success, with young men much older than himself; he was then about fifteen or sixteen years of age.

His scientific education naturally was neglected for the physical one. Rodolphe knew but little; but the grand-duke wisely thought that, to expect much from the mind, it was necessary that the mind should be sustained by a strong physical organization; then, although instruction should come late, yet the intellectual faculties would be rapidly developed.

The good Murphy was no scholar; he could only give to Rodolphe some primitive instructions; but no one better than he could inspire a pupil with the consciousness of what was base, ignoble, and contemptible.

This hatred of vice, this energetic and salutary admiration of virtue, took root forever in the bosom of Rodolphe; later, these principles were violently shaken by the storms of passion; but never were they torn from his heart. The thunderbolt strikes and shatters the tree firmly planted, but the sap lives in its roots, and a thousand green branches soon cover the unsightly and withered trunk. Murphy gave, then, to Rodolphe, if it may be said, the health of both body and mind; he made him robust, active, and hardy, sympathetical with that which was great and good, repugnant to that which was wicked and bad.

His task thus admirably fulfilled, the squire, recalled to England by important business, left Germany for some time, to the great regret of Rodolphe, who loved him tenderly.

Murphy had agreed to return and fix himself permanently at Gerolstein, with his family, as soon as he could arrange some important affairs; he hoped not to be absent more than one year. Reassured concerning the health of his son, the grand-duke thought seriously of his future education. A certain Abbé Polidori, a renowned physiologist, distinguished physician, historian, and very learned in the studies of physical and ordinary sciences, was intrusted with the cultivation of this rich, but virgin soil, so perfectly prepared by Murphy.

This time the choice of the grand-duke was unfortunate, or, rather, his religion was cruelly

deceived by the person who presented the abbé to him, and caused him to be accepted; he, a Catholic priest, as a preceptor for a Protestant prince. This innovation was very much disapproved by many, and thought to be of "funeste présage" for the education of Rodolphe. Chance, or, rather, the abominable character of the abbé, realized a part of these sad predictions.

Impious impostor, hypocrite, sacrilegious despiser of all that is held most sacred among men; full of cunning and address, concealing the most dangerous immorality, the most frightful skepticism, under a pious and austere exterior; exaggerating a false Christian humility to conceal his insinuating suppleness, even so far that he affected an expansive benevolence, an ingenuous optimism to conceal the perfidy of his interested flattery; with a profound knowledge of mankind, or, rather, being only experienced in the baser passions of mankind, the Abbé Polidori was the most detestable mentor that could have been given to a young man. Rodolphe, abandoning with extreme regret the independent, animated life which he had led until then, with Murphy, for the ceremonious usages of his father's court, and for musty books, took, at first, the abbé in great aversion. It could hardly be otherwise.

On leaving his pupil, the poor squire had compared him, and not without reason, to a wild young colt, full of grace and vigour, just taken from the prairies, where he had sported free and joyful, to be submitted to the bridle and spur, and to be taught to moderate and use his strength, which, until then, he had employed only to run and bound according to his caprice.

Rodolphe commenced by declaring to the abbé that he felt no inclination to study; that he had, before everything, need of exercising his arms and legs; to breathe the pure air of the fields; to rove over woods and mountains; besides, a good horse and gun seemed to him preferable to all the books in the world.

The priest answered his pupil, that there was in effect, nothing more tiresome than study; but that nothing was more clownish than the pleasures he preferred to study; pleasures entirely worthy of a stupid German farmer; and the abbé drew such a ridiculous picture of this simple and rustic life, that, for the first time, Rodolphe was ashamed to have found it so happy. Then he naïvely asked the priest how he should pass his time, if he loved neither the chase, study, nor the free life of the country.

The abbé answered him, mysteriously, that he would instruct him by-and-by. Under another point of view the hopes of this priest were as ambitious as those of Sarah. Although the Grand-duchy of Gerolstein was only a secondary state, the abbé imagined himself one day become a Richelieu, and Rodolphe playing the part of "Prince Fainéant."*

He began then to endeavour to render himself agreeable to his pupil, and to cause him to forget Murphy, by means of his condescension and obsequiousness. Rodolphe continuing to be refractory respecting the cause of science, the abbé concealed from the grand-duke the repugnance of Rodolphe for study; on the contrary, he boasted of his assiduity and his astonishing progress; and some few questions, prepared beforehand between him and Rodolphe, but which seemed altogether accidental, continued the grand-duke (not very learned, it must be avowed) in his blind confidence.

* Idle or lazy.

By degrees the indifference with which the priest had at first inspired Rodolphe changed, on the part of the young prince, to a cavalier familiarity, very different from the serious attachment that he had for Murphy. Soon Rodolphe found himself united to the abbé (although by very innocent causes) by the kind of ties which unite two accomplices. Sooner or later he would despise a man of the character and age of this priest, who could lie so unworthily to excuse the idleness of his pupil. The abbé knew this, but he also knew that, if one did not fly at once from the corruption of corrupt beings, that, in spite of themselves, by degrees they became accustomed to their wit, too often attracting; and that insensibly they arrived at the point of hearing, without shame and indignation, ridiculed and sneered at what before they had held in veneration and respect.

The abbé, besides, was too cunning to attack directly certain noble convictions, fruits of the education of Murphy. After having redoubled his railleries on the vulgarity of the pastimes of his early years, the priest, half laying aside his mask of austerity, had vividly excited his curiosity by a relation of the enchanting life led by princes of a time gone by; finally, ceding to the requests of Rodolphe, after a good deal of management, and many jokes on the ceremonious gravity of the court of the grand-duke, the abbé inflamed the imagination of the young prince by the exaggerated and highly-coloured recitals of the pleasures and gallantries which had illustrated the reigns of Louis XIV., the regent, and, above all, Louis XV., the hero of César Polidori.

He assured this unfortunate boy, who listened to him with fatal avidity, that even excessive voluptuousness, far from demoralizing a prince happily endowed, on the contrary, often rendered him merciful and generous; for this reason, that fine minds are never more predisposed to benevolence and affection than by happiness.

Louis XV., "le bien aimé," was an irrefragable proof of this assertion. "And besides," said the abbé, "how many men of ancient and modern times have largely sacrificed to an epicurianism the most refined, from Alcibiades to Maurice de Saxe, from Antony to the great Condé, from Cæsar to Vendôme!"

Such conversations naturally cause frightful ravages in a young, ardent, and sinless soul; besides, the abbé eloquently translated to his pupil the odes of Horace, where this rare genius extolled, with the most irresistible charm, the sweet delights of a life entirely devoted to love and sensuality. However, here and there, to conceal the danger of these theories, and to satisfy the innate purity of Rodolphe's character, the abbé glossed it over as if imaginary, a most charming Utopia.

To have believed him, an intelligent, voluptuous prince could ameliorate the condition of men by pleasure, improve their morals by happiness, and lead the most incredulous to sentiments of religion, in raising their gratitude towards the Creator, who, in the corporeal existence, should load man with enjoyments with an inexhaustible prodigality.

To enjoy all, and always, was, according to the abbé, to glorify God in the magnificence and eternity of his gifts. These theories produced their fruit.

In the midst of this religious and virtuous court, accustomed, from the example of its mas-

ter, to honest pleasures and innocent enjoyments, Rodolphe, instructed by the abbé, already dreamed of the mad revels of Versailles, the orgies of Choisy, the violent voluptuousness of the "Parc-aux-Cerfs," and also, now and then, by way of contrast, of some romantic love. The abbé had not failed to show to Rodolphe that a prince of the Germanic Confederation should have no other military pretensions than to send his contingency to the Diet. Besides, the spirit of the times was no longer for war. To let his days flow deliciously and lazily in the midst of women and the refinements of luxury; to refresh himself occasionally from these pleasures by the delightful recreations of the arts; to seek sometimes in the chase, not as a savage Nimrod, but as an intelligent epicurean, those fatigues which double the chasm of indolence and sloth—such was, according to the abbé, the only possible life for a prince who (what happiness!) could find a prime minister capable of devoting himself courageously to the irksome and heavy burden of the affairs of state.

Rodolphe, in giving way to suppositions which were not at all criminal because they were not without the reach of probabilities, proposed to himself, when God should recall to himself the grand-duke his father, to devote himself to this life, which the Abbé Polidori had painted under such glowing colours, and to take the priest for his prime minister.

We repeat, Rodolphe loved his father tenderly, and he would have profoundly regretted him, although his death would have permitted him to play Sardanapalus on a small scale. It is useless to say that the young prince kept as a profound secret the miserable hopes with which he had been inspired.

Knowing that the favourite heroes of the grand duke were Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII., and the great Frederic (Maximilian Rodolphe had the honour to be nearly connected with the royal house of Brandebourg), Rodolphe thought, and with reason, that his father, who professed such profound admiration for these king captains, always booted and spurred, riding and fighting, would regard his son as lost if he thought him capable of replacing in his court the Teutonic gravity by the gay and licentious manners of the Regency. A year—eighteen months passed in this way. Murphy had not yet returned, although he announced his speedy arrival. The first repugnance conquered by the obsequiousness of the abbé, Rodolphe profited by the scientific attainments of his preceptor, and acquired, if not a very extensive education, at least a superficial knowledge, which, joined to a naturally quick and sagacious understanding, allowed him to pass for being much better instructed than he really was, and to do the greatest honour to the cares of the abbé.

Murphy returned from England with his family, and wept for joy on embracing his old pupil. At the end of some days, without being able to find out the reason of a change which deeply grieved him, the worthy squire found Rodolphe cold and constrained towards him, and even ironical when he recalled to him their rude and hardy life. Certain of the natural goodness of heart of the young prince, advised by a secret presentiment, Murphy believed him for the moment perverted by the pernicious influence of the abbé, whom he detested from instinct, and whom he promised himself to watch closely.

On his part, the priest, very much vexed at the return of Murphy, whose frankness he dreaded as well as his good sense and penetration, had only one thought, which was to ruin him in the estimation of Rodolphe. It was at this epoch that Tom and Sarah were presented and received at the court of Gerolstein with the most extreme distinction. Sometime before their arrival, Rodolphe had set out with an aid-de-camp and Murphy to inspect the troops of some of the garrisons. This being entirely a military excursion, the grand-duke had thought it proper that the abbé should remain behind. The priest, to his great regret, saw Murphy assume, for some days, his ancient functions about the young prince. The squire counted much on this occasion to enlighten himself as to the cause of the coolness of Rodolphe. Unfortunately this latter, already proficient in the art of dissimulation, and believing it dangerous to let his ancient mentor penetrate into his projects for the future, evinced the utmost cordiality, feigned to regret sincerely the days of his early youth, and his rural pleasures, and almost completely reassured him.

We say almost, for certain minds are endowed with admirable instincts. Notwithstanding the proofs of affection which the young prince gave him, Murphy had a vague presentiment that there was a secret between them; in vain he wished to clear up his suspicions: his attempts always failed before the precocious duplicity of Rodolphe. During the voyage the abbé had not remained idle. Intriguers divine or recognise certain mysterious signs, which are carefully watched, in order to see whether it is better to join forces or declare war.

Some days after the establishment of Sarah and her brother at the court of the grand-duke Tom became very intimate with the Abbé Polidori. This priest avowed to himself, with great impudence, that he had a natural, almost involuntary affinity for rogues and scoundrels; thus he said, without positively finding out the object of Tom and Sarah, he found himself attracted towards them by a sympathy too lively, not to suppose some diabolical design. Some questions of Tom Seyton on the character and former occupations of Rodolphe, questions of no importance to a less suspicious person than the abbé enlightened him at once as to the views of the brother and sister; only he did not give the young girl credit for views so honest and ambitious. The arrival of this charming girl appeared to the abbé as a lucky hit. Rodolphe had the imagination inflamed with idle fables of love. Sarah should be the ravishing reality which should replace such charming dreams; he thought the abbé, before arriving at the choice of pleasure or variety in voluptuousness, one begins almost always by a unique and romantic attachment. Louis XIV. and Louis XV. were only faithful to Marie Mancini and to Rose d'Arcy.

According to the abbé, it would be thus with Rodolphe and the Scotch girl. This latter would without doubt have an immense influence over a heart submissive to the enchanting charm of first love. To direct, prepare this influence, to make use of it to ruin Murphy forever—such was the plan of the abbé.

Like a cunning man, he made the two ambitious pretenders understand that they must treat with him, being alone responsible to the grand-duke for the private life of the young prince.

This was not all; they must mistrust an ancient preceptor who had accompanied him, then on a military inspection: this man, rude, rough, hedged in with absurd prejudices, had had formerly great authority over Rodolphe, and could become a dangerous overseer; and far from excusing or tolerating the charming follies of youth, he would feel himself obliged to denounce them to the severe morality of the grand-duke. Tom and Sarah comprehended in half a word, although they had not informed the abbé of their secret designs. At the return of Rodolphe and the squire, all three, united by their common interests, were tacitly leagued against Murphy, their most redoubtable enemy.

CHAPTER XI.

A FIRST LOVE.

That which was expected to happen happened.

On his return, Rodolphe, seeing Sarah every day, became madly in love. Soon she avowed to him that she returned his love, although she forewarned him that it would cause a great deal of trouble. They never could be happy! A too great distance separated them! Thus she recommended to Rodolphe the most profound discretion, for fear of awakening the suspicions of the grand-duke, who would be inexorable, and deprive them of their only happiness, that of seeing each other every day. Rodolphe promised obedience, and that he would conceal his love. The Scotch girl was too ambitious, too much on her guard, to compromise and betray herself in the eyes of the court. The young prince felt, also, the necessity of dissimulation. He imitated the prudence of Sarah. Their secret was perfectly well kept for some time. When the brother and sister saw the phrensied passion of Rodolphe at its height, and the increasing admiration, more difficult to conceal from day to day, on the point of breaking forth, and thus losing all, they brought forth their great "coup de main."

The character of the abbé authorizing this confidence, of the most perfect morality, Tom made to him the first overtures on the necessity of a marriage between Rodolphe and Sarah; otherwise, added he very sincerely, he and his sister would immediately quit Gerolstein. Sarah spoke of the love of the prince, but she preferred death to dishonour, and never could be anything else than the wife of His Highness. These pretensions stupified the priest; he never had thought Sarah so audaciously ambitious. Such a marriage, surrounded by numberless difficulties, by dangers of all sorts, appeared impossible to the abbé; he told Tom frankly the reasons why the grand-duke would never consent to such a union. Tom listened to these reasons, and acknowledged their importance; but he proposed as a "mezz termine," which would conciliate all, a secret marriage, till in rule, and only to be declared after the death of the reigning grand-duke. Sarah was of a noble, an ancient house; such a union did not want for precedents; Tom gave the abbé, and, consequently, the prince, eight days to decide. His sister could support no longer the cruel anguish of uncertainty; if she must renounce the love of Rodolphe, she should take this sorrowful resolution as promptly as possible. As a motive for their hasty departure, which must then follow, Tom had addressed, he said, a letter to a friend in England, which was to be put in the office at London, and sent back to Germany; this letter would contain reasons for a return sufficiently strong, that Tom and Sarah would find themselves obliged to leave for some time the court of the grand-duke.

This time, at least, the abbé, guided by his evil opinion of human nature, guessed the truth. Seeking always for something hidden, even in the most honest sentiments, when he knew that Sarah wished to make her love legal by a marriage, he saw in it a proof, not of virtue, but of ambition. Certain of not being deceived concerning the views of Sarah, the abbé remained much perplexed. After all, the wish that Tom had expressed in the name of his sister was very honourable. What did he ask? either a separation, or a lawful union.

Notwithstanding his cynicism, the priest had not dared to show openly to Tom his surprise at the honourable motives which seemed to dictate his conduct, and to say rudely to him, that he and his sister had skilfully manœuvred to lead the prince to an unequal marriage. The abbé had one of three parts to take: To inform the grand-duke of the matrimonial scheme; open the eyes of Rodolphe on the manœuvres of Tom and Sarah; or to assist the marriage. But, to inform the grand-duke, was to alienate himself forever from the presumptive heir of the crown. To enlighten Rodolphe on the interested views of Sarah, was to expose himself to be received, as one always is by a lover, when one comes to depreciate the object loved; and, besides, what a terrible blow for the vanity or for the heart of the young duke, to reveal to him that it was his sovereign rank alone they wished to espouse; and, besides, what an anomaly! he, a priest, to condemn the conduct of a young girl, because she would only receive him as husband!

By aiding this marriage, on the contrary, the abbé attached the prince and his wife by the ties of profound gratitude, or, at least, by the binding of a dangerous act. Doubtless all might be discovered, and he would then be exposed to the anger of the grand-duke; but the marriage would be concluded, the union valid, the storm would blow over, and the future sovereign of Gerolstein would be so much the more friendly towards the abbé for his having encountered so many dangers in his service. After serious reflections the abbé decided to serve Sarah, not without a certain restriction, of which we shall speak hereafter.

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When the abbé proposed to Rodolphe that he should never more see the enchanting girl, unless he would consent to a secret marriage, he sprang upon the neck of the priest, and called him his saviour, his friend, his father. Had the church and minister been there, the young prince would have married her at once. The abbé, for his own reasons, took charge of everything. He found a clergyman, witnesses, and the union (of which all the formalities were verified by Tom) was secretly celebrated, during a short

absence of the grand-duke, called to a conference of the Germanic Diet.

The predictions of the Scotch nurse were verified; Sarah married the heir to a crown. Without being less in love, Rodolphe became more circumspect, and, protected by Tom and the abbé, they conducted with so much caution that they escaped all suspicion.

During the first three months of his marriage Rodolphe was the happiest of men; when reflection succeeded his transports, he coolly contemplated his situation, and did not regret being united to Sarah by indissoluble ties; he gave up, without regret, his future projects of a voluptuous life, of which he had so ardently dreamed, and he made, with Sarah, the finest projects in the world on their future reign.

In these remote hypothesis, the part of prime minister, which the abbé had destined for himself in "petto," diminished much in importance. Sarah reserved for herself these governmental functions; too imperious not to be ambitious of power and domination, she hoped to reign in the place of Rodolphe. An event impatiently expected by Sarah, soon changed this calm into a tempest. She was about to become a mother.

There was manifested by this woman exigences at once new and frightful for Rodolphe; she declared to him, bursting into hypocritical tears, that she could no longer support the constraint with which she lived, a constraint that her situation rendered still more painful. In this extremity, she proposed resolutely to Rodolphe to confess all to the grand-duke; he was, as also the dowager duchess, more and more attached to Sarah. "Without doubt," added she, "he will be very indignant, will storm at first; but he loves his son so blindly, so tenderly, he has so much affection for him, that the paternal wrath will soon be appeased, and she would take at the court of Gerolstein the rank which belonged to her, doubly belonged to her, as she was about to give an heir to the heir-presumptive of the grand-duke." This pretension frightened Rodolphe; he knew the profound attachment of his father for him; but he also knew the inflexible principles of the grand-duke as to the duty of princes. To all his objections Sarah answered unmercifully: "I am your wife before God and before man. In a short time I cannot conceal my situation; I wish no longer to blush for a position of which I am, on the contrary, so proud." Tom took the part of his sister. "The marriage is indissoluble," said he to his most serene brother-in-law. "The grand-duke may exile you and your wife from court; nothing more; now he loves you too much to resort to such a measure; he will rather tolerate what he cannot prevent." These arguments, certainly very reasonable, did not calm the anxieties of Rodolphe. In the interim Tom was charged by the grand-duke to visit some states in Austria. This mission, which he could not refuse, would not detain him over fifteen days at the farthest; he set out, to his great regret, at a very decisive moment for his sister. She was at once pleased and displeased at his departure; she lost the aid of his counsels, but also, in case all should be discovered, he would be shielded from the rage of the grand-duke. Sarah was to keep Tom well informed day by day of the different aspects of an affair so important for them both, and, to correspond the more securely and secretly, they agreed upon a cipher. This precaution alone proves that Sarah had to keep her brother advised of other things besides her love for Rodolphe. In effect, this egotistical, ambitious woman, had not felt her icy coldness of heart melt before the passionate love she had created. Maternity was only a motive for more action on Rodolphe, and nowise softened this soul of iron. The youth, the fond love, the inexperience of this prince, almost a child, so perfidiously drawn into an inextricable position, inspired her with no interest; in her intimate conversations with Tom she complained with disdain and bitterness of the weakness of this young man, who trembled before the most paternal of German princes, *who lived a long time!* In a word, this correspondence between the brother and sister unfolded clearly their interested selfishness, their ambitious calculations, their impatience—almost murderous; and completely laid bare the secret of this dark plot, crowned by the marriage of Rodolphe.

A few days after the departure of Tom, Sarah was present at the circle of the grand-duchess dowager. Many of the ladies looked at her with astonishment, and whispered to their neighbours. The grand-duchess Judith, notwithstanding her ninety years, had her hearing perfect and her sight good; this movement did not escape her. She called one of the ladies in waiting to her, and learned that Mlle. Sarah Seyton, of Halsburg, was thought to be rather less delicate and sylph-like than usual. The old princess adored her young protégée; she would have answered to heaven for her virtue. Indignant at the illiberality of these observations, she shrugged her shoulders, and said aloud from the end of the saloon, where she was seated, "My dear Sarah, listen!" Sarah arose. It was necessary for her to pass through the circle of ladies to reach the princess, who wished, with an all-benevolent intention, to confound the calumniators, and to prove to them that the figure of her favourite had lost none of its grace and "souplesse." Alas! the most perfidious enemy could not have contrived a worse plan than the duchess contrived in her desire to defend her protégée. She came to her. It needed the profound respect due to the grand-duchess to repress the murmur of surprise and indignation that arose when the young girl crossed the circle.

Those the least suspicious perceived that which Sarah desired no longer to conceal; the ambitious woman had managed this scene, in order to force Rodolphe to declare his marriage.

The grand-duchess, not willing to believe the evidence of her own senses, whispered to Sarah, "My dear child, you are frightfully dressed to-day. You had a figure that I can clasp in my hands; you are no longer recognisable."

* * * *

We will relate at another time the consequences of this discovery, which lead to such terrible and great events. But we will now say, what the reader has doubtless suspected—that La Goualeuse, that Fleur de Marie was the fruit of this unhappy marriage, was the daughter of Rodolphe and Sarah—and that both of them thought her dead.

* * * *

We must not forget that Rodolphe, after having visited the house in the Rue de Temple, had returned home, and that he intended, the same evening, to attend a ball given by Madame the ambassadress of * * *.

It is to this fête we will follow his highness the reigning Grand-duke of Gerolstein, Gustavus Rodolphe, travelling in France under the title of the Count de Duren.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BALL.

At eleven o'clock in the evening, a Swiss, in grand livery, opened the door of a hotel in the Rue du Plumet, to let pass a magnificent berlin, drawn by two superb horses with long manes, and of the largest size. On the seat, covered with a hammer cloth edged with silken fringe, was seated a fat coachman, rendered still larger by a blue furred coat with a collar of marten skin, all the seams laced with silver, and decorated with frogs of the same material. Behind the carriage a gigantic and powdered footman, dressed in a blue and silver livery, accompanied a "chasseur" with formidable mustaches, laced like a drum-major, and whose chapeau, extensively embroidered, was half concealed by a plume of yellow and blue feathers. The lamps shed a vivid light in the interior of this vehicle, lined with satin, where could have been seen Rodolphe, seated on the right, having on the left the Baron de Graün; and opposite, the faithful Murphy. Out of deference to the sovereign, who was represented by the ambassador where he was going, Rodolphe wore on his coat only the diamond crown of the order of * * *. The orange riband, and the enamelled cross of "Grand Commander of the Golden Eagle of Gerolstein" hung from the neck of Sir Walter Murphy. The Baron de Graün was decorated in the same manner. We shall only just mention an innumerable quantity of crosses of all orders, which, suspended from a golden chain, were placed between the two first buttonholes of his coat.

"I am really quite happy," said Rodolphe, "for the good news that Madame Georges gives me concerning my poor little protégée of the Boqueval farm; the treatment of David has done wonders. Except for the sadness which overwhelms this unfortunate child, she is much better; and speaking of the Goualeuse, acknowledge, Sir Walter Murphy," added Rodolphe smiling, "that if one of your acquaintances of the cité should see you thus *disguised*, valiant coalman, she would be much astonished." "But I think, monseigneur, that your highness would cause the same surprise, if you would go to-night to the Rue du Temple and make a friendly visit to Madame Pipelet, for the purpose of diverting a little the melancholy of this poor Alfred, who only asks to love you, as this estimable 'portière' said to your highness."

"Monseigneur has so perfectly described Alfred, with his majestic green coat, his doctoral air, and his immovable 'chapeau tromblon,'" said the baron, "that I think I see him on his throne in the obscure and smoky lodge. Besides, your highness is, I dare hope, satisfied with the information of my secret agent? His house in the Rue du Temple has completely answered the expectations of monseigneur?" "Yes," said Rodolphe, "I have even found more than I expected." Then, after a moment's silence, and to drive away the painful thoughts which were caused by his fears for Madame d'Harville, he continued, in a more cheerful tone, "I dare not avow this childishness, but I find enjoyment in these contrasts; one day a fan-painter, sitting down in a dirty room in the Rue aux Fèves; this morning as a clerk, offering a glass of cassis to Madame Pipelet; and to-night, one of the privileged, by the grace of God, who reign in this lower world. (The man with forty crowns says, 'my income,' just the same as a millionaire)," added Rodolphe, by way of parenthesis, and in allusion to the smallness of his state.

"But many millionaires, monseigneur, have not the rare, the admirable good sense of the man of forty crowns," said the baron. "Ah! my dear de Graün, you are too good, a thousand times too good, you overcome me," answered Rodolphe, feigning an embarrassed and delighted manner, while the baron looked at Murphy like a man who perceived too late that he had said a foolish thing.

"Truly," continued Rodolphe, with imperturble gravity, "I do not know, my dear De Graün, how to exhibit my gratitude for the good opinion you have of me, and, above all, how to make you any return."

"Monseigneur, I beg you will not take the trouble," said the baron, who had for a moment forgot that Rodolphe always revenged himself for flattery, which he held in contempt, by the most relentless raillery.

"How then? Baron, but I cannot remain in your debt; this, unfortunately, is all I can say to you for the moment; on honour, you look as if you were not more than twenty years; Antinous had never features more enchanting than yours." "Ah! monseigneur, pardon!" "Do look, Murphy! the Apollo Belvidere, has he a form more graceful, more airy, more elegant, more juvenile?" "Monseigneur, it is so long since such a thing has happened before to me." "And this purple mantle, how well it becomes him!" "Monseigneur, I will never offend again." "And this circle of gold, which retains, without concealing it, the curl of his beautiful black hair, which floats on his divine neck." "Ah! Monseigneur, pardon, pardon; I repent," said the unhappy diplomatist, with an expression of comic despair. (The reader must not forget that he was fifty years of age, with gray hair, curled and powdered, a stiff white cravat, thin face, and gold spectacles.) "'Vrai Dieu!' Murphy, he only wants a quiver of silver on his shoulders, and a bow in his hands, to resemble the vanquisher of the Pythian serpent!"

"Pardon him, my lord; do not crush him under the weight of this mythology," said the squire, laughing; "I will be security to your highness, that for a long time he will not venture to say a flattery, since in the new vocabulary of Gerolstein the word truth is thus translated." "How! you also, old Murphy? at this moment you dare—" "My lord, this poor De Graün affects me. I desire to partake his pun-

ishment." "Monsieur, my coalman in ordinary here is a proof of friendship that I honour; but, seriously, my dear De Graün, how could you forget that I never permit flattery except from a Harmeins and his fellows, for, to be just, he does not know how to say anything else; it is the warbling of such birds; but for a man of your taste and mind, fy! baron."

"Well, monseigneur," said the baron, resolutely, "your highness will pardon me; but there is much pride in your aversion to flattery."

"Very well, baron; I like that better; explain yourself." "Well, monseigneur, it is absolutely as if a very handsome woman said to one of her admirers, 'Mon Dieu! I know that I am charming; your approbation is altogether superfluous.' Why affirm what is evident? Do people cry in the streets, 'The sun gives light?'" "This is more adroit, baron, and more dangerous; thus, to vary your punishment, I will avow to you, that this infernal Abbé Polidori, could not have better contrived to conceal the poison of flattery." "Monseigneur, I am silent." "Then your Highness," said Murphy, seriously this time, "does not doubt that this is the abbé disguised as a quack?" "I doubt it no longer, since you have been advised that he has been in Paris for some time." "I had forgotten, or, rather, omitted to speak of him, my lord," said Murphy, sadly, "because I know how odious the recollection of this priest is to your highness."

A shade of gloom overspread the features of Rodolphe; and, buried in sad reflections, he remained silent until the moment that the carriage entered into the courtyard of the embassy. Lights gleamed from every window of this immense hotel; a row of servants, in grand livery, extended from the doorway and antechambers to the waiting-room, where were placed the valets de chambre. All was arranged in a splendid and royal manner. The count and countess had remained in their first reception room until the arrival of Rodolphe. He soon entered, followed by Murphy and M. de Graün. Rodolphe was then about thirty-six years of age; but, although he approached the decline of life, the perfect regularity of his features, as we have said, "almost too handsome for a man," and his air of affable dignity, would always have rendered him extremely remarkable, even if these advantages had not been enhanced by the august eclat of his rank. When he appeared in the first saloon of the embassy, he seemed transformed; it was no longer the blustering look, the quick and bold bearing of the fan-painter, the conqueror of the Chourineur; it was no longer the merry clerk who sympathized so gayly with the misfortunes of Madame Pipelet. It was a prince, in the poetic ideality of the word.

Rodolphe carried his head erect and proudly, his chestnut hair curling naturally around his broad and noble forehead; his expression sweet, and yet dignified; if he spoke to any one, with the kindness so natural to him, his smiles, full of charms, displayed his beautiful teeth, which the dark colour of his slight moustache, rendered still more dazzling; his brown whiskers surrounded his face, of a perfect oval, uniting under his dimpled chin, which was slightly prominent.

Rodolphe was dressed very plainly. His cravat and waistcoat were white. A blue coat, quite closely buttoned, with the diamond order on the left breast, displayed his figure—quite as good as it was easy and elegant; in fine, something manly and resolute in his attitude corrected that which was perhaps too agreeable in the "gracieux ensemble."

Rodolphe went so little into society, and he had such a princely air, that his arrival produced a certain sensation; every look was turned towards him when he appeared in the first saloon of the embassy, accompanied by Murphy and the Baron de Graün, who followed some steps behind him.

An attaché, charged to watch his arrival, went immediately to inform the Countess *** who, with her husband, advanced to meet Rodolphe, saying, "I do not know how to express to your highness all my gratitude for the honour which your highness deigns to favour me with this evening."

"You know, 'Madame l'Ambassadrice,' that I am always very desirous to pay my respects to you, and very happy to say to Monsieur l'Ambassador how much I esteem him; for we are old acquaintances, Monsieur le Comte!"

"Your highness is too kind in recollecting it; it gives me a new motive never to forget your goodness."

"I assure you, 'Monsieur le Comte,' that it is not my fault if certain recollections are always before me; I have the happiness of only remembering what is agreeable to me."

"Then your highness is most marvellously endowed," said the Countess, smiling.

"Am I not, Madame? Thus, some years hence, I will have, I hope, the pleasure to recall to you this day, all the taste and extreme elegance which preside over this fête. For, frankly, I can whisper in your ear, that you alone understand how to give balls." "Monseigneur!!!" "And this is not all: tell me, 'Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,' why it is that the women always appear so much handsomer here than anywhere else?" "It is because your highness extends towards them the same good-will with which we are honoured."

"Permit me to differ with you, Monsieur le Comte; I believe that it is wholly referable to 'Madame l'Ambassadrice!'"

"Will your highness have the goodness to explain this to me?" said the countess, smiling.

"It is very plain, madame; you know how to receive all these fine ladies with urbanity so refined, with a grace so perfect; you say to each a word so charming and so flattering, even to those who do not altogether merit this amiable complaisance," said Rodolphe, with a slight smile of malice, "and they are so much the more delighted for being distinguished by you, because those who do merit it are so much the less delighted at your appreciation. This grateful satisfaction reflects from every countenance; happiness renders things the least agreeable attractive; and this is the reason, Madame la Comtesse, that women appear so much prettier in your saloons than elsewhere. I am sure that Monsieur l'Ambassadeur thinks as I do." "Your Highness gives me too many good reasons to think as he does, that I should not acknowledge it."

"And I, monseigneur," said the countess, "at the risk of becoming as pretty as these fine ladies who do not altogether merit the compliments one pays them, I accept the flattering explanation of your highness with as much gratitude and pleasure as if it were real."

"To convince you, madame, that nothing is more true, let us make some observations on the effects of flattery on the countenance." "Ah! monseigneur, it would be a horrible snare," said the countess, laughing.

"Come, Madame l'Ambassadrice, I renounce my project but on one condition: it is that you will permit me to offer you my arm. I have heard of a flower-garden, truly fairylike, in the month of January; will you be kind enough to conduct me to this wonder of the Arabian Nights?" "With the greatest pleasure, monseigneur; but you have heard an exaggerated account. Your highness, however, can judge for himself, at least, if his habitual indulgence does not abuse." Rodolphe offered his arm to the ambassadress, and entered with her into the other saloons, while the Count * * * conversed with the Baron de Graün and Murphy, whom he had known for a long time.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WINTER GARDEN.

And nothing, truly, could be more fairylike, more worthy of the Arabian Nights, than the garden of which Rodolphe had spoken to the Countess * * *.

Let the reader imagine, at the end of a long and splendid gallery, a space of about two hundred and forty feet in length by about one hundred and eighty in breadth, an arched glass roof of extreme lightness, covering, at the height of fifty feet, this parallelogram; its walls lined with looking-glass, and covered with a fine trellis of dark green, resembling a bower, from the reflection of the numerous lights on the glasses; a row of orange-trees as large as those of the Tuileries, and camelias of the same size; the first laden with fruit, glistening like so many golden apples among a foliage of shining green; the second, enamelled with purple, white, and rose-coloured flowers, were placed against the walls in their entire length. This was the enclosure of this garden. Five or six enormous, bushy trees and shrubs of India or the tropics, planted in vast cases filled with moss, and surrounded by walks of shell-mosaic, sufficiently wide for two or three persons to pass.

It is impossible to describe the effect that was produced in the dead of winter, in the midst of a ball, by this display of rich and splendid vegetation.

These immense bananas reached almost to the vaulted roof, and mingled their large palms of lustrous green with the lance-shaped leaves of the magnolia, some of which were already covered with their large flowers, as odoriferous as they were magnificent; from their bell-shaped calices, purple without and silvered within, shot forth their golden stamina; farther on, palm-trees, dates from the Levant, red latimers, figs from the Indies, all hardy, flourishing, and covered with leaves, completed these immense masses of verdure; a verdure exceedingly lustrous and brilliant, like all the vegetation of the tropics, which seems to borrow its colours from the emerald, so much are the leaves of these trees, thick, pulpy, and polished, covered with shining and silvery tints. On the whole of the trellis, among the orange-trees, jumping from one branch to another, here arranged in garlands, there twisted into a spiral form, still farther tangled in inextricable network, ran, entwined, clambered, even to the very top of the vaulted arch, an innumerable quantity of climbing plants, the winged passion flower, and the "passiflores," with their large purple flowers, striped with blue and crowned with a crest of black violet, fell from the top of the archlike colossal garlands, and seemed to wish to remount by clasping their delicate tendrils around the gigantic branches of the aloe.

In another place a bignonia of India, with long calices of sulphur, and light foliage, is surrounded by a "stéphanotis" with its richly-perfumed white flowers; these two convolvuluses, thus entwined, festoon with their green fringe and golden bells the immense velvet leaves of the Indian fig-tree.

In the distance rise and fall, in a sort of flowery cascade, an innumerable quantity of the plant swallow-wort, of which the leaves and umbels of fifteen or twenty starred flowers are so thick, so polished, that they look like bunches of enamelled roses, surrounded by small leaves of green porcelain.

The borders are composed of Cape heath, Mozelle tulips, narcissuses from Constantinople, Persian hyacinths, iris, cyclamen, which form a sort of natural carpet, where all the colours, all the shades, mix in a most splendid manner.

Chinese lanterns of transparent silk, some blue, others of a pale rose colour, here and there half concealed by the foliage, illuminate this garden. It is almost impossible to imagine the soft and mysterious light which proceeded from the mixture of these two shades, a charming, fantastic light, which resembled the clear, ethereal blue of a summer's night, slightly tinged by the rosy reflections of the aurora-borealis.

This immense conservatory was reached by descending two or three steps from a long gallery, dazzling with gold mirrors, crystals, and lights. This blazing light seemingly framed the penumbra, where were vaguely to be perceived the large trees of the winter garden, which could be seen through the large bay window, half closed by two large doors of crimson velvet. It might have been taken for a gigantic window opening on some fine landscape of Asia during the serenity of twilight. Seen from the bottom of the garden, where were placed immense divans under a dome of foliage and flowers, the gallery presented a striking contrast to the soft obscurity of the conservatory. It was in the distance a kind of luminous golden mist, in which sparkled, like a living embroidery, the dazzling and variegated colours of the ladies' dresses, and the prismatic scintillations of jewels and diamonds.

The sounds from the orchestra, weakened by the distance and by the heavy joyous buzzing of the gallery, died away melodiously in the immovable foliage of the large exotic trees. One involuntarily spoke in a low tone in this garden;

the light noise of a footstep was scarcely heard, hardly the rustling of the satin robes; this air, at once light, warm, and embalmed with the thousand sweet odours of the aromatic plants, this dream-like, distant music, cast over the senses an ineffable state of quietude and repose.

Certainly, two lovers just caught and happy, seated on the silk in some corner of this Eden, intoxicated with love, harmony, and the rich perfume, could not find a more enchanting spot for still opening love; though, alas! one or two months of such peaceful happiness is sufficient to change two lovers so awkward into frigid man and wife.

On reaching this charming winter garden, Rodolphe could not refrain from an exclamation of surprise, and said to the ambassadress, "Truly, madame, I could not have believed such a wonder possible. It is not only great luxury joined to good taste, but it is poetry in action. Instead of describing like a poet, of painting like a painter, you create what one could hardly dream."

"Your highness is a thousand times too good."

"Frankly, you must acknowledge that he who would know how to describe faithfully this enchanting picture, with its charms of colour and contrast — there the splendid tumult, here this delicious retreat, admit madame, that, be he painter or poet, he would make an admirable work, and that only in producing yours."

"The praises with which the indulgence of your highness inspires you, are so much the more dangerous, as one cannot prevent one's self from being charmed by them, and listening to them with extreme pleasure 'malgré soi.' But look, monseigneur, what a charming young woman! Your highness will allow, at least, that the Marchioness d'Harville must be handsome *everywhere*. Is she not ravishing with grace? Does she not gain much from contrast with the severe beauty who accompanies her?"

The Countess Sarah M'Gregor and the Marchioness d'Harville descended at this moment the steps which led from the gallery to the garden.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

The praises of the ambassadress respecting the Marchioness d'Harville were not exaggerated. Nothing can give an idea of that enchanting face, blooming then in all the freshness of delicate beauty, a beauty so much the more uncommon, as it existed less in the regularity of features than in the inexpressible charm of the aspect of the marchioness, whose lovely countenance concealed itself, as it were, under a touching expression of *goodness*. We insist on this last word, because ordinarily it is not *goodness* that predominates in the looks of a young woman of twenty, handsome, witty, sought after, flattered, as was Madame d'Harville. Hence, one felt one's self singularly interested from the contact of this ineffable sweetness, and with the success which she enjoyed, without adverting to the advantages of name, birth, and fortune, which she united. We will try to make ourselves understood.

Too worthy, too eminently endowed to seek homage, Madame d'Harville showed herself equally as grateful to those who rendered it to her, as if she had not deserved it; she did not pride herself on it, but it made her happy; indifferent to praise, but very sensible to benevolence, she perfectly distinguished flattery from sympathy.

Her keen, just wit, sometimes wicked without wickedness, pursued in a subtile and inoffensive raillery those persons who, delighted with themselves and always occupied in attracting attention, intruded their faces, radiant with selfish joy, or puffed out with stupid pride; "Persons," said Madame d'Harville, pleasantly, "who all their life seem to be dancing, 'one gentleman forward twice' opposite an invisible mirror, on which they smile complacently." A character at once timid and almost proud in its reserve, on the contrary, inspired Madame d'Harville with a certain interest.

These few words will assist the reader to understand the beauty of Madame d'Harville, if we may so express it. Her complexion, of dazzling fairness, was shaded by the long curls of her brown hair, which fell on a neck of marble. It were difficult to describe the angelic beauty of her large gray eye, fringed with long black lashes. Her rosy mouth, of transcendent sweetness, was to these charming eyes that which her affable and touching conversation was to their sad and mild expression. We will not speak of her fine figure, nor of the exquisite distinction of her whole person. She wore a robe of white crape, trimmed with natural camelias, and leaves from the same plant, among which diamonds, half concealed, here and there shone, like so many drops of sparkling dew. A similar garland was placed gracefully on her pure and white forehead. The style of beauty of the Countess Sarah M'Gregor heightened that of the Marchioness d'Harville. About thirty-six years of age, Sarah appeared hardly thirty. Nothing seems more healthful to the body than cold egotism; one is preserved fresh for a long time in this kind of ice.

Certain hard, withered hearts, impregnable to those emotions, which wear them out, are never concerned except for the misfortunes of pride or the mistakes of a deceased ambition; there sorrow has but a feeble reaction on the physical man. The conservation of Sarah proves what we have advanced. Except a slight embonpoint, which gave to her figure, much taller, but less slight than that of Madame d'Harville, a voluptuous grace, Sarah shone with an éclat quite juvenile; very few could sustain the deceitful fire of her black and piercing eye; her humid and red lips, half lying, expressed resolution and sensuality. The blue veins of her temples and neck appeared through the milky whiteness of a fine and transparent skin

The Countess M'Gregor wore a robe of "moire paille," under a tunic of straw-coloured crape; a simple crown of the natural leaves of a "pyrrus" of emerald green surrounded her brow and harmonized wonderfully with her bands of black hair, which was divided on her forehead: this severe "coiffure" gave an antique cast to the imperious profile of this woman.

Many persons, dupes of their own looks, appear to see an irresistible vocation in the character of their faces. The one finds he has an excessively warlike look; he fights. Another looks like a poet; he rhymes; conspirator, he conspires; politician, he becomes a politician; preacher, he preaches. Sarah thought, and not without reason, that she had a perfectly royal air; she must adhere to the predictions of the old Highlander, which were only half realized, and persist in the belief of a sovereign destiny.

The marchioness and Sarah had perceived Rodolphe in the garden, at the moment they entered; but the prince appeared not to see them, for he turned into another walk as they approached.

"The prince is so much occupied with the ambassadress," said Madame d'Harville to Sarah, "that he does not see us."

"Do not believe that, my dear Clémence," answered the countess, who was very intimate with Madame d'Harville; "the prince, on the contrary, has seen us distinctly; but I made him afraid. His pouting still continues."

"Less than ever can I comprehend his desire to avoid you: often I have reproached him with the strangeness of his conduct towards you, an old friend. 'The Countess Sarah and I are mortal enemies,' he answered, laughing. 'I have made a vow never to speak to her, and it must needs be a very sacred vow that makes me deprive myself of the mediation of so amiable a person.' Thus, my dear Sarah, as singular as this answer appeared to me, I was obliged to be contented with it."* "I assure you that the cause of this mortal quarrel, half comic, half serious, is, nevertheless, most innocent. If a third person was not interested, I should confide to you this great secret. But what is the matter, my dear child? you appear abstracted!"

"It is nothing; it was so warm just now in the gallery, that I felt slightly indisposed; let us sit down a moment here: it will pass over, I hope."

"You are right; ah, here is an obscure corner; you will be there perfectly secure from the researches of those whom your absence will drive to despair," added Sarah, smiling, and laying an emphasis on these words. They both seated themselves on a divan. "I said those whom your absence will drive to despair, my dear Clémence. Don't you thank me for my discretion?" The young woman slightly blushed, held down her head, but made no answer.

"How unreasonable you are!" said Sarah, in a tone of friendly reproach. "Have you no confidence in me, child? without doubt, child, I am of an age to call you daughter."

"I want confidence in you!" said the marchioness to Sarah, sadly; "have I not rather said to you what I never dared to say to myself?"

"Wonderful; well! let us see—speak of him: you have, then, sworn to drive him to desperation—to death?"

"Ah!" cried Madame d'Harville, with affright, "what do you say?"

"You don't know him yet, poor child. He is a man of great energy, to whom life is of little value; he has always been so unfortunate. And they say you take pleasure in tormenting him!"

"Do you think so? mon Dieu!"

"You do not intend it, perhaps, but so it is. Oh, if you knew how sadly sensitive and susceptible those are whom great misfortunes overwhelm! Really, just now, I saw two large tears roll in his eyes."

"Can it be true?"

"Certainly, and that in the midst of a ball, and at the risk of ridicule, if this sorrow had been perceived. Do you know that one must love deeply to suffer thus, and, above all, not to think of concealing from the world that one suffers thus?"

"In mercy, do not speak to me of this," answered Madame d'Harville, in a trembling voice; "you give me pain. I too well know this expression of suffering, at once so tender and resigned. Alas! it is the pity with which he has inspired me which has ruined me," said Madame d'Harville, involuntarily. Sarah appeared not to have understood the meaning of this last word, and answered,

"What exaggeration! ruined, because you have coquetted with a man, who pushes discretion and reserve so far as not to be presented to your husband, for fear of compromising you! M. Charles Robert, is he not a man of soul, honour, and delicacy? If I defend him with warmth, it is because you have become acquainted with him at my house, and that he has as much respect for you as attachment."

"I have never doubted his noble qualities, you have always spoken so well of him. But you know that it is his misfortunes that have rendered him interesting in my eyes."

"And how much does he merit and justify this interest? avow it. And, besides, such an admirable face, must it not be the mirror of the soul? With his tall and fine figure, he recalls to my mind the time of the 'preux chevaliers.' I saw him once in uniform; no one could make a finer appearance. Certainly, if nobility was to be obtained by merit and figure, M. Charles Robert would be duke and peer. Would he not marvellously represent one of the great names of France?"

"You are not ignorant that nobility of birth finds but little favour in my eyes; you, who re-

* The love of Rodolphe for Sarah, and the events which succeeded, having taken place eighteen years previous, were unknown in the fashionable world, both parties having their own reasons for concealing it.

proach me too often with being a little republican," said Madame d'Harville, smiling.

"Assuredly, I have always thought, like you, that M. Charles Robert had no need of titles to make himself agreeable; and, besides, what talent! what a charming voice! What a treasure he has been to us in our morning concerts! Do you remember the first time you sang together, what expression in the duet he sang with you! what emotion!"

"Stop, I beg you," said Madame d'Harville, after a long silence; "let us change the conversation."

"Why?"

"All this makes me very sad—what you told me just now of his desperate manner." "I assure you that, in the excess of sorrow, such a character might seek relief in death." "Oh! I beg you, stop! stop!" said Madame d'Harville, interrupting Sarah; "this thought has already struck me. Once more let us speak of something else—of your mortal enemy," added she, with an affected gayety; "let us talk of the prince, whom I have not seen for a long time. Do you know he is charming, although almost a king? All republican as I am, I find but few men as agreeable as he is."

Sarah cast by stealth a scrutinizing and suspicious glance at Madame d'Harville, and answered gayly, "You must acknowledge, my dear Clémence, that you are very capricious. I have known in you feelings of admiration and aversion towards the prince, that are very singular. Some months since, when he first arrived here, you were so much taken, that, between us, I feared a moment for your heart." "Thanks to you, at least," said Madame d'Harville, smiling, "my admiration was not of very long duration; you played so well the part of mortal enemy, you told me so many things about the prince, that I acknowledge indifference took the place of the admiration which made you fear for my heart; a fear that your enemy took no trouble to keep alive: for a short period after your revelations, the prince, while he continued to see my husband intimately, almost ceased to honour me with his visits."

"Apropos! and your husband; is he here to-night?" said Sarah. "No! he did not wish to come out," answered Madame d'Harville, with embarrassment.

"It seems to me that he goes less and less into society?"

"Yes: sometimes he prefers to remain at home." The marchioness was visibly embarrassed; Sarah perceived it, and continued,

"The last time I saw him, he seemed paler than ordinary."

"Yes: he had been rather unwell." "My dear Clémence, do you wish me to be frank with you?"

"I beg you."

"Whenever your husband is spoken of, you appear to be singularly agitated."

"I! what folly!"

"Sometimes, in speaking of him, your countenance expresses—mon Dieu! how shall I tell you this!" and Sarah, laying great stress on the following words, and looking as if she would read the very heart of Clémence, continued, "Yes, your face expresses a kind of fearful repugnance."

The impassable features of Madame d'Harville at first defied the inquisitive glance of Sarah. However, this last perceived a slight nervous trepidation, almost invisible, which agitated a moment the lower lip of the marchioness. Not wishing to push these investigations farther, and awaken the suspicions of her friend, the countess hastened to add, "Yes, a fearful repugnance: such as a jealous, peevish husband would inspire."

At this interpretation, the slight convulsive movement of the lip ceased; she appeared relieved from an enormous weight, and answered,

"But no, M. d'Harville is neither peevish nor jealous." Then, seeking, doubtless, a pretext for breaking a conversation which was irksome to her, she cried, "Ah! mon Dieu! here is that insupportable Duke de Lucenay, one of my husband's friends. I trust he will not see us! where does he come from? I thought him a thousand leagues off!" "Yes, he was said to be off on a voyage of a year or two in the East; he has not been gone more than five months. Here is a sudden arrival, which must annoy the duchess, although the duke is not very troublesome," said Sarah, with a wicked smile. "She will not, however, be alone in confounding this unlucky return. M. de Saint Rémy will partake of her sorrow." "Don't be slanderous, my dear Sarah; rather say that this return will be sorrowful for every one. M. de Lucenay is disagreeable enough for you to generalize the grief."

"Slanderous? certainly not; I am only an echo. Besides, they do say that M. de Saint Rémy, the model of fashion, who has dazzled all Paris with his ostentation, is almost ruined, although he goes on as usual; it is true that Madame de Lucenay is very rich."

"Oh! how shocking!"

"I repeat, I am but an echo—ah! mon Dieu! the duke has seen us. He comes, we must be resigned. It is afflicting; I know nothing in the world more insupportable than this man; he is such bad company; he laughs so loud at his own jokes; he is so noisy that he almost deafens one; if you have any affection for your smelling bottle or your fan, keep them from him; for he has the inconvenient fashion of breaking everything he touches, and that with the most frolicksome and satisfied air in the world."

Belonging to one of the most noble houses of France, still young, with a face which would not have been disagreeable except for the length of his nose, M. de Lucenay joined to a boisterous noise and perpetual agitation a voice and laugh so astounding, witticisms so detestable, attitudes so gross and unexpected, that it was necessary at each moment to recall his name to prevent surprise at seeing him in the midst of the most distinguished society of Paris, and to understand how his eccentricities of language and gesture could be tolerated for a moment. They fled from him like the plague, although he was not wanting in a certain wit, which hit here and there, through a most incred-

ible exuberance of words. He was one of those avenging beings, into the hands of whom one would always wish to see fall those who are odious and ridiculous.

Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay, one of the most agreeable, and yet one of the most fashionable of Paris, notwithstanding her thirty years, had made herself much talked about; but her levity of conduct was almost excused, in reflecting on the insupportable behaviour of M. de Lucenay. As soon as the latter perceived Madame d'Harville and Sarah, he bellowed out, "Well! well! what is all this? what do I see—how? the prettiest woman of the ball hiding away in a corner—is it permitted? Must I come from the antipodes to put a stop to such scandal? If you contiue to conceal yourself from the general admiration, marchioness, I'll scream like a burned child—I'll cry at the loss of the most charming ornament of this fête!"

And, by way of peroration, M. de Lucenay threw himself backward alongside of the marchioness, on the divan; after which he crossed his left leg on his right thigh, and took his foot in his hand.

"How, sir, have you already returned from Constantinople?" said Madame d'Harville, drawing back with a movement of impatience.

"Already? You say just what my wife thinks, I am sure, for she would not accompany me to-night on my reentrée into society. To return, and surprise your friends, and be received in this way!"

"It is quite plain—it was so easy for you to remain amiable there," said Madame d'Harville, with a half smile.

"That is to say, remain absent, is it not? Oh, it is shameful, infamous, what you have just said!" cried M. de Lucenay, uncrossing his legs, and drumming on his hat like a tabor. "For the love of Heaven, Monsieur de Lucenay, do not scream so loud; and keep yourself quiet, or you will compel us to leave our seats," said Madame de Lucenay, with temper.

"Leave your seats! it will be to give me your arm, and take a turn in the gallery?"

"With you? certainly not. Come, I beg you will not touch this bouquet; I pray you will leave this fan alone; you will break it, according to custom." "If it is only that, I have broken more than one—go along! yes, above all, a splendid Chinese affair, that Madame de Vaudemont gave to my wife." In speaking these reassuring words, M. de Lucenay busied himself in pulling towards him some of the climbing plants. He at length detached them from the trees which sustained them; they fell, and the duke remained, as it were, crowned with the luxuriant foliage. Then he burst into a shout of laughter so shrill, so mad, so deafening, that Madame d'Harville would have fled from this noisy and disagreeable person, if she had not perceived M. Charles Robert (the commandant, as Madame Pipelet called him) advancing from the other extremity of the walk. The young woman feared that it might appear as if she went to meet him, and remained alongside of M. de Lucenay.

"I say, Madame M'Gregor, I must look like the god Pan, like a naiad, like a sylvan, under this foliage?" said M. de Lucenay, addressing Sarah, seating himself roughly beside her. "Speaking of savages, reminds me I must tell you a story outrageously ridiculous. Imagine that at Otaheite—"

"Monsieur le Duc," said Sarah, in a frozen tone.

"Well! no, I won't tell you my story; I'll keep it for Madame de Foubonne, who is yonder."

This was a little fat woman of fifty years, with a great deal of pretension, and very ridiculous, whose chin touched her neck, and who always showed the whites of her large eyes in speaking of her heart, the langour of her heart, the want of her heart, the aspirations of her heart. She wore on this evening a frightful turban of copper-coloured stuff, with a sprinkling of green flowers. "I'll keep it for Madame de Foubonne," cried the duke.

"What is it, then, Monsieur le Duc?" said Madame de Foubonne, with affectation, and commencing to turn up her whites, as the people say. "We are talking, madame, of a history horribly indecent, unsuitable, incongruous."

"Ah! mon Dieu! and who would dare? who is it who would allow?"

"I, madame; it will make an old 'chambouran' blush. But I know your taste. Listen to it."

"Monsieur!"

"Well! no, you shall not hear my story, exactly! because, after all, you, who always dress so well, with so much taste, with so much elegance—you have to-night a turban, which, allow me to tell you, on my word of honour, resembles an old turtle eaten up with verdigris;" and the duke screamed with laughter.

"If you have returned from the East to recommence your absurd jokes, which are generally excused because you are half a fool," said the fat woman, much irritated, "your return will be much regretted, monsieur;" and she walked off majestically. "I want four men to hold me, to keep me from tearing off the turban from this precious old woman," said M. de Lucenay; "but I respect her—she is an orphan. Ah! ah! ah!" and again he laughed. "Hallo! M. Charles Robert!" continued M. de Lucenay. "I met him in the Pyrenees—a shining young man; he sings like a swan. You shall see, marchioness, how I'll intrigue him. Shall I present him to you?" "Keep silent, and leave us quiet," said Sarah. While M. Charles Robert advanced slowly, pretending to admire the flowers, M. de Lucenay had manœuvred to get possession of the "flacon" of Sarah, and he busied himself very quietly in endeavouring to break the stopper of this "bijou." M. Charles Robert gradually approached; his tall figure was in perfect proportion, his complexion of irreproachable purity, his dress of supreme elegance; yet his face, his finish, was wanting in grace and distinction; his bearing was stiff, constrained, his hands and feet large and vulgar; when he perceived Madame d'Harville, the regular nothingness of his features was concealed at once under an expression of

ofound melancholy, much too sudden not to feigned; nevertheless, this seeming was rfect. M. Robert had the appearance of be- so frightfully unhappy, so naturally deso- e, when he drew near to Madame d'Harville, at she could not but think of the sinister ords of Sarah on the excesses to which de- air might carry him. "Ah! good-day, then, y dear sir!" said M. de Lucenay, stopping n as he was passing; "I have not had the easure of seeing you since I met you at the rings. But what is the matter? How ill u look!"

Here M. Charles Robert cast a long and elancholy look on Madame d'Harville, and swered the duke, with a voice plaintively ac- ntuated, "Truly, sir, I am suffering." "Mon eu! mon Dieu! you cannot, then, get rid of ur *pituite*?" asked M. de Lucenay, with an of the most serious interest. This question s so absurd, so impertinent, that for a mo- nt M. Charles Robert remained stupified, nned; then, with a flush of rage mounting to brow, he said, with a firm and cold voice, M. de Lucenay, "Since you take so much erest in my health, I hope you will come to- rrow morning to hear how I am?" "How, en, my dear sir—but certainly I will send," d the duke, with hauteur. M. Charles Rob- made a kind of half bow, and passed on. he best of the joke is, that he hasn't got 'pituite' any more than the grand Turk," d M. de Lucenay, falling back on his seat ar Sarah, "unless I have guessed it without owing. I say, Madame M'Gregor, does he k to you as if he had the 'pituite,' this gen- man?"

Sarah turned her back upon M. de Lucenay, thout answering a word. All this passed y rapidly. Sarah had with much difficulty pt from laughing. Madame d'Harville had ffered much in thinking of the feelings of a n who was questioned so ridiculously before woman he loved; she was alarmed for fear a el might take place; then, urged on by sen- ments of irresistible pity, she arose quickly, k Sarah's arm, rejoined M. Charles Robert, o was beside himself with rage, and whisper- as she passed him, "To-morrow, at one lock, I will go."

Then, regaining the gallery with the countess, e left the ball.

CHAPTER XV.

YOU COME VERY LATE, MY ANGEL.

Rodolphe, in coming to the fête as an act of complaisance," wished also to discover if his rs concerning Madame d'Harville were well nded, and if she was really the heroine of story of Madame Pipelet. After leaving the rden with the Countess * * *, Rodolphe d sauntered in vain through several saloons, the hope of meeting Madame d'Harville ne. He returned to the conservatory, when, he stopped for a moment on the first step of the ircase, he was a witness of the rapid scene ich passed between Madame d'Harville and M. Charles Robert, after the detestable pleasantry of the Duke de Lucenay; Rodolphe witnessed an exchange of very significant glances. A secret presentiment told him that this tall, handsome young man was the commandant. Wishing to be assured, he entered the gallery. A waltz was about to commence; at the end of a few moments, he saw M. Charles Robert standing in a doorway. He appeared doubly satisfied both with his answer to M. de Lucenay (M. Charles was very brave, notwithstanding his follies) and with the rendezvous that Madame d'Harville had given him for the next day, quite certain that this time she would not fail. Rodolphe went to look for Murphy: "You see that fair young man in the midst of that group there?" "That tall man who appears so self-satisfied?" "Yes, monseigneur."

"Endeavour to approach near enough to whisper to him without his seeing you, and so he alone can hear these words: *You come very late, my angel!*" The squire looked at Rodolphe with surprise. "Seriously, monseigneur?" "Seriously. If he turns at these words, guard that magnificent 'sang-froid' that I have so often admired, so that the gentleman cannot discover who has pronounced these words." "I comprehend nothing, my lord, but I obey." The worthy Murphy, before the end of the waltz, had contrived to place himself exactly behind M. Charles Robert. Rodolphe, perfectly well placed, so as to lose none of the effects of this experiment, followed Murphy with his eyes; at the end of a second, M. Charles Robert turned suddenly round, with a most surprised look.

The impassable squire never winked; and certainly this large bald man, with his imposing and serious expression, was the last person that the commandant could suspect of having pronounced these words, which recalled to him the disagreeable "quiproquo" of which Madame Pipelet had been the cause and the heroine. The waltz finished, Murphy returned to Rodolphe. "Well, monseigneur, this young man turned as if I had bitten him. These words, then, are magical?" "They are magical, my old Murphy; they have revealed to me what I wished to know." Rodolphe could do nothing more than to pity Madame d'Harville for a fault so much the more dangerous, as he had a vague presentiment that Sarah was an accomplice or confidant. At this discovery, he felt a grievous blow; he no longer doubted the cause of the sorrow of Madame d'Harville, whom he loved tenderly; jealousy was the reason, no doubt. His wife, endowed with charming qualities, sacrificed to a man every way unworthy. Master of a secret obtained by chance, incapable of abusing it, not having it in his power to try to enlighten Madame d'Harville, Rodolphe found himself obliged to remain a quiet spectator of the ruin of this young woman. He was aroused from these sad thoughts by M. de Graün. "If your highness will grant me a moment's conversation in the little saloon where there is nobody, I will have the honour to give you an account of the information I have obtained."

Rodolphe followed M. de Graün. "The only duchess whose name has any connexion with

the initials N. and L. is 'Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay, née de Noirmont,'" said the baron; "she is not here to-night. I have just seen her husband, M. de Lucenay, who set out on a journey to the East about five months since, which was to last more than a year; he returned unexpectedly two or three days since." The reader will recollect that, on his visit to the house in the Rue du Temple, Rodolphe had found near the door of the apartment of the quack César Bradamanté a handkerchief bathed in tears, richly bordered with lace, and in the corner of which he had remarked the letters N. and L. surmounted with a ducal coronet. By his orders, but ignorant of this fact, M. de Graün had inquired the names of the duchesses then in Paris, and obtained the information given above.

Rodolphe comprehended everything. He had no reason to interest himself about Madame de Lucenay; but he could not prevent himself from shuddering in thinking that, if she really had made a visit to the quack, this scoundrel, who was no other than the Abbé Polidori, possessed the name of this woman, whom he caused Tortillard to follow, and who could frightfully abuse the terrible secret that had placed the duchess in his power.

"Fortune is very singular sometimes, monseigneur," continued M. de Graün. "How is that?" "At the time that M. de Grangeneuse was giving me this information, and adding, maliciously enough, that the unlooked-for return of M. de Lucenay must have vexed the duchess and a very handsome young man, the most exquisite élégant of Paris, the Viscount de Saint Rémy, the ambassador came and asked me if I thought your highness would permit him to present to you the viscount who is here; he has just been attached to the legation of Gerolstein, and he will be too happy to pay his respects to your highness." Rodolphe could not repress a slight movement of impatience, and said,

"This is infinitely disagreeable to me, but I may not refuse. Tell the Count * * * to present M. de Saint Rémy." Notwithstanding his ill-humour, Rodolphe knew too well his duties as prince to be wanting in affability on this occasion. The Viscount de Saint Rémy approached, conducted by the Count * * *.

M. de Saint Rémy was a charming young man of twenty-five, slender, graceful, and of the most distinguished bearing and good looks; his complexion was very brown, but of velvet softness, clear and transparent as amber, as we remark in the portrait of Murillo; his black hair, parted over the left temple, curled gracefully around his face, half concealing the small white ears. His black eyes sparkled from their pearly bed, slightly shaded with that tint of blue, which gives to the Indian an expression so charming. By a freak of nature, the thickness of his "mustaches" made a striking contrast with the juvenile appearance of his chin and cheeks, as smooth as those of a young girl; he wore, through affectation, a cravat of black satin very low, so as to show the elegant contour of his throat, worthy of the young *Fluteur antique*.

A single pearl confined the long ends of his cravat, a pearl of inestimable price, from its size, the purity of its form, and the splendour of its "orient" so dazzling, that an opal could not have been more splendidly watered. With perfect taste, the dress of M. de Saint Rémy harmonized fully with this jewel of magnificent simplicity. The figure and person of M. de Saint Rémy could never be forgotten, so much did it differ from the ordinary appearance of the "élégans." The splendour of his vehicles and horses was extreme; a bold and heavy better, the total of his race-book amounted annually to two or three thousand Louis. His house in the "Rue du Chaillot" was cited as a model of elegant sumptuousness; after exquisite fare, there was always heavy and ruinous play, where he lost often considerable sums with the most hospitable disregard; and yet it was known for a certainty that the patrimony of the viscount had been for a long time dissipated. To explain his incomprehensible prodigalities, the envious or malicious spoke, as Sarah had said, of the great wealth of Madame de Lucenay, but they forgot that, setting aside the vileness of this supposition, M. de Lucenay had naturally a control over the fortune of his wife, and that M. de Saint Rémy spent at least fifty thousand crowns, or two hundred thousand francs, a year. Others spoke of imprudent usury, for M. de Saint Rémy expected no farther inheritance. Others, finally, said he was *too* lucky on the turf, and whispered of trainers and jockeys bribed by him, to make the horses lose against which he had made heavy bets. But by far the greater part of the people of fashion troubled themselves very little as to the means which M. de Saint Rémy resorted to for the purpose of keeping up his pomp and ostentation. He belonged by birth to the best and most fashionable society; he was gay, courageous, witty, a good companion, easy to entertain; he gave excellent bachelor dinners, and took all the stakes they proposed to him: what more was necessary? The women adored him; he was young and handsome, gallant and magnificent on all the occasions where a man can be so with women of fashion; thus, the infatuation was such, that the obscurity with which he surrounded the source of the Pactolian river, which he used with a liberal hand, cast on his life a certain mysterious charm. It was said, "This devil of a Saint Rémy must have found the philosopher's stone."

On learning that he had caused himself to be attached to the legation of Gerolstein, other persons thought that he wished to make an honourable retreat. The Count *** said to Rodolphe, on presenting M. de Saint Rémy to him, "I have the honour to present to your highness M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy, attached to the legation of Gerolstein." The viscount made a profound salutation to Rodolphe, and said, "Your highness will deign to excuse the impatience which I experience to pay my court; perhaps I have been in too much haste to enjoy an honour to which I attach so much value?"

"I shall be very happy, sir, to see you at Gerolstein. Do you intend to go shortly?" "The stay of your highness in Paris renders me less anxious to set out." "The quiet contrast of our German court will surprise you much sir,

accustomed as you are to live in Paris." "I dare assure your highness that the kindness that is shown me, and which I hope will be continued, will alone prevent me from regretting Paris." "It shall not be failure in me, sir, should you not always think so, during the time you pass at Gerolstein;" and Rodolphe made a slight inclination with his head, which announced to M. de Saint Rémy that the presentation was finished; with a profound bow, he retired.

Rodolphe was a great physiognomist, and subject to sympathies or aversions almost always justified; after the few words exchanged with M. de Saint Rémy, without being able to explain the reason, he felt for him a sort of involuntary aversion. He found in his looks something profoundly cunning, and a dangerous physiognomy.

* * * * * * * * *

We shall meet M. de Saint Rémy under circumstances which will contrast terribly with the brilliant position he occupied on his presentation to Rodolphe, where the realities of the presentiments of this last will be proved.

This presentation over, Rodolphe, reflecting on the strange "rencontres" that chance had brought about, descended into the winter-garden; the supper hour had arrived, the saloons were almost deserted; the most retired spot in the conservatory was in the midst of some shrubbery, at the angle of two walls, that an enormous banana, surrounded with climbing plants, almost entirely concealed: a small side door, hidden by the trellis, and leading to the refreshment-room by a long corridor, was half open, not far from this tree.

Concealed by this screen of verdure, Rodolphe seated himself in this spot. He was for some moments plunged in a profound revery, when his name, pronounced by a well-known voice, made him shudder.

Sarah, seated on the other side of the foliage which concealed Rodolphe, was talking in English with her brother Tom. Rodolphe listened attentively to the following conversation. "The marchioness has gone for a moment to the ball of the Baron de Norval; she has, happily, gone off without being able to speak to Rodolphe, who sought her, for I dread always the influence he has over her; an influence which I have had so much trouble to combat, and partly to destroy. In fine, this rival, whom I have always feared from presentiment, and who can, by-and-by, so much injure my projects—this rival will be lost to-morrow. Listen to me—this is serious, Tom." "You are mistaken, Rodolphe has never thought of the marchioness." "It is time I should give you some explanations on this subject. Many things took place during your last journey; and it is necessary that we should act sooner than I thought—even to-night, when we leave here. This conversation is indispensable. Happily, we are alone." "I listen."

"Before she saw Rodolphe, this woman, I am sure, never loved. I do not know for what reason she evinces an unconquerable aversion to her husband, who adores her. There is a mystery there, that I have endeavoured to penetrate in vain. The presence of Rodolphe had excited in the heart of Clémence a thousand new emotions. I stifled this growing love by overwhelming revelations touching the prince. But the need of love was awakened in the bosom of the marchioness. Meeting, at my house, with this Charles Robert, she was struck with his beauty, struck as one is at the sight of a picture; this man is, unfortunately, as 'niais' as he is handsome, but there is something touching in his looks: I praised the nobleness of his heart, the elevation of his character. I knew the natural goodness of Madame d'Harville; I *coloured* M. Robert with the most interesting misfortunes; I recommended him to be always very sad, and sighing, and, above all, to speak but little. He has followed my counsels. Thanks to his talent for singing, to his figure, and, above all, his appearance of sorrow, he has almost made himself beloved by Madame d'Harville, who has thus given a change to this need of love which the sight of Rodolphe had alone awakened. Do you understand now?"

"Perfectly — continue." "Robert and Madame d'Harville only seeing one another intimately at my house, twice a week, we practised music, we three, in the morning. The handsome unfortunate sighed, said some tender words in a low tone; he slipped in her hands two or three billets. I feared still more his prose than his words; but a woman is always indulgent for the first declarations she receives; those of my protégé did him no harm; the most important thing was to obtain a meeting. This little marchioness had more principle than love, or, rather, she had not love enough to forget principle. Unknown to her, there existed always in the bottom of her heart a 'souvenir' of Rodolphe, which watched, as I may say, over her, and combated the feeble 'penchant' for M. Charles Robert — a 'penchant' much more seeming than real—but kept alive by her lively interest in the imaginary misfortunes of M. Charles Robert, and by the incessant exaggeration of my praises of this Apollo without brains. Finally, Clémence, conquered by the profoundly desperate air of her unfortunate adorer, decided one day to give him the rendezvous so much desired." "She made you, then, her confidant?" "She avowed to me her attachment to M. Charles Robert, that's all; I did not wish to know anything more; it would have annoyed me. But he, ravished with happiness, or, rather, pride, told me of his happiness, without, however, telling me the day, or the place of rendezvous." "How did you know it?" "Karl, by my orders, went the next day and the day after, very early, to hide near his door and follow him. The second day, towards noon, our lover took, in a carriage, the road to an unknown quarter, Rue du Temple. He went into a house of a bad appearance; he remained there an hour and a half, and then went away. Karl waited a long time to see if any one came out after M. Charles Robert. No one came. the marchioness had failed in her promise. I knew it the next morning from the lover, as much irritated as disappointed. I counselled him to redouble his despair. The pity of Clémence was once more touched: a new rendezvous, but all in vain, as the first. A last time, however, she came to the door: some progress

You see how this woman struggles—and why? Because I am sure it is that which causes my hatred; she has always in the bottom of her heart, and without knowing it, a 'pensée' for Rodolphe, which seems thus to protect her. Finally, 'la marquise' has given a rendezvous for to-morrow: this time, I doubt not, she will go. The Duke de Lucenay has so grossly ridiculed this young man, that the marchioness, quite upset by the humiliation of her lover, has granted from pity what, perhaps, she would not otherwise have accorded; this time, I repeat, she will keep her promise." "What are your projects?"

"This woman obeys a kind of charitable instinct, exalted, but not in love; Charles Robert is so little made to understand the delicacy of sentiment which this night has dictated the resolution of the marchioness, that to-morrow he will wish to profit by this rendezvous, and he will ruin himself completely in the mind of Clémence, who gives herself up to this compromising step without love, without passion, and only from pity. In a word, I doubt not she goes there to do an act of courageous interest, but perfectly calm and certain not to forget for a moment her duties. This Charles Robert never can conceive this; the marchioness will hold him in aversion; and, her illusion destroyed, she will fall under the influence of her recollections of Rodolphe, which, I am sure, lie constantly hidden at the bottom of her heart." "Well?" "Well! I wish that she should be lost to him forever; he would have, I do not doubt, betrayed sooner or later the friendship of M. d'Harville in responding to the love of Clémence; but he will hold her in horror, if he knows her capable of a fault of which he has not been the object; this is an unpardonable crime for a man; in fine, making a pretext of the affection which binds him to M. d'Harville, we will never see again this woman, who has unworthily deceived this friend he so much loves." "It is the husband, then, that you wish to inform?" "Yes, and to-night, if you are of my opinion. From what Clémence has told me, he has vague suspicions without knowing on whom to fix them. It is midnight—we will leave the ball; you get out at the first 'café,' and write to M. d'Harville that his wife is going to-morrow, at one o'clock, to the Rue du Temple, No. 17. He is jealous—he will surprise Clémence—you can guess the rest!" "It is an abominable action!" said the gentleman, coldly. "You are scrupulous, Tom?" "By-and-by I'll do as you wish; but I repeat to you, that it is an abominable action." "You consent, notwithstanding?" "Yes; this night M. d'Harville shall be informed of all. And—but—it seems to me that there is some one there behind the shrubbery!" said Tom, speaking in a low voice. "I thought I heard some one move." "Go and look!" said Sarah with inquietude. Tom got up, walked around, and saw no one. Rodolphe had just disappeared through the little door of which we have spoken. "I am deceived," said Tom, on returning; "there is no one there." "That is what I thought." "Listen, Sarah. I do not think this woman as dangerous as you do for your future projects; Rodolphe has certain principles that he will never transgress. The young girl he has conducted to this farm, about six weeks since, he disguised as a workman; this creature, whom he has surrounded with comforts, to whom he is giving a good education, and whom he has visited several times, inspires me with more fears. We are ignorant who she is, although she seems to belong to an obscure class of society. But the rare beauty with which she is said to be endowed, the care with which Rodolphe has conducted her to this village, the growing interest he has for her, all prove that this affection is not without importance. Thus I have gone ahead of your wishes. To get rid of this obstacle, much more real, I think, it has been necessary to act with great caution, to be well informed concerning the people of this farm, and of the habits of this young girl. This information I have; the moment to act is come; chance has thrown in my way this horrible old woman, who had my address. Her relations with the kind of brigands who attacked us the night of our excursion in 'la cité' will powerfully serve us. All is provided—there will be no proof against us; and, besides, if this creature, as it appears, belongs to the working class, she will not hesitate between our offers, and the fate, even brilliant that she dreamed of, for the prince has guarded a profound incognito; in fine, to-morrow this question shall be solved; if not, we shall see." "These two obstacles out of the way, Tom, then our grand project."

"It offers difficulties, but it may succeed." "Acknowledge that it will have one chance the more, if we execute it at the moment in which Rodolphe will be doubly overwhelmed by the disgrace of the conduct of Madame d'Harville, and by the disappearance of this creature, for whom he is so much interested?" "I think so. But if this last hope escapes us, then I shall be free," said Tom, looking at Sarah with a gloomy air. "You shall be free! You shall no longer renew the prayers which twice have, in spite of me, suspended my vengeance!" Then, looking at the crapes which surrounded his hat, and his black gloves, Tom added, smiling in a sinister manner, "I await always—I—you well know that I have worn this mourning for sixteen years—and I will never leave it off until—" Sarah, whose features expressed involuntary fear, hastened to interrupt her brother, and said to him, with anxiety, "I tell you that you shall be free, Tom, for then this profound confidence, which until now has sustained me in circumstances so diverse, because it has been justified by more than human knowledge, will have totally abandoned me. But, until then, there is no danger, however slight in appearance, that I do not wish to guard against. Success often depends on the smallest causes. Obstacles not very serious may present themselves, as I am about arriving at the goal; I wish to have the field clear; I shall break them. My means are odious; so be it! Have I been eye-led—I?" cried Sarah, involuntarily raising her voice. "Silence! they are returning from supper," said Tom. "Since you think it useful to advise the Marquis d'Harville of the meeting to-morrow, let us go, it is late. The advanced hour of the night at which this notice will be given him, will prove its importance." Tom and Sarah left the ball of the ambassadress of ***.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MEETING.

Wishing, at all hazards, to inform Madame d'Harville of the danger which she ran, Rodolphe, leaving the embassy without waiting the end of the conversation between Tom and Sarah, was ignorant of the plot hatched by them against Fleur de Marie, and the imminent peril which menaced this young girl. Notwithstanding his efforts, Rodolphe, unfortunately, was not able to save the marchioness, as he had hoped. She, at her departure from the ball, had intended to appear for a moment at Madame de Nerval's; but, overcome by the emotions which agitated her, Madame d'Harville had not the courage to go to this second fête, and returned home. This, unfortunately, ruined all. M. de Graün, as well as most of the other guests of the Countess ***, was invited to Madame de Nerval's; Rodolphe drove with him there rapidly, with directions to seek out Madame d'Harville, and to inform her that the prince desired to say to her that night some words of the greatest interest; he would be on foot before the Hotel d'Harville, and that he would open the door of the carriage to speak to her, while her people were opening the "porte cochère." After losing much time in seeking her, the baron returned. She had not appeared. Rodolphe was in despair; he had wisely thought that he should, first of all, advise the marchioness of the treason to which she would be a victim; for then the accusation of Sarah, which he could not prevent, would pass for an indignant calumny. He was too late: this infamous letter was sent to the marquis at one hour after midnight.

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The next morning M. d'Harville was walking slowly in his sleeping apartment, furnished with elegant simplicity, and only ornamented with a panoply of arms, and an "étagère" furnished with books. The bed had not been used, yet the silken counterpane hung in tatters; a chair, and a little table of ebony with twisted legs, were overturned near the fireplace; on the carpet were seen the fragments of a crystal goblet, wax candles half crushed, and a candlestick with two branches thrown in the corner. This disorder seemed to have been caused by a violent struggle. M. d'Harville was about thirty years of age, a manly face of much character, an expression ordinarily agreeable and pleasant, but then contracted, pale, and violent; he wore his dress of the previous evening; his neck was bare, his waistcoat open; his shirt, torn, appeared here and there stained with some drops of blood; his brown hair, usually curled, fell rough and tangled on his livid forehead. After having walked up and down for a long time, his arms crossed, his head down, his look fixed and glaring, M. d'Harville stopped suddenly before the fireless hearth. He took from the marble chimney-piece this letter, which he read again, with devouring attention, by the dull light of this winter morning. "To-morrow, at one o'clock, your wife has an engagement in the Rue du Temple, No. 17. Follow her, and you will know all—Happy husband!" As he read these words, already so many times perused, his lips, blue with cold, seemed convulsively to spell letter by letter this fatal billet. At this moment the door opened; a valet-de-chambre entered. This servant, already old, had gray hair, an honest and good face. The marquis turned his head roughly, without changing his position, still holding the letter between his hands. "What do you want?" said he, crossly, to the domestic. He, without answering, contemplated with an air of sorrowful surprise, the disorder of the chamber; then, regarding attentively his master, he cried, "Blood on your shirt? Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! monsieur, you must be wounded. You were alone. Why did you not ring, as usual, when you have felt the—" "Go away." "But, Monsieur le Marquis, you don't think; your fire is out; it is very cold here; and, above all—after—your—"

"Will you be silent! Leave me!" "But, Monsieur le Marquis," said the valet, trembling, "you have ordered M. Doublet to be here this morning at half past ten; he is here with the notary." "It is true," said the marquis, bitterly, recovering himself. "When one is rich, he must think of business. It is so fine, fortune! Let M. Doublet go into my cabinet."

"He is already there, Monsieur le Marquis." "Give me some clothes—directly I shall go out." "But, Monsieur le Marquis—" "Do what I tell you, Joseph," said the marquis, in a softer voice. "Has any one gone into my wife's room yet?" "I do not think Madame la Marquise has yet rung." "Let me be advised as soon as she does." "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis." "Tell Philip to come and help you; you will never finish!" "But, monsieur, wait until I have arranged things a little," answered Joseph, sadly. "They would see this disorder, and could not comprehend what could have happened this night to Monsieur le Marquis." "And if they did comprehend—it would be very shocking, would it not?" answered the marquis, in a tone of mournful pleasantry. "Ah! monsieur," cried Joseph; "God be praised! no one suspects—" "No one? no! none," answered the marquis, gloomily.

While Joseph was occupied in repairing the disorder of the room, the marquis went straight to the panoply of which we have spoken, examined attentively, for some minutes, the arms which composed it, made a gesture of ominous satisfaction, and said to Joseph, "I am sure that you have forgotten to clean my guns which are up there in my hunting equipage." "Monsieur le Marquis has not spoken to me about it," said Joseph, astonished. "Yes; but you have forgotten." "I protest to Monsieur le Marquis—" "They ought to be in good condition!" "It is scarcely a month since they were brought from the gunsmith's!" "No matter; as soon as I am dressed, hand them down to me; I shall go shooting to morrow, perhaps; I want to examine these guns."

The room arranged, a second valet-de-chambre came to assist Joseph. The toilet finished, the marquis entered into the cabinet, where M. Doublet (his steward) and a notary's clerk awaited him. "This is the act which we have come to read to M. le Marquis," said the steward; "it only requires your signature." "Have you read it, Monsieur Doublet?" "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis." "In that case, it is suffi-

cient—I sign." He signed ; the clerk went out. "By means of this acquisition, Monsieur le Marquis," said M. Doublet, with a triumphant manner, "your ground-rents, on good security, is not less than 126,000 francs in sacks. Do you know that this is very uncommon, monsieur, a revenue of 126,000 francs ground-rent?"

"I am a very happy man, am I not, Monsieur Doublet? 126,000 francs ground-rent! There is no happiness at all comparable!" "Without reckoning the portfolio of M. le Marquis—without reckoning—" "Certainly, and without reckoning—so many other sources of happiness still!" "God be praised! Monsieur le Marquis, for you want nothing: youth, riches, health—every happiness united ; and among them," said M. Doublet, smiling agreeably, "or, rather, at their head, I place that of being the husband of Madame la Marquise, and of having a charming little girl that resembles a cherubim." M. d'Harville cast a sinister look at the intendant. We shall not attempt to paint the expression of savage irony with which he said to M. Doublet, striking him familiarly on the shoulder, "With 126,000 francs ground-rent, and a wife like mine, and a child that looks like a cherubim, there is nothing left to wish for, is there?" "Eh! eh! Monsieur le Marquis," naïvely answered the steward, "there remains to wish for a long life—to marry mademoiselle your daughter, and to become a grandfather. To be a grandfather is what I desire with all my heart for M. le Marquis, as I do that Madame la Marquise shall be a grandmother and great-grandmother." "This good Monsieur Doublet, who dreams of Philemon and Baucis, he is always so very 'àpropos.'" "Monsieur le Marquis is too good. He has only to command me—" "Only! Ah! if, however—how much have you in hand?" "Nineteen thousand three hundred and some francs for current expenses, M. le Marquis, without reckoning what is in the bank." "You will bring me this morning ten thousand francs in gold, and you will give them to Joseph, if I am out." "This morning?" "This morning." "In one hour the money shall be here. M. le Marquis, has he anything more to say to me?" "No, Monsieur Doublet." "126,000 francs sent in bags! in bags!" repeated the steward, as he went out. "It is a fine day for me. I feared so much that this farm, which suits us so exactly, might escape us. Your servant, Monsieur le Marquis."

Scarcely was he gone, than M. d'Harville fell upon his chair, quite overcome ; he leaned his arms on his desk, and concealed his face in his hands. For the first time since he had received the fatal letter, he could weep. "Oh!" said he, "cruel derision of destiny, which has made me rich! What shall I put in this golden frame now? My shame—the infamy of Clémence? Infamy that the world, perhaps, will cast back on the brow of my child! Shall I conceal it? shall I have pity—of—no, no! blood! blood! revenge will save from ridicule! I now understand her aversion. The miserable—" Then stopping suddenly, as if struck with a sudden thought, he continued, in a mournful tone, "Her aversion? Oh! I know well the cause ; I inspire her with horror—I frighten her!" And, after a long silence, "But is it my fault? Must she deceive me on that account? Instead of hatred, is it not pity that I merit?" continued he, arousing himself by degrees. "No, no, blood! both—both! for she, without doubt, has told all this to the *other*." This thought redoubled the fury of the marquis. He raised his two clinched fists towards heaven ; then passing his burning hand over his eyes, and feeling the necessity of calming himself before his people, he entered into his sleeping room in apparent tranquillity. He found Joseph there. "Well, the guns?" "Here they are, M. le Marquis ; they are in perfect order." "I will see. Has my wife rung yet?" "I do not know, M. le Marquis." "Go and see." M. d'Harville hastened to take from the gun-box a small powder-horn, some balls and percussion-caps, then relocked the box and kept the key, after which he went to the panoply, and took a pair of pistols of *Manton*, of small size, loaded them, and put them in the pocket of his morning coat. At this moment Joseph came back. "Monsieur, you can see madame." "Has Madame d'Harville ordered her carriage?" "No, Monsieur le Marquis ; Mademoiselle Juliette said, before me, to the coachman, who came to get his orders for the morning, that as it was cold and dry, madame would go out on foot—if she went out." "Very well. Ah! I forget. If I go shooting, it will be to-morrow or after. Tell Williams to examine the little green briska this morning; you hear me?" "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis. Will you not have your cane?" "No. Is there not a hack-stand near?" "Very near; at the corner of the Rue de Lille."

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On leaving his room, instead of visiting Madame d'Harville, he only said to her femme-de-chambre: "You will tell the marchioness that I desired to speak to her this morning, but that I am obliged to go out for a moment; if it is agreeable to her to breakfast with me, I shall return by noon ; if not, never mind. Thinking that I will return, she will believe herself more free," said M. d'Harville to himself, and he walked to the hack-stand near his house. "Coachman, by the hour!"

"Yes, bourgeois ; it is half past eleven o'clock. Where shall we go?" "Rue de Belle Chase, at the corner of the Rue Saint Dominique, alongside of a garden-wall you will find there: you will wait."

"Yes, bourgeois." M. d'Harville let down the curtains. The carriage was driven off, and soon arrived opposite the house of the marquis. From this place no one could go out of his doors without being seen by him. Twelve o'clock struck at Saint Thomas d'Aquin, when the door of the Hotel d'Harville was slowly opened, and the marchioness came out. "Already! Ah! what attention! she feared to make the *other* one wait." Clémence wore a black hat, covered with a blonde veil of the same colour, and a "Douilette" of purple silk ; her immense cashmere shawl of deep blue reached to the skirt of her dress, which she raised gracefully to cross the street. Thanks to this movement, one could just have a glimpse of a pretty little foot, in its beautiful boot of Turkish satin. *

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The marquis partly pulled down the blind,

and said to the coachman, "You see that lady in the black hat and blue shawl, who is walking along the wall?" "Yes, bourgeois." "Drive slowly, and follow her. If she goes to the hack-stand, follow the carriage she gets into." "Yes, bourgeois." "Stop, stop, this is amusing!"

Madame d'Harville went to the hack-stand, and got into one of the carriages. The coachman of M. d'Harville followed her. At the end of a few moments, to the great astonishment of the marquis, the coachman took the road to the church of Saint Thomas d'Aquin, and stopped there. "Bourgeois, the lady has just got out at the church. 'Sapristé!' what a fine little foot; all the same—it is very amusing!" A thousand different thoughts agitated M. d'Harville; at first he thought that his wife, seeing that she was followed, wished to put a stop to the pursuit. Then he thought that perhaps the letter was a calumny. If Clémence was culpable, why this false appearance of piety? was it not a sacrilegious jesting? For a moment M. d'Harville had a ray of hope, so great was the contrast between this apparent piety and the act of which his wife was accused. This illusive consolation endured but for a short time. His coachman leaned over and whispered, "Bourgeois, the little lady has returned to the carriage." "Follow her." "Yes, bourgeois! very amusing! very amusing!" The hack reached the quays, the Hotel d'Ville, the Rue Saint Avoye, and, finally, the Rue du Temple.

"Bourgeois," said the coachman, "they have stopped at No. 17; we are at No. 13; shall we stop also?" "Yes." "Bourgeois, the little lady has gone into No. 17." "Open the door." "Yes, bourgeois." Some seconds after M. d'Harville entered close on the steps of his wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ANGEL.

Madame d'Harville entered the house. Attracted by curiosity, Madame Pipelet, Alfred, and the oysterwoman were standing in the door of the lodge. The staircase was so dark that, on coming in from the light, it could not be seen. The marchioness, obliged to address herself to Madame Pipelet, said to her, in a voice trembling with emotion, "Monsieur Charles, madame!" "Monsieur who?" repeated the old woman, feigning not to hear her, so as to allow her husband and the oysterwoman time to examine her features through her veil. "I ask for—Monsieur Charles—madame," answered Clémence, holding down her head, in endeavouring to conceal her face from the looks of those who examined her with such insolent curiosity.

"Ah! Monsieur Charles! very good; you speak so low that I didn't hear. Well! my little lady, since you wish to see M. Charles, a fine young man, just so—go up straight ahead; it is the door opposite." The marchioness, overwhelmed with confusion, put her foot on the first step. "Eh! eh! eh!" added the old woman, chuckling; "it appears that it is all right to-day. 'Vive la noce,' and go along!" "That doesn't prevent him from being an amateur, the commandant," added the oysterwoman. If it had not been necessary to repass the lodge where these creatures were stationed, Madame d'Harville, almost expiring with fright and shame, would have left immediately. She made a last effort, and reached the landing-place. What was her surprise! She found herself face to face with Rodolphe, who, placing a purse in her hands, said quickly, "Your husband knows all; he follows you." At this moment the sharp voice of Madame Pipelet was heard crying,

"Where are you going to, sir?" "It is he!" said Rodolphe; and he added rapidly, pushing her towards the staircase leading to the second story, "Go up to the garret: you have just come to succour an unfortunate family; they are called Morel." "Monsieur, you shall pass over my body rather than go up without saying where you are going to!" cried Madame Pipelet, barring the passage to Madame d'Harville.

"I follow the lady who has just entered," said the marquis.

"That is different; pass on." Having heard an unusual noise, the commandant half opened his door. Rodolphe entered quickly, and shut himself in with him at the moment Madame d'Harville reached the landing-place. Fearing that he might be recognised by the marquis, he profited by this occasion surely to escape him.

M. Charles Robert, magnificently dressed in his flowery robe-de-chambre, and his Greek cap of embroidered velvet, remained stupified at the sight of Rodolphe, whom he had not perceived at the ball, and who was more modestly dressed than ever. "Sir, what is the meaning—" "Silence!" said Rodolphe in a low voice, but with such an expression of anguish that M. Charles Robert was silent. A violent noise, like that of a body which fell and rolled down the stairs, resounded through the staircase. "The unfortunate being has killed her!" cried Rodolphe. "Killed! who? But what is all this?" said M. Charles in a low voice, and turning pale. Without answering him, Rodolphe opened the door. He saw descending in great haste, and limping, the little Tortillard; he held in his hand the purse of red silk that Rodolphe had just given to Madame d'Harville. The light step of Madame d'Harville could be heard, as well as the heavier one of her husband, who continued to follow her to the upper story. Not comprehending how Tortillard could have this purse in his possession, but a little reassured, Rodolphe said to M. Robert, "Do not stir from hence; you have been near ruining everything." "But, monsieur," answered M. Robert, in an impatient manner, "will you tell me what this signifies? Who are you, and by what right—" "This signifies, sir, that the husband of Madame d'Harville knows everything; that he has followed his wife to your door, and that he follows her up there?" "Ah! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried M. Charles Robert, joining his hands in terror; "but what will she do up there?" "Never mind; remain in your room, and do not come out until the 'portière' notifies you." Leaving M. Robert as much frightened as stupified, Rodolphe descended to the lodge. "Well! say now?" cried Madame Pipelet, with a radiant air; "'ça chauffe,' it grows warm! there is a gentleman who has followed the little lady. It is without doubt the

husband, the *dandelion*. I guessed that right away, and I sent him up. He will massacre the commandant; that will make a noise in the neighbourhood; people will crowd to see the house, as they did to see No. 36, where there was an assassination." "My dear Madame Pipelet, will you render me a great service?" and Rodolphe put five "louis" in the hands of the portière. "When this lady comes down, ask her how she found these poor Morels; tell her she does a good act in helping them, as she had promised to come and get some information concerning them."

Madame Pipelet looked at the money, and then at Rodolphe, in amazement! "How! Monsieur, this gold—is for me? And this little lady—she is not, then, at the commandant's?" "The gentleman who followed her is the husband. Advised in time, the poor woman went up to the Morel's, as if she came to bring them alms; do you comprehend?" "If I comprehend, I must aid in deceiving the husband: that suits me—like a glove! You shall say I do this as if I had done nothing else all my life. I say!"

Here could have been seen the "chapeau tromblou" of Monsieur Pipelet, raising itself suddenly in the shade of the lodge. "Anastasia," said Alfred, gravely, "I see you have respect for nothing on this earth; just like M. César Bradamanté—there are some things which should never be agitated even in the charms of intimacy." "Come, come, 'vieuz cheri,' don't play the prude with your eyes like loto balls; you see I am only joking. Do you not know that there is not a person in the world who can boast of—enough—sufficient. If I am obliging, it is only to oblige our new lodger, who is so good." Turning to Rodolphe, she said, "You shall see me work! Will you remain in the corner there, behind the curtain? Hold! I have them now."

Rodolphe hastened to conceal himself. M. and Madame d'Harville descended, she holding on to his arm. When they arrived opposite the lodge, the face of M. d'Harville expressed profound happiness, mingled with astonishment and confusion. Clémence was calm and pale. "Well! my good lady," cried Madame Pipelet, coming out of the lodge, "have you seen these poor Morels? I hope that touches your heart! Ah! mon Dieu, it is a good work you are doing there. I told you they were much to be pitied the last time you came for information. Be easy, you never can do enough for such good people—is it not so, Alfred?" Alfred, whose prudery and natural integrity revolted at the idea of entering into this anti-conjugal complot, answered vaguely, by a kind of negative growl. Madame Pipelet continued: "Alfred has the cramp in the stomach, otherwise he would tell you, as I do, that these poor people will pray to the bon Dieu for you, my worthy lady!" M. d'Harville looked at his wife with admiration, and repeated, "An angel! an angel! Oh! calumny!" "An angel? You are right, monsieur, and a good angel of the 'bon Dieu,' what's more!" "My friend, let us go," said Madame d'Harville, who suffered horribly from the constraint she had imposed on herself since her entrance into the house; she felt her strength giving way. "Let us go," said the marquis. He added, at the moment of leaving the alley, "Clémence, I need pardon and pity!" "Who has not need?" said she with a sigh.

Rodolphe came out of his retreat, profoundly affected at this scene of terror, mingled with ridicule and vulgarity; a singular "denouement" of a mysterious drama, which had raised so many diverse passions.

"Well!" said Madame Pipelet, "I hope I did him nicely—the dandelion? And your furniture, Monsieur Rodolphe, they have not brought it yet?" "I am going to attend to it. You can go and tell the commandant, now, he can come down." "True. I say, now, ain't it a farce! It appears as if he might have hired the room for the Roi de Prusse. It is well done—with his shabby twelve francs a month!" Rodolphe went out. "I say, Alfred!" said Madame Pipelet, "the commandant's turn now! I am going to have a good laugh!" She ascended to the room of M. Charles Robert; rang at the door, which he opened. "Commandant!" and Anastasia carried the back of her hand in military style to her periwig, "I come to let you out of prison. They are gone arm in arm, the husband and wife, right under your nose! All the same, you escaped a fine—thanks to M. Rodolphe; you ought to be very grateful." "Is it the slender gentleman with mustaches who is M. Rodolphe?" "Himself." "Who is this man?" "This man?" cried Madame Pipelet, in a vexed manner; "he is worth any other! two others! He is a travelling clerk, resident of this house, who has but one room, and who is not mean—not he! He has given me six francs for his 'ménage;' six francs! and right off! Once more I say, six francs, without bargaining!" "Very well—very well; here is the key." "Shall I make a fire to-morrow, commandant?" "No." "After to-morrow?" "No, no." "Well, commandant, do you remember? I told you that you would not pay your expenses." M. Charles Robert cast a look of contempt on the portière, and went out, not being able to comprehend how a travelling clerk could have been informed of his rendezvous with the Marchioness d'Harville. At the moment he went out of the 'allée' he met the little Tortillard, who came in hobbling. "Here you are, 'mauvais sujet!' said Madame Pipelet. "Has the Borgnesse been here for me?" asked the child, of the portière, without replying to her. "La Chouette? No; horrid monster! Why should she come to seek for you?" "Stop! to take me to the country, then!" said Tortillard, swinging on the door of the lodge. "And your master?" "My father asked M. Bradamanté to give me a holyday—to go to the country—the country—the country!" sang out the son of Bras-Rouge, drumming on the window of the lodge.

"Will you stop, brat? you will break my glasses! But here is a hack."

"Oh! good, it is La Chouette," said the child; "what happiness to go in a carriage!" In effect, through the glass and on the red curtain inside could be seen the earthly profile of the Borgnesse. She made a sign to Tortillard, who ran and jumped into the vehicle. La Chouette was not alone. In another corner of the carriage, wrapped up in an old cloak with a fur collar, his features half concealed by a black

silk nightcap which came down to his eyebrows, might have been seen the Maître d'Ecole. His red eyelids left visible two white immovable eyes, without pupils, and which rendered still more frightful his scarred visage, which was marbled by the cold with blue and livid seams. "Come, child, squat down on the legs of my man; you will keep him warm," said La Borgnesse to Tortillard, who crept like a dog between the legs of the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette. "Now," said the coachman, "to the Borqueval farm, is it not, La Chouette? You shall see that I know how to drive a carriage." "Above all, whip your horse," said the Maître d'Ecole. "Be easy, No-eyes—he will run all the way to the cross-road." "Shall I give you some advice?" said the Maître d'Ecole. "Which?" answered the coachman. "Drive fast through the barriers, otherwise they may recognise you." "I will keep my eyes open," said the other, mounting his seat. The above conversation was in Argot, and if we again approach this horrible language, it is only because it shows that the sham coachman was a brigand, a worthy companion of the Maître d'Ecole. The carriage left the Rue du Temple. Two hours after, at the close of day, this vehicle stopped before a wooden cross, marking a deserted and stony road which led to the Bouqueval farm, where the Goualeuse resided, under the protection of Madame Georges.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

AN ECLOGUE.

Five o'clock struck at the church of the little village of Bouqueval; the cold was sharp, the sky serene; the sun, sinking slowly behind the tall, leafless trees which crowned the heights of Econeu, shed a purple tint over the horizon, and cast his pale and oblique rays over the vast field, hardened by frost. In the country, each season presents a different and charming aspect. Sometimes the dazzling snow changes everything into immense landscapes of alabaster, which display their immaculate splendours under a sky of rosy gray.

Then, sometimes, at dusk, ascending the hills, or descending into the valleys, the belated farmer is returning home; horse, cloak, cap, all is covered with snow: sharp is the frost, icy is the wind, dark is the advancing night; but there, there, in the midst of the naked trees, the little windows of the farm are gayly illuminated; its tall brick chimneys cast towards the skies a thick column of smoke, which says to the master he is waited for; sparkling fire, rustic supper, then the evening chat, quiet and peaceful repose, while the wind whistles without, and the dogs scattered over the plains bark, and are answered in the distance. Sometimes, in the morning, the hoar-frost suspends to the trees its girandoles of crystal which the winter's sun causes to sparkle with all the diamond splendour of the prism; the damp, rich ground lies in long furrows, where hides the timid hare, or lightly spring the active partridge. Here and there is heard the melancholy tinkling of the bell of the master ram of a large flock of sheep grazing on the green patches in narrow lanes, while, well wrapped in his gray mantle, the shepherd, seated at the foot of a tree, sings in weaving a basket of osier. Sometimes the scene becomes more animated; the echo sends back the faint sounds of the horn and the cries of the hounds; a frightened fawn springs suddenly from the borders of the forest, makes for the plains, flying with terror; she is lost in the horizon. The horns and the bayings draw near; dogs, spotted and white, come out in their turn from the thick forest; they run on the brown earth, they run on the fallow ground; the nose to the earth, they follow, crying in the scent of the fawn. After them appear hunters dressed in red, bending over the arched necks of their swift coursers; they animate the hunt with their horns and cries. This all passes like a whirlwind, like lightning, the noise ceases; by degrees all is quiet, dogs, horses, hunters disappear at a distance in the wood where the fawn has fled for shelter. Then the quiet is again established; then the profound silence of the plain, the tranquillity of the broad horizon, are only interrupted by the monotonous song of the shepherd.

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These representations, these rural situations abound in the environs of the village of Bouqueval, which, notwithstanding its proximity to Paris, is situated in a kind of desert only approached by cross-roads. Concealed during the summer in the midst of trees, like a nest in some foliage, the farm where the Goualeuse had retired, appeared quite entire without its veil of verdure. The course of the little river frozen by the cold, resembled a long riband of unwrought silver, unrolled in the midst of meadows always green, where some fine cows grazed in slowly regaining their stables. Brought back by the approach of night, flights of pigeons settled down successively on the sharp roof of the pigeon-house; the immense walnut-trees, which during the summer shaded the court and the farm-buildings, then despoiled of their leaves, permitted the tiled and thatched roofs to be seen, covered with velvet-like moss of emerald green.

A heavy cart, drawn by three stout horses, thick-set, with heavy manes, shining coats, harnessed with blue collars, trimmed with small bells and tufts of red wool, was bringing a load of wheat from one of the mills of the plain. This heavy vehicle arrived in the court through the large door, while a large flock of sheep crowded through one of the side entrances. Man and beast seemed impatient to escape from the coldness of the night, and to taste the delights of repose. The horses neighed joyously at the sight of the stables; the sheep bleated in besieging the door of the warm sheepfolds; the workmen cast an impatient glance through the windows of the kitchen, where was preparing the evening meal. There existed in this farm rare and extreme order—a neatness minute and unusual. Instead of being covered with dry mud, scattered here and there, and exposed to the inclemency of the season, the harrows, ploughs, rollers, and other implements of husbandry, of which some were of an entire new invention, were arranged neatly under a large shed, where the wagoners came and placed the harness of their horses. Vast, neat, well planted, the sanded court did not present to view those heaps of manure, those ponds of stagnant water, which disfigure the finest farms of La Beauce or La Brie. The lower court, surrounded by a green trellis, received all the feathered tribe,

and these came in every night by a small door opening on the fields. Without descanting any farther on the details, we will only say, that in everything this farm passed, for good reasons, throughout the country for a model-farm, as much from the order which was established there, as by the excellence of its agriculture and crops, and by the happiness and morality of the numerous persons who made the place of value.

We will tell by-and-by the reason of this superiority so prosperous. In the mean while, we will conduct the reader to the trellised door of the lower court, which yielded in nothing to the rest of the farm, by the neatness of its roosts, coops, and its little canal encased with small stones, where flowed constantly pure and limpid water, just then carefully cleared from the ice which might obstruct it.

A kind of revolution suddenly seemed to break out among the inhabitants of this lower court. The hens left their perches cackling; the turkeys gobbled; the Guinea-fowls screamed; the pigeons abandoned the roof of the pigeon-house, and lit on the sand, cooing.

The arrival of Fleur de Marie was the cause of all these gay follies. Greuze or Watteau never could have imagined a more charming model, if the cheeks of the poor Goualeuse had been rosier and fuller. Yet, notwithstanding her paleness, and the thinness of her oval-shaped face, the expression of her features, the "ensemble" of her person, the grace of her attitude, would yet have been worthy of the pencils of the great painters we have named.

The little round hat of Fleur de Marie displayed her fine forehead, with its bands of flaxen hair. Like almost all the peasant girls of the environs of Paris, under this hat she wore, arrayed very smoothly, and fastened behind her head with two large pins, a red Indian handkerchief, whose square ends fell gracefully on her shoulders, a picturesque and graceful head-dress, which even Italy and Switzerland might envy us.

A "fichu" of white lawn, crossed on her bosom, was half concealed by her apron of brown linen; a coat of blue cloth, with tight sleeves, set off her fine figure, under which was seen her petticoat of thick gray fustian, striped with brown; very white stockings, and black buskins, hidden in little black "sabots" (wooden shoes), trimmed on the instep with a piece of lambskin, completed this costume of rustic simplicity, to which the natural charms of Fleur de Marie gave additional ornament. Holding in one hand her apron by the two corners, she took from thence handfuls of grain, which she distributed to the winged crowd by which she was surrounded. A pretty pigeon, of silvery whiteness, with beak and feet of purple, more audacious or more familiar than the rest, after having fluttered for some time around Fleur de Marie, settled at last on her shoulder. The young girl, accustomed, doubtless, to this cavalier treatment, did not discontinue throwing the grain with a liberal hand; but half turning her sweet face, with its enchanting profile, she slightly raised her head, and smilingly extended her rosy lips to the little coral beak of her friend.

The last rays of the setting sun shed a golden beam on this charming picture.

CHAPTER II.

UNEASINESS.

While the Goualeuse was busy with her rural occupations, Madame Georges and the Abbé Laporte, curé of Bouqueval, seated at the corner of the fire, in the little saloon of the farm, were talking of Fleur de Marie, a subject of conversation always interesting for them. The old curate, pensive, thoughtful, his head down, and his elbows on his knees, extended mechanically before the fire his two trembling hands. Madame Georges, occupied with her sewing, looked at the abbé from time to time, and appeared to be waiting for an answer. After a moment's silence he said, "You are right, Madame Georges, we must inform M. Rodolphe; if he questions Marie, she is so grateful to him that perhaps she will avow to her benefactor what she conceals from us." "Is it not true, Monsieur le Curé? then this night I will write to the address she gave me, Allée des Veuves."

"Poor child!" continued the abbé; "she ought to be so happy; what sorrow can be preying upon her now?" "Nothing seems to drive away this sadness, not even her application to her books." "She really has made extraordinary progress for the little time she has been studying."

"Is it not so, Monsieur l'Abbé? To learn to read and write almost at once, and to know enough of accounts to assist me in keeping the books of the farm! and, besides, the dear soul aids me so actively in everything that I am at once touched and astonished. She fatigues herself so much in spite of me, that I am uneasy about her health." "Happily, this black doctor has quite reassured us as to this slight cough which so much alarmed us." "He is so good, this M. David! he is so much interested for her! Mon Dieu! like every one else who knows her. Here each cherishes and respects her. This is not surprising, for, thanks to the generous and elevated views of M. Rodolphe, the people of this farm are the very best in the country. But the most boorish, the most indifferent, cannot be insensible to the attractions of this gentleness, at once angelic and timid, which always seems to be asking pardon. Unhappy child! as if she alone was culpable!" "Have you not told me," said the abbé, "that the sadness of Marie dated from the time of the visit that Madame Dubreuil, the fermière of M., the Duke of Lucenay at Arnouville, made here at the fêtes of All-Saints?" "Yes! Monsieur le Curé, I have remarked it, yet Madame Dubreuil, and, above all, her daughter Clara, a model of candour and goodness, have felt, like every one else, the charms of Marie; both of them overwhelmed her daily with marks of friendship; you know on Sunday our friends of Arnouville come here, or we go to see them. Well! one would say that each visit augments the melancholy of our dear child, although Clara already loves her like a sister."

"Truly, Madame Georges, it is a strange mystery. What can be the cause of this secret grief? She ought to be so happy! Between her present situation and the past, there is the difference of hell to paradise. Yet we cannot accuse her of ingratitude."

"Her! 'grand Dieu!'—she—so sweetly grateful for our attentions! she in whom we have always found instincts of such rare delicacy! This poor little thing, does she not do all she can that she may earn her living? does she not endeavour, by her services, to compensate for the hospitality she enjoys? This is not all; except Sundays, when I require her to dress with

some little care to accompany me to church, she has always wished to wear clothes as coarse and humble as those of the girls of the country. And, notwithstanding this, there exists in her such a distinction, such natural grace, that she is only still more charming in this dress: is it not so, Monsieur le Curé?"

"Ah! how I recognise there maternal pride!" said the old priest, smiling. At these words the eyes of Madame Georges filled with tears; she thought of her son. The abbé, guessing the cause of her emotion, said, "Courage! God has sent you this poor child to aid you in waiting for the time when you shall find your son. And, besides, a holy tie will attach you soon to Marie; a godmother, when she comprehends her holy duties, is almost a mother. As to M. Rodolphe, he has given her, so to speak, the life of the soul, in dragging her from the abyss. In advance he has fulfilled his duties of godfather."

"Do you find her sufficiently instructed to administer that sacrament which the unfortunate has doubtless not yet received?"

"In returning with her directly to the presbytery, I shall inform her that this ceremony will probably take place in a fortnight."

"Perhaps, Monsieur le Curé, you will preside some day at another ceremony, also very pleasing and serious." "What do you mean to say?"

"If Marie was beloved as she deserved, if she loved a good and honest man, why should she not be married?"

The abbé sadly bent his head, and answered: "Marry her? Reflect, Madame Georges, truth will compel us to tell all to him who would wish to espouse Marie. And what man, notwithstanding my caution and yours, would brave the past, which has sullied the youthful days of this unfortunate child? Nobody would have her." "But M. Rodolphe is so generous! he will do for his protégeé still more than he has done—a dowry." "Alas!" said the curé, interrupting Madame Georges, "evil to Marie, if cupidity alone will silence the scruples of him who would marry her! She would be wedded to the most painful fate; cruel recriminations would soon follow such a union." "You are right, Monsieur l'Abbé, it would be horrible. Ah! what an unfortunate lot is then reserved for her!" "She has great faults to expiate," said the curé, gravely. "Mon Dieu! Monsieur l'Abbé, abandoned so young, without resources, without aid, almost without the idea of good and evil, dragged, in spite of herself, in the ways of evil, how could she have escaped?" "Moral good sense ought to have sustained her, enlightened her; and, besides, did she endeavour to escape this horrid fate? Charitable people, are they then so scarce in Paris?" "No, doubtless; but how to find them? Before discovering one, how many refusals, how much indifference! and, besides, Maria did not need a passing charity, but a continued interest, which had put her in the way to earn her living." "Many mothers, without doubt, would have had pity on her; but it needed the good fortune to find them. Ah! believe me, I have known misery. But for a providential chance like that which, alas! too late, brought M. Rodolphe to Marie; but for, I say, one of these chances, the unfortunate, almost always brutally repulsed in first demands, believe pity not to be found, and pressed by hunger—hunger so imperious, they often seek resources in vice, which they despair to obtain from commiseration."

At this moment the Goualouse entered the room.

"Where do you come from, my child?" asked Madame Georges, with an air of interest. "From the 'fruitier,'* madame, after having closed the doors of the lower court. The fruit is well preserved, except a few which I have taken out." "Why did you not tell Claudine to do it, Marie? You were too much fatigued." "No, no, madame, I enjoy myself much in my fruitier, the odour of the ripe fruit is so delicious!"

"You must some day, Monsieur le Curé, visit the fruitier of Marie," said Madame Georges. "You cannot imagine with how much taste it is arranged; garlands of grapes separate each kind of fruit, and these are again divided into compartments by borders of moss."

"Oh! Monsieur le Curé, I am sure you will be very much pleased," said the Goualouse, ingenuously. "You will see what a fine effect the moss has around the red apples and golden pears. There are, above all, some lady apples which are so nice, which have such a charming white and rose colour, that they look like cherubims in a nest of green moss," added the young girl, with the exultation of the artist for her work.

The curé looked at Madame Georges smilingly, and said to Fleur de Maria, "I have already admired the dairy which you direct, my child; it would be the envy of the most fastidious dairywoman; one of these days I will go and admire your fruitier, and these red apples, and these golden pears, and, above all, these beautiful little apples—cherubims in their mossy nest. But here is the sun almost down; you will only have time to conduct me to the parsonage and return before night. Take your cloak and let us go, my child. But I think the cold is too sharp; some one from the farm will accompany me."

"Ah! Monsieur le Curé, you will render her very unhappy," said Madame Georges. "She is so content to accompany you thus every evening!" "Monsieur le Curé," added the Goualouse, raising her large blue eyes towards the priest, "I shall think you are not pleased with me if you do not allow me to accompany you as usual." "I, poor child? take your cloak then, quick, quick, and wrap yourself up well." Fleur de Marie hastened to throw over her shoulders a sort of pelisse with a hood, made of course white woollen, bordered with a black velvet riband, and offered her arm to the curé. "Happily," said he, "it is not far, and the road is safe." "As it is a little later to-day than usual," replied Madame Georges, "do you wish that some one from the farm should go with you, Marie?" "They will think me a coward," said Marie, smiling. "Thank you, madame, do not trouble any one for me; the distance is short to the parsonage; only a quarter of an hour; I shall be back before night.

"I shall not insist, for never, Dieu mercé! we never hear of any vagrants in this neighbourhood."

"Except on this account, I would not accept the arm of this dear child," said the curé, "although it is of great assistance."

The abbé soon left the farm, leaning on the arm of Fleur de Marie, who regulated her light step by the slow and painful movement of the old man.

* A place where fruit is kept.

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A few minutes afterward, the priest and La Goualeuse arrived near the hollow pathway, where the Maître d'Ecole, La Chouette, and Tortillard were concealed.

CHAPTER III

THE AMBUSH.

The church and parsonage of Bouqueval were situated on a hill-side, surrounded by chestnut-trees, and overlooking the village.

Fleur de Marie and the abbé reached a crooked path, which conducted to the curé's abode, in crossing the hollow-road, by which this hill was diagonally intersected.

La Chouette, the Maître d'Ecole, and Tortillard, concealed in one of the windings of this road, saw the priest and his companion descend into the ravine, and come out by a steep path. The features of the young girl were concealed under the hood of her mantle: the Borgnesse did not recognise her former victim.

"Silence, my man!" said the old woman to the Maître d'Ecole; "the young girl and the priest have just crossed the road; it must be her from the description given by the tall man in black: peasant's dress, middling size, petticoat striped with brown, mantle of wool, bound with black. She thus conducts, every day, the priest to his house, and returns alone. When she returns, directly, at the end of the road, we must pounce upon her and take her to the carriage." "And if she cries for help!" answered the Maître d'Ecole, "they will hear her at the farm, since you say that you can see the buildings from hence; for you can see—you—," added he, in a mournful tone. "Certain, we can see the houses from here," said Tortillard. "Just now, I creeped up to the top of the slope on my belly. I heard a man a speaking to his horses, in the court down there." "Then, now, see what must be done," answered the Maître d'Ecole, after a moment's pause: "Tortillard must go and watch at the entrance of the road. When he sees the little one coming in the distance, he must go to her crying that he is the son of a poor old woman who is wounded by falling into the hollow-road, and he must beg the young girl to come to her assistance."

"I understand, 'Fourline.' The poor old woman shall be your Chouette. Well managed. My man, you are always the king of sensible men! And afterward, what shall I do?"

"You will go down to the end of the hollow-road, near where Barbillon waits with the carriage. I shall hide near-by. When Tortillard has brought the little one to the middle of the ravine, stop groaning, and jump on her, one hand round the neck, and the other in the mouth, after her tongue, understand? eh? keep her from crying."

"Understood, Fourline; just like the woman at the Canal St. Martin, whom we drowned after having robbed her of her black box, which she carried under her arm; same game, is it not?"

"Yes, just so. While you hold the little one tight, Tortillard will come after me; we three, we'll pack the young girl in my cloak; then we'll carry her to the carriage of Barbillon, and then to the plain of St. Dennis, where the man in black waits for us." "Ah! that's it! Stop, now, Fourline, your match is not to be found. If I only had some powder I would set off some fire-works on your sconce, and I would illuminate you with coloured lamps, 'a la Saint Charlot,' the patron of *bequillard* (executioner). Do you understand this, you 'moutard?' If you wish to become a *passé-singe* (an adroit criminal), imitate my old dotard; there's a man for you!" said La Chouette, proudly, to Tortillard. Then, addressing the Maître d'Ecole, she said, "Apropos, you don't know Barbillon is afraid as the devil of having *a brain fever* (Argot for a capital accusation)." "How's that?" "He has *buté* (killed), some time since, in a dispute, the husband of a milk-woman, who came every morning from the country, in a little wagon drawn by an ass, to sell milk in the cité, at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille Draperie, near to the Ogresse of the Lapin Blanc." The son of Bras-Rouge not understanding Argot, listened to La Chouette with a kind of disappointed curiosity. "You'd like to know what we are talking about, hey! Moutard?" "Marry, that's certain."

"If you are a good boy, I'll teach you Argot. You are old enough; it may be of use to you. Will you be pleased, 'Fife?'"

"Oh! I guess so! and, besides, I'd rather stay with you than with the old cheat of a quack, to pound his drugs and curry his horse. If I knew where he kept his *ratsbane for men*, I'd put some in his soup, so I would no longer be forced to stay with him."

La Chouette burst out a laughing, and said to Tortillard, drawing him towards her, "Come right away, and kiss mamma, 'loulou,' ain't you a droll one! But how do you know that he has ratsbane for men—your master?" "Hold! I heard him say it one day, when I was concealed in the black cabinet in his room, where he keeps his bottles, his steel instruments, and where he mixes in his little mortars." "You heard him say what?" asked La Chouette. "I heard him say to a gentleman, in giving him a powder in a paper, 'Whoever takes this three times, will go to sleep under ground without any one knowing why nor how, and without leaving any trace."

"And who was this gentleman?" asked Le Maître d'Ecole.

"A fine young man, who had black mustaches, and a handsome face like a lady. He came another time; but that time, when he went away, I followed him by order of M. Bradamanté, to knew where he roosted. This fine gentleman went into a fine house in the 'Rue de Chaillot.' My master told me: 'No matter where this gentleman goes, follow him and wait at the door; if he comes out again, follow until he stops again; if he remains, that proves he lives there: then, Tortillard, my boy, twist yourself up to know his name, or I'll twist your ears in a droll manner.' "Well?" "Well! I twisted myself, and I found out his name." "And did you manage?" asked the Maître d'Ecole.

"Stop. I am no fool. I entered into the porter's lodge of the house of the 'Rue Chaillot:' there was the porter, all powdered, in a fine brown suit, with a yellow collar and silver binding. I said to him, just so: 'My good sir, I come to get five francs that your master has promised me for finding his dog a little black dog called Trumpet; and to prove what I say is true, this gentleman is of a dark complexion, with black mustaches, a white overcoat, and blue pantaloons; he told me that he lived in the "Rue de Chaillot," and that his name was Dupont.' 'The gentleman of whom you speak is my master, and is called

M. le Vicomte de Saint-Rémy; there is no other dog here than yourself, you bad boy; so march, or I'll thrash you, to teach you how to try to cheat me out of five francs,' answered the porter, adding a kick by way of warning. However, it's all the same," continued Tortillard, philosophically. "I found out the name of the handsome gentleman with black mustaches, who came to my master's to get ratsbane for men; he is named the Vicomte de Saint-Rémy-my-my," added the son of Bras-Rouge, stuttering in his usual manner.

"Do you want me to eat you, little joker?" said La Chouette, embracing Tortillard; "isn't he cunning! I declare, you deserve that I should be your mother, wicked one!" These words made a singular impression on the little lame boy; his wicked countenance, crafty and cunning, became suddenly sad; he appeared to take in earnest the maternal demonstrations of La Chouette, and answered, "And I love you, too, because you embraced me the first day that you came to seek me at the Cœur Saignant, at my father's. Since the death of my mother, no one but you has caressed me; everybody else beats me or drives me off like a mangy dog; everybody, down to La Mère Pipelet, the portière." "Old hussey! I'd advise her to play the disgusted," said La Chouette, in a manner that deceived Tortillard, "to repulse a child's love like yours!" and the Borgnesse embraced again the little Tortillard, in a most ridiculously affecting manner. The son of Bras-Rouge, profoundly touched with this new proof of affection, returned the embrace, and cried in his gratitude, "You have only to command; you'll see how well I'll obey you—how I'll serve you!"

"Truly? Well! you will not repent it." "Oh! I should like to live with you!" "If you are a good boy, we'll see about it; you shall never leave us, my man."

"Yes," said the Maître d'Ecole, "you shall lead me like a poor blind man; you'll say you are my son, we will get into houses; and 'mille massacres!'" added the murderer with rage, "La Chouette aiding, we'll do some good business; I will show this demon of a Rodolphe, who made me blind, that I am not yet at the end of my crimes! He has taken away my sight, but he has not taken the thought of evil; I will be the head, Tortillard the eyes, and you the hand, La Chouette; you'll help me, heiu?" "Am I not yours even to the rope and the gallows, Fourline? Did I not, on coming out of the hospital, when I heard that you had sent to the Ogresses' after me by that *sinne* (simple fellow) of Saint Mandé, did I not fly to your village, among those ninnies of peasants, saying I was your wife?"

These words of the Borgnesse awoke some disagreeable "souvenir," for the Maître d'Ecole changing roughly his tone and language, cried in an angry voice, "Yes, I was tired, all alone with these honest people; at the end of a month, I could not remain quiet. I was afraid. Then I thought I would send for you. Well, I was caught," added he, in a still more irritated manner, "the day after your arrival. I was robbed of the rest of the money that this demon of the Allée des Veuves had given me. Yes, some one stole my belt filled with gold while I was asleep. You alone could have done it; and now I am at your mercy. Hold, every time I think of this, I don't know why I don't kill you on the spot, old she-thief!" and he made a step towards the Borgnesse.

"Take care of yourself; if you hurt, La Chouette!" cried Tortillard. "I'll crush you both, you and she, wicked serpents as you are!" cried the brigand in a fury; and hearing the son of Bras-Rouge talking near him, he dealt a chance blow so vigorously that it must have killed him if it had reached him. Tortillard, as much to revenge himself as La Chouette, picked up a stone, and throwing it at the Maître d'Ecole, hit him on the forehead. The blow was not dangerous, though severe. The brigand roused himself furiously like a mad bull, made some steps forward, and stumbled.

"Break-neck!" cried La Chouette, with shouts of laughter. Notwithstanding the bloody ties which bound her to this monster, she saw, for many reasons, and with a kind of ferocious joy the annihilation of this man, formerly so renowned and so proud of his gigantic strength. The Borgnesse justified thus in her own way this frightful thought of La Rochefoucault: "That we always find something satisfying in the troubles of our best friends." The horrible child, with yellow hair and weasel face, joined in the hilarity of La Chouette. At a new false step of the Maître d'Ecole, he cried, "Open your eyes, old boy, open your eyes, then! you are going the wrong way, don't you see clear? wipe the glasses of your spectacles."

From the impossibility of reaching the child, the Herculean murderer stopped, struck the ground with rage, placed his two enormous hands on his eyes, and put forth a cry like a muzzled tiger.

"You cough, old boy!" said the son of Bras-Rouge. "Hold, here is some famous liquorice; a gens d'arme gave it to me—musn't be disgusted with it!" and he gathered up a handful of fine sand, which he threw in the face of the assassin. Stung severely by this rain of gravel, the Maître d'Ecole suffered more cruelly from this new insult than from the blow of the stone; becoming pale under his lived scars, he stretched out his arms, crossed, and with a movement of inexpressible despair, and lifting towards heaven his frightful face, cried with a voice profoundly supplicating, "Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!"

Coming from a man stained with every crime, and before whom, formerly, the most hardened wretches had trembled, this involuntary appeal to the Divine commiseration, seemed something providential. "Ah! ah! ah! Fourline, who makes such good use of his arms," cried La Chouette, chuckling. "Your tongue is twisted, my man; it is the devil that you ought to call to your assistance." "But a knife, at least, that I may kill myself! a knife!! since every one abandons me," cried the wretch, biting his fists with savage fury. "A knife? You have one in your pocket, Fourline, with a sharp edge. The little old man, of the 'Rue de Roule,' and the cattle merchant must have told it before this to the worms." The Maître d'Ecole, thus put in the way of executing his threats, changed the conversation, and continued, in a low and cowardly tone, "The Chourineur was good, he—he never robbed me; he had pity on me." "Why did you say that I stole your gold?" said La Chouette, hardly restraining her laughter.

"You alone entered into my room," answered the brigand; "I was robbed the first night of your arrival. Who would you that I should suspect? These peasants were incapable of doing it."

"Why can't they steal as well as any one

else? Is it because they drink milk and get herbs for their rabbits?" "No matter; I have been robbed." "Is it the fault of La Chouette? Ah, now, come, think about it. If I had stolen your belt, would I have remained with you afterward? Are you a fool? Most certainly, I would have taken your money if I could, but, on the faith of Chouette, you would have seen me after I had spent the money, because you please me just as much as ever with your white eyes. Brigand! come, be good now; don't break your teeth by grinding them so hard." "One would think he was cracking nuts," said Tortillard. "Ah, ah, ah! he is right, the droll. Come, be calm, my man, and let him laugh; he is a child! But acknowledge that you are unjust. When the tall man in black, who looks like a death's head, said to me, 'Here is a thousand francs for you, if you will carry off a young girl, who is at the farm of Bouqueval, and bring her to a certain place on the plain of Saint Denis, that I will point out,' answer, Fourline, if I did not right away propose this to you, instead of choosing some one who could see? It is just the same as an alms to you; for, excepting that you can hold the little one while Tortillard and I pack her up, you are no more use than a fifth wheel to an omnibus. But, no matter; setting aside that I would have robbed you if I could, I like to do you a service. I wish that you should owe everything to your dear Chouette; it is my way. We'll give two hundred francs to Barbillon for driving the carriage, and for coming here twice to reconnoitre; and there'll remain eight hundred francs for us two to frolic. What do you say to that? Well, are you still angry with your old woman?"

"Who can assure me that you will give me anything when the job is once done?" said the brigand, with an air of defiance.

"I can give you nothing at all, it is true; for you are in my frying-pan, my man, like the Goualeuse, formerly. You must let yourself be cooked according to my notion, while the devil is waiting his turn to bake you, eh, eh, eh! Well, Fourline, do you still pout at your Chouette?" added the Borgnesse, striking the shoulder of the brigand, who remained silent and overwhelmed.

"You are right," said he, with a sigh of concentrated rage; "it is my fate—mine—mine—at the mercy of a child and a woman, who formerly I could have killed with a breath. Oh! if I were not so much afraid of death!" said he, throwing himself on the ground. "Are you a coward now—are you a coward?" said La Chouette, with contempt. "Do talk now of your conscience; it will be still more of a farce. Look here, if you have no more courage than this, I'll be off—I'll leave you."

"And I can never revenge myself on this man, who, in torturing me thus, has placed me in this frightful position, and from whence I can never escape!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with renewed rage. "Oh! I am afraid to die. Yes, afraid; but let any one tell me, They are going to place in your arms this man, and then afterward they will throw you into an abyss, both of you, I would say, Let them do it. Yes, for I would be very certain to hold him tight until we came to the bottom; and while we were rolling down, I'd bite him in the face, in the throat, in the heart; I'd tear him with my teeth! in fine, I'd be jealous of a knife!" "That's right, Fourline; that's the way I love you. Be calm; we'll find him, this devil of a Rodolphe; and the Chourineur, also. When I came out of the hospital, I hovered around the house in the Allée des Veuves—all was closed; but I said to the tall man in mourning, 'Formerly, you wanted to pay us to do something to this monster of a Rodolphe; after this affair is over with the young girl, you have only to tell us what we must do.' 'Perhaps,' he answered. Do you hear, Fourline? perhaps! Courage, my man! we'll have a bite at him, I tell you so. We'll eat him!"

"Truly, you will not abandon me?" said the brigand. "If you forsake me what will become of me?" "That's true. Say, now, Fourline, what a joke it would be if we—Tortillard and I—should go off in the carriage, and leave you here in the midst of fields this night, when the cold pinches so hard. That would be funny, heiu, brigand?"

At this threat the Maître d'Ecole shuddered. He drew near to La Chouette, and said to her, tremblingly, "No, no; you would not do that, La Chouette; nor you, Tortillard; it would be too wicked." "Ah, ah, ah! too wicked. Is he a fool! And the little old man of the Rue du Roule—and the cattle merchant—and the woman of the canal Saint Martin—and the gentleman in the Allée des Veuves! Do you think that they found you very loving, with your long knife? Why shouldn't you have jokes played to you in your turn?" "Well, I avow it!" said the Maître d'Ecole, gloomily. "Come, I was wrong to suspect you—I was wrong to wish to strike Tortillard. I ask pardon. Do you hear? and you also, Tortillard? Yes, I ask both your pardons."

"I want you to ask pardon on your knees, because you wished to strike La Chouette," said Tortillard. "Little love! ain't he amusing?" said La Chouette, laughing. "He really gives me a desire to see what sort of a figure you'll cut in that way, my man. Come, on your knees, just as if you were making love to your Chouette—quick, or we leave you; and I give you notice, in a half hour it will be night." "Night or day, what does it signify to him?" said Tortillard, chuckling. "This gentleman always keeps his shutters closed: he is afraid of spoiling his complexion." "Behold me on my knees. I ask your pardon, La Chouette; and yours also, Tortillard. Well, are you satisfied?" said the brigand, kneeling in the middle of the road. Now you will not abandon me—speak?"

This strange group, standing on the slope of the ravine, lighted by the red gleams of twilight, was hideous to behold. In the middle of the road, the Maître d'Ecole, in a supplicating manner, extended to the Borgnesse his powerful hands; his rough and tangled hair fell, like a mane, on his livid face; his red eyelids, half opened through fright, partly disclosed the immovable eyeballs, dull, glassy, dead—the look of a corpse. His formidable shoulders were humbly bent. This Hercules knelt, tremblingly, at the feet of an old woman and a child. The Borgnesse, wrapped in a shawl of red tartan, her head covered with a cap of black tulle, from whence escaped some tresses of gray hair, stood over the bandit in all her stature. The long, tanned, wrinkled, besotted face of this old woman, with her crooked nose, expressed insulting and ferocious joy; her yellow eye sparkled like a live coal; her sinister smile parted her lips, shaded by long hairs, discovering three or four large teeth, yellow and decayed. Tortillard, dressed in his blouse, with the leather belt, standing on

one foot, leaned on the arm of La Chouette, to maintain his equilibrium. The sickly and cunning face of this child, with a complexion as faded as his hair, expressed, at this moment, a wickedness at once diabolical and jeering.

"But promise me, then, at least not to abandon me!" repeated the Maître d'Ecole, frightened at the silence of La Chouette and Tortillard, who enjoyed his fear. "Are you no longer there?" said the murderer, leaning down to listen, and mechanically advancing his arms. "Yes, yes, my man, we are here; don't be afraid. Abandon you!—rather die! Once for all, you must be assured, and I will tell you why I will not abandon you—never. Listen: I have always wished to have some one to feel my nails, man or beast. Before Pegriotte (who the devil return to me, for I have always my notion to wash her with vitriol)—before Pegriotte, I had a 'môme,' who died under the punishment; that was the reason why I was sent to prison for six years. During that time I was the torment of the birds: I caught them to strip the feathers from them; but I had no fun for my pains; they can't stand anything. When I came out of prison, the Goualeuse fell under my clutches; but the little hussey escaped, while there was some of her skin left to amuse one's self with. After that I had a dog, who suffered as much as she did: I finished by cutting off one of his legs before and one behind; that made him look so awkward that I laughed—I laughed, ready to split my sides!"

"I must do just so to a dog that I know, and who bit me," said Tortillard to himself. "When I met you, my man," continued La Chouette, "I was just about finishing a cat. Well, now you shall be my cat, my bird, my Pegriotte—you shall be my beast of suffering. Do you comprehend, my man? Instead of a bird or a child, to torment a wolf or a tiger, that's what I call rather select, heiu?" "Old she-devil!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with renewed rage. "Come, now, you are angry again with your old woman. Well, leave her; you are the master. I don't take you without your consent." "Yes, the door is open; march, No-eyes, and straight ahead!" said Tortillard, screaming with laughter. "Oh, let me die! die!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, throwing about his arms. "You repent, my man; you have already said this. You die! You joke: you are as solid as the Pont-Neuf. Stop, now; you must live for the happiness of your Chouette. I will put you in misery from time to time, because it is my pleasure; and you must earn the bread I give you; but, if you behave yourself, you shall assist me in all my good jobs, like to-day, and in others that are better, where you can serve me. You shall be my dog: when I say to you, Bring, you shall bring; bite, you shall bite. And now, say, my man. I don't want to take you by force, at least. If, instead of the life I propose to you, you prefer to have an income, ride in a carriage with a pretty little wife, to be decorated with the cross of honour, to be made a great judge, and to see clear, instead of being blind, don't be backward; it is very easy: you have only to say it; it shall be served up smoking hot. Shan't it, Tortillard!" "Smoking hot, all boiling, right off!" answered the son of Bras-Rouge, chuckling. But, leaning suddenly towards the ground, he said, in a low voice, "I hear somebody walking; conceal ourselves. It is not the young girl, for they came from the same side she came from." In a few minutes, a strong country girl, followed by a large dog, and carrying on her head a covered basket, crossed the ravine, and took the path which had been followed by the priest and La Goualeuse. We will rejoin these two persons, and leave the three accomplices concealed in the hollow road.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARSONAGE.

The last rays of the setting sun disappeared slowly behind the imposing mass of buildings of the Chateau d'Ecouen and the woods that surrounded it; on every side, as far as the eye could reach, were spread out immense fields, whose brown furrows were hardened by the frost; a vast solitude of which the hamlet of Boqueval seemed the oasis. The perfectly serene and cloudless sky was mottled in the west with long streaks of purple, a certain sign of wind and cold; these colours, at first very bright, became of a violet hue as the twilight advanced and night came on.

A young moon, like the half of a ring of silver, began to shine softly in the midst of the azure and shade. The silence was profound, the hour solemn. The curé stopped for a moment on the hill to enjoy the appearance of this fine evening.

After a few moments' reflection, extending his trembling hand towards the horizon, half obscured by the shades of evening, he said to Fleur de Marie, who walked pensively at his side, "See now, my child, this immensity, whose boundaries cannot be seen—not the least noise is heard—it seems to me that silence and infinity give us almost an idea of eternity. I say this to you, Marie, because you are sensible of the beauties of creation. Often have I been touched with the religious admiration with which they inspire you, who have been for so long a time debarred from them; are you not struck as well as me with the imposing calmness of this hour?" La Goualeuse answered not a word.

Astonished, the curé looked at her; she wept. "What is the matter, then, my child?" "My father, I am very unhappy!" "Unhappy! You, now unhappy?" "I know I have no right to complain of my lot, after all that has been done for me. Yet—" "Yet?" "Ah! my father, pardon these sorrows; they offend, perhaps, my benefactors." "Listen, Marie, we have often asked the reason of the grief which often overhangs you, and which causes your second mother the most lively inquietude. You avoid answering us; we have respected your secret, and have been afflicted that we could not solace your sorrows." "Alas, my father, I cannot tell you all that passes within me. Thus, like you just now, I felt myself troubled at the sight of this calm and peaceful evening. My heart is broken, and I wept."

"But what is the matter, Marie? You know how much we love you. Come, tell me all. Besides, I can tell you that the day draws near when Madame Georges and M. Rodolphe will present you to the font for baptism, in taking before God the engagement to protect you always." "M. Rodolphe? he who saved me!" cried Fleur de Marie, joining her hands; "he will deign to give me this new proof of affection! oh! hold! I will conceal nothing from

you, my father; I fear too much to be ungrateful." "Ungrateful! and how?" "To make myself understood, I must speak of the first days I came to the farm."

"I listen to you; we will talk as we walk on." "You will be indulgent, won't you, my father? What I am going to tell you is perhaps very wicked." "The Lord has proved to you that he is very merciful. Take courage." "When I learned, on arriving here, that I should not leave the farm and Madame Georges," said Fleur de Marie, after a moment's pause, "I thought I was in a dream. At first I felt as if I were stunned with happiness; at each moment I thought of M. Rodolphe. Often, all alone and in spite of myself, I raised my eyes to heaven, as if to seek him there, and thank him. At length—I accuse myself, my father—I thought more of him than of God; for he had done for me what God alone could do; I was happy; happy as one who had escaped forever a great danger. You and Madame Georges were so kind to me that I thought myself then more to be pitied than blamed."

The curé looked at the Goualeuse with surprise; she continued. "By degrees I became accustomed to a life so easy; I no longer felt afraid on awaking to find myself at the Ogresse's; I felt myself, as it may be said, to sleep with security; all my joy was to aid Madame Georges in her labours, to apply myself to the lessons you gave me, my father; and also to profit by your exhortations. Save some moments of shame when I thought of the past, I believed myself the equal of everybody, because every one was good to me, when one day—" Here her sobs interrupted her. "Come, now, be calm, poor child; courage! go on."

The Goualeuse wiped her eyes and thus continued:

"You may remember, my father, that during the fête of All Saints, Madame Dubreuil, 'fermière' of the Duke of Lucenay, at Arnoville, came with her daughter to pass some time here with us." "Doubtless, and I saw with pleasure that you became acquainted with Clara Dubreuil; she is an excellent young person." "She is an angel, my father; an angel. When I knew that she was coming to pass some days at the farm, my happiness was great; I only thought of the moment when she would arrive. At length she came. I was in my room; I was to divide it with her, I arranged it all in order; they sent to seek me. I entered in the saloon, my heart beat; Madame Georges, in introducing me to this beautiful young girl, said, 'Marie, here is a friend for you.' 'And I hope that you and my daughter will soon be like two sisters,' added Madame Dubreuil. Hardly had her mother said these words, than Mlle. Clara ran to embrace me. Then, my father," said Fleur de Marie, weeping, "I do not know what suddenly passed within me; but when I felt the pure and lovely face of Clara touch my faded cheek, my cheek became burning with shame, with remorse. I remembered what I had been. I! to receive the caresses of a young person so modest! Oh! that seemed to me a mockery, an unworthy hypocrisy." "But, my child—" "Ah! my father," cried Fleur de Marie, interrupting the curé, in a mournful manner, "when M. Rodolphe brought me from the cité, I had then vaguely the consciousness of my degradation. But do you think that the education, the counsels, the examples that I have received from Madame Georges and yourself, in cultivating my mind, have not, alas! made me comprehend that I have been more culpable than unfortunate? Before the arrival of Mlle. Clara, when these thoughts tormented me, I stifled them in endeavouring to please Madame Georges and you, my father. If I blushed for the past, it was to myself. But the sight of this young person of my own age, so charming, so virtuous, made me reflect on the distance that separated us forever. For the first time I felt that there are crimes nothing can efface. Since that day, this thought never leaves me. In spite of myself, I dwell on it without ceasing; since that day I have no longer any repose."

The Goualeuse wiped her eyes, filled with tears.

After having looked at her some time, with the most tender commiseration, the curé answered, "Reflect, my child, that if Madame Georges wished to see you the friend of Madame Dubreuil, it is because she knew you worthy of it from your good conduct. The reproaches you make yourself are almost addressed to your second mother." "I know it, my father, I was wrong without doubt; but I could not overcome my shame and fear. This is not all; I want courage to finish." "Go on, Marie; so far your scruples, or, rather, your remorse, prove in favour of your heart." "Clara once established on the farm, I was as sad as I at first thought I should be happy, in thinking I should have a companion of my own age; she, on the contrary, was all joyous. Her bed was prepared in my room. The first night, before we retired, she embraced me, and said she loved me already; she asked me to call her Clara, as she would call me Marie. Then she prayed, saying she would join my name in her prayers if I would do so for her. I dared not refuse that. After talking for some time, she fell asleep; I had not yet retired; I approached her; I regarded her angel face in weeping; and then, in thinking that she slept in the same room with me, who had been found at the Ogresse's with robbers and assassins, I trembled as if I had done a bad action. I went to my bed; I had fearful dreams; I saw again the sinister figures that I had almost forgotten, the Chourineur, the Maître d'Ecole, La Chouette. Oh! what a night! Mon Dieu! what a night! what dreams!" said the Goualeuse, shuddering at the thought. "Poor Marie!" said the curé, with emotion; "why have you not confided this to me before? I would have consoled you. But continue." "I slept very late; Clara came to awaken me with a kiss. To conquer what she called my coldness and prove her friendship, she wished to confide to me a secret; as soon as she was eighteen she was to be united to the son of a farmer of Goussainville, whom she loved tenderly. Then she related to me, in a few words, her past life; a life simple, calm, happy; she had never left her mother, she never would leave her; for her betrothed would assist her father on his farm. 'Now, Marie,' said she, 'you know me as if I were your sister; relate your life.' At these words I thought I should have died with shame. I blushed, I stammered. I was ignorant what Madame Georges might have said of me; I feared to contradict her. I answered vaguely that I was an orphan and brought up by strict people, I had not been very happy in my childhood, and that my happiness dated from the time of my residence with Ma-

dame Georges. Then Clara, more through interest than curiosity, asked where I was brought up; was it in the city or country? what was my father's name? Above all, she asked me if I remembered my mother. Each of the questions embarrassed as much as they pained me; for it was necessary to answer them with a falsehood, and you have taught me, my father, how bad it is to tell an untruth. But Clara did not imagine that I could deceive her. I attributed the hesitation of my answers to the grief which the sad recollections of my childhood caused me. Clara believed me, and pitied me with a kindness which tortured me. Oh! my father! you can never know what I suffered in this first interview! how much it cost me not to say a word that was deceitful and false!" "Unfortunate child! may the wrath of God bear on those who, in casting you in the abominable way of perdition, will force you, perhaps, to suffer all your life the inexorable consequences of a first fault!" "Oh! yes, they have been very wicked, my father," answered Fleur de Marie, bitterly; "for my shame is indelible. This is not all; while Clara was telling me of the happiness she expected from her marriage, from her family circle, I could not but compare my lot with hers; for, notwithstanding the benefits I receive, my lot must be a sad one; you and Madame Georges, in making me to understand virtue, have also made me understand the horrors of my past life. Alas! since the knowledge of good and evil is so fatal to me, why not leave me to my unhappy fate!"

"Oh! Marie! Marie!" "What I say is very wicked, is it not, my father? Alas! that is what I dared not to confess to you. Yes, sometimes I have been ungrateful enough to say, If I had not been taken away from the paths of infamy, well! misery would soon have killed me; at least, I should have died in ignorance of what I shall now never cease to regret." "Alas! Marie, that is fatal! A nature, even generously endowed by the Creator, had it been plunged but one single day in the mire from whence you were taken, would always preserve an indelible stigma. Such is the immutability of Divine Justice." "You see, now, my father," cried Fleur de Marie, mournfully, "I must despair even till death!"

"You must despair to efface from your life this desolating page," said the priest, in a grave and sorrowful voice; "but you must hope in the infinite compassion of the All Powerful: here below, for you, poor child, tears, remorse, expiation; but one day, there, above," added he, raising his hand towards the starry firmament, "there, pardon, eternal felicity!"

"Pity, pity, 'mon Dieu!' I am so young, and my life may perhaps be so long!" said the Goualeuse in a touching voice, falling, with an involuntary movement, at the feet of the curé. The priest was standing on the summit of the hill, not far from the parsonage. His black cassock, his venerable face, around which floated his long white hair, was lighted by the last gleams of twilight; one hand was raised towards heaven, the other abandoned to Fleur de Marie, who covered it with kisses.

The hood of her gray mantle, at this moment thrown back upon her shoulders, discovered the enchanting profile of the young girl—her supplicating and tearful expression—her neck, of dazzling whiteness, where was seen the silken fastenings of her flaxen hair.

This simple and grand picture presented a striking contrast, a singular coincidence, to the sorrowful scene which at the same moment occurred between La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole, in the ravine of the hollow road. Concealed in the darkness of the gloomy "chemin creux," assailed by cowardly fears, a frightful murderer, bearing the penalty of his misdeeds, was also kneeling; but before his accomplice, a jeering fury, a revengeful woman, who tormented him without pity, and excited him to new crimes—his accomplice—first cause of the misfortunes of Fleur de Marie—of Fleur de Marie, who was tortured by never-ceasing remorse. The exaggeration of her grief—it is not to be conceived? Surrounded from her infancy with wicked, degraded, infamous beings; leaving her prison for the den of the Ogresse, another humble prison—never leaving the court of her jail, or the dark streets of the cité—this unfortunate young girl, had she not lived until then in profound ignorance of what was good and virtuous, as she was also a stranger to noble and religious sentiments, and the splendid magnificence of nature?

"Oh! sorrow for me!" said La Goualeuse, in desperation; "my whole life, was it as pure as yours, my father, would henceforth be disgraced by conscience and the memory of the past. Sorrow for me!" "Happiness for you, on the contrary, Marie; happiness for you, to whom the Lord sends this remorse, full of bitterness, but salutary! It proves the religious susceptibility of your soul. So many others, less nobly endowed than you are, had in your place soon forgotten the past, to enjoy only the present felicity. A delicate mind like yours finds sufferings where a vulgar one would feel none! But each one of these sufferings will be recompensed up there, believe me! God did not leave you a moment in the evil path, but to reserve for you the glory of repentance, and the eternal recompense due to the expiation! Has he not said it himself? 'Those who do right without fighting for it, and who come to me with the smile on their lip, those are my elect; but those who are wounded in the struggle, and come to me bleeding and wounded, those are the elect from among my elect.' Courage, then, my child! Advice, support, nothing shall be wanting. I am very old; but Madame Georges, but M. Rodolphe, have yet many years to live. M. Rodolphe above all—who shows so much interest for you—who follows your progress with a solicitude so enlightened; say, Marie, say, can you ever regret having met him?" The Goualeuse was about to answer, when she was interrupted by the peasant girl of whom we have spoken; she was one of the servants of the farm.

"Excuse me, Monsieur le Curé," said she to the priest, "but Madame Georges told me to bring this basket of fruit to the parsonage, and so I can accompany Mlle. Marie back, for it is late; but I have brought Turk with me," said she, caressing an enormous dog from the Pyrenees, who could have defied a bear in combat. "Although there are no robbers in these parts, it is always more prudent."

"You are right, Claudine. Here we are at the passage. You will thank Madame Georges for me." Then addressing in a low tone the Goualeuse, the curé said to her gravely, "I must go to-morrow to the conference of the diocess; but I shall return by five o'clock. If you wish, my child, I will expect you at the parsonage. I

see, from the state of your mind, that you have need of a longer conference with me." "I thank you, my father," answered Fleur de Marie; "to-morrow I will come, since you allow it."

"But here we are at the garden-gate," said the priest. "Leave the basket there, Claudine; my housekeeper will take it. Return quick to the farm with Marie, for it is almost night, and the cold increases. To-morrow, Marie, at five o'clock!" "To-morrow, my father." The abbé entered his garden, and the Goualeuse and Claudine, followed by Turk, took the road to the farm.

CHAPTER V.

THE RENCONTRE.

Night came on clear and cold. Following the advice of the Maître d'Ecole, La Chouette had gone with the brigand to a part of the road at some distance from the pathway, and nearer the place where Barbillon was waiting with the hack. Tortillard, posted as a scout, watched the return of Fleur de Marie, whom he was to entice into this ambush, by supplicating her to come to the assistance of a poor old woman. The son of Bras-Rouge had advanced a few steps from the ravine to listen; he heard, at a distance, the Goualeuse talking to the peasant who accompanied her. The young girl being no longer alone, the plot had failed; he hastened to descend into the ravine, and ran to inform La Chouette. "There is some one with her," said he, in a low and breathless voice. "May the hangman strangle her!" cried she, in a rage. "Who is she with?" asked the Maître d'Ecole. "Doubtless with the peasant girl who just now passed, followed by a large dog; I heard a woman's voice," said Tortillard. "Hold! Listen! Do you not hear the noise of their sabots?" "There are two of them; I can take charge of the little one in the gray mantle; but the other one! what shall we do with her? Fourline can't see, and Tortillard is too weak to manage the other one, whom the devil choke! What shall we do?" repeated La Chouette.

"I am not strong; but, if you say so, I'll catch hold of the legs of the peasant girl with the dog. I'll hold one with my hands and teeth; I'll not let her go. During this time, you can carry off the little one; you, La Chouette." "And if they scream? and if they kick? they will hear them at the farm," answered La Borgnesse. "They will have time to come to their assistance before we can reach the carriage. It isn't so easy to carry off a woman who struggles!" "And they have a large dog with them," said Tortillard. "Bah! bah! if it was only that, with one blow of my shoe I'd settle him," said La Chouette.

"They come," continued Tortillard, listening to the noise of their approaching footsteps; "they are descending into the ravine."

"But do speak now, Fourline; what do you advise, old tadpole? Are you dumb?" "There is nothing to be done to-day," said the brigand. "And the thousand francs of the gentleman in black?" cried La Chouette; "they are lost, then? Rather—use your knife! your knife! Fourline. I'll kill the companion, so she shan't trouble us; as to the little one, Tortillard and I'll soon gag her."

"But the man in black doesn't expect us to kill any one."

"Well, we'll put the blood down as something extra in the bill. He must pay well, since he is our accomplice."

"There they are! They descend," said Tortillard in a low voice.

"Your knife, my man!" cried La Chouette, also in a low tone.

"Oh! La Chouette!" said Tortillard in affright, stretching his hands towards La Borgnesse; "it is too much! Kill her? Oh! no, no!"

"Your knife, I tell you," repeated La Chouette in a low voice, without paying any attention to the supplications of Tortillard, and taking off her shoes in great haste. "I take off my shoes," added she, "to surprise them by creeping after them. It is quite dark, but I can recognise the little one by her gray mantle, and I'll kill the other one." "No!" said the brigand, "to-day it is useless; there will be time enough to-morrow." "You are afraid? *frileux?*" said La Chouette, with brutal contempt. "I am not afraid," answered the Maître d'Ecole; "but you may fail, and thus lose all."

The dog which accompanied the peasant, scenting, no doubt, the people in ambush, stopped short, barked with fury, and paid no attention to the reiterated calls of the companion of Fleur de Marie.

"Do you hear their dog? Here they are! Quick—your knife! or—useless!" cried La Chouette, with a menacing tone. "Come, then, and take it by force!" said the Maître d'Ecole. "It is finished! it is too late!" cried La Chouette, after having listened a moment with attention. "They are gone. You shall pay for this! Get out, gallows-bird!" added she, furiously shaking her fist in his face; "a thousand francs lost by your fault!" "A thousand, two thousand, perhaps three gained, on the contrary!" answered the Maître d'Ecole, in a tone of authority. "Listen to me, La Chouette," added he, "and you will see if I was wrong in refusing to lend you my knife. You go to Barbillon—and both of you return with the carriage to the place where you are to meet the tall man in black. You will tell him that nothing can be done to-day, but that to-morrow she shall be carried off." "And you?" murmured La Chouette, still in a rage.

"Listen once more! The little girl goes alone every night to see the priest home; it was by chance, to-day, that she met some one; it is probable that to-morrow we'll have better luck. Return, then, to-morrow at this hour, with Barbillon and the hack." "But you? but you?"

"Tortillard will lead me to the farm where this girl resides; he will say we are lost; that I am his father, a poor workman, blind from an accident; that we are going to Louvres, to one of our relations, who will assist us; and that we became lost in the fields, by trying to find a shorter path. We will ask to pass the night at the farm, in a corner of the stable. They never refuse this. These peasants will believe us, and give us a lodging. Tortillard will examine well the doors and windows: there is always money among these folks at the approach of rent-day. I, who have owned property," added he, with bitterness, "I know this. We are now in the second week of January; it is the right time. The farm is situated, you say, in a lonely place; when we once know how to get in and out, we can return with some friends; it is an affair that can be managed."

"Always a trump; and what wisdom!" said

La Chouette, beginning to be appeased. "Go on, Fourline."

"To-morrow morning, instead of leaving the farm, I will complain that I am not able to walk. If they don't believe me, I will show the wound that I have had since I broke my chain, and which always troubles me. I will say that I got this wound from a bar of red-hot iron, while working at my trade as a machinist; they will believe me. Thus, I will remain at the farm a part of the day, so that Tortillard can have time to examine everything. When the evening comes, at the moment that the young girl, as is her custom, goes home with the priest, I will say that I am better, and that I am ready to go. We will follow the young girl at a distance, and we will return to await her here, when she goes home. Knowing us, she will have no fear; we will take hold of her, Tortillard and I; and, once she is within my arms, I'll answer for her; she is caught, and the thousand francs are ours. This is not all. In two or three days we can give the affair at the farm to Barbillon, and some others, and will divide whatever they get, since it is us who *nourri le poupard* (pointed out the business)." "Come, No-eyes, you haven't your equal," said La Chouette, embracing the Maître d'Ecole. "But if, by chance, she should not take the priest home to-morrow?"

"We will wait the day after; it is one of those morsels that must be eaten cold and slowly; besides, it will make expenses that will augment the bill against the gentleman in black; and besides, once at the farm, I will know better how to judge, from what I hear, if we have any chance to carry her off by the means proposed, or whether we must arrange another way." "That will answer, my man! your plan is a famous one! I say, Fourline, when you become altogether infirm we must make you consulting robber; you'll gain as much money as a lawyer. Come, embrace your Chouette, and make haste; these peasants go to sleep with the chickens. I'll clear out and find Barbillon; to-morrow, at four o'clock, we'll be at the cross, him and his carriage, unless, in the mean time, he should be arrested for having killed the husband of the milkwoman of the 'Rue de la Vielle-Draperie.' A quarter of an hour after, I'll be here and wait for you."

"You've said it—till to-morrow, La Chouette. And I, who was going to forget to give some wax to Tortillard, if there should be any impressions to take at the farm! Here! make good use of it." "Fy, fy!" added the Borgnesse, giving a piece of wax to Tortillard.

"Yes, yes; papa showed me how. I have taken for him the impression of the lock of a little iron box that my master, the quack, has in the black cabinet."

"Very well; and, that it don't stick, don't forget to wet your wax after having well moulded it in your hands."

"I know how!" answered Tortillard. "But, you see, I do everything you wish me to; and that is—because you love me a little, don't you, La Chouette?" "I love you! I love you as much as if you were my child, and the deceased Emperor, the great Napoleon, was your father!" said La Chouette, embracing Tortillard, who was immoderately flattered with this imperial compliment.

"Till to-morrow, Fourline!" "Farewell!" answered the brigand, who, with Tortillard, directed his steps towards the farm, while La Chouette went to find Barbillon and the hack.

Strange fatality which thus drew together Anselmo Duresnel and his wife, whom he had not seen since his condemnation to labour in the galleys!

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVENING.

Is there anything more cheering than the kitchen of a large farmhouse, at the hour of the evening repast—in the winter season, above all? Is there any that more vividly recalls the calmness and happiness of a rural life? A proof of this could have been adduced at the sight of the kitchen of the Bouqueval farm. Its immense chimney, six feet in height by eight in breadth, resembled a wall of stone opening on a furnace. On the black hearth blazed immense logs of oak and beech. This immense fire sent as much light as heat to all parts of the kitchen, and rendered useless the light of a lamp suspended from the main beam of the ceiling. Large kettles and saucepans of red copper were arranged on shelves, shining like silver; an antique fountain of the same metal sparkled like a mirror, not far from a kneading-trough of walnut, carefully polished, and from whence arose a most refreshing odour of new-made bread; a large table, covered with a coarse cloth, but of dazzling purity, occupied the middle of the room; the place of each one was marked by a plate of delft-ware, and spoon and fork of iron, glistening like silver. In the middle of the table a large tureen, filled with a vegetable soup, smoked like a crater, and covered with its savoury fumes a formidable plate of ham and cabbage, and another plate, not less formidable, of a ragout of mutton and potatoes; finally, a quarter of roast veal, flanked by two salads, and accompanied by two plates of potatoes and two cheeses, completed the repast. Three or four stone pitchers, filled with foaming cider made on the farm, and as many loaves of bread, as large as millstones, were at the discretion of the labourers.

An old shepherd's dog, almost without teeth, owed to his great age and former services the permission to remain by the fireside. Using modestly and discreetly this privilege, with his muzzle elongated on his two outstretched paws, he followed with an attentive eye the different culinary evolutions which preceded the supper. This venerable dog answered to the name, somewhat pastoral, of Lysander. Perhaps the ordinary of the people of this farm will appear somewhat sumptuous; but Madame Georges (in this faithful to the views of Rodolphe) ameliorated as much as possible the condition of her workmen, exclusively chosen among the most honest and industrious of the country. They were well paid; they were made comfortable and happy; thus, to become a labourer on the farm of Bouqueval was the aim of all the good workmen of the district; an innocent ambition, which kept alive a sort of emulation, so much the more to be praised as it turned to the profit of the masters they served; for no one could present himself to obtain a vacant place on a farm unless he had the best recommendations from his former employer.

Rodolphe created thus, on a small scale, a kind of model farm, not only destined to the improvement of agriculture or the breed of cattle, but, above all, to the amelioration of men; and

he attained this end by making it their interest to be honest, active, and intelligent. After having served up the supper, and placed on the table a jug of old wine, destined to accompany the dessert, the cook rang the bell. At this joyous appeal, labourers, boys, milkmaids, girls, to the number of twelve or fifteen, entered gayly into the kitchen. The head of the table was occupied by an old labourer with white hair, with an honest and hardy face, and a slightly sneering mouth. The père châtelain (as this Nestor was called), having never left the farm since his infancy, was there employed as head labourer when Rodolphe bought the farm; the old "serviteur" was warmly recommended to him; he kept him, and he was invested, under the orders of Madame Georges, as a superintendant of the field-labours. All the peasants seated themselves. After having asked a blessing in a loud voice, the père châtelain, after an old and holy custom, traced a cross on one of the loaves of bread with the point of his penknife, and cut off a small piece, representing the share of the Holy Virgin, or for the poor; he poured out a glass of wine afterward, under the same invocation, and put the whole on a plate, which was piously placed on the centre of the table. At this moment the dogs without began to bark; the old Lysander answered by a sullen growl, drew up his nap, and showed two or three stumps which were yet quite respectable.

"There is some one by the walls of the court," said père châtelain. Hardly had he said these words, when the bell of the large door was rung. "Who can come so late?" said the old labourer; "everybody has come in. Go and see, Jean René."

Jean René put back with regret into his plate an enormous spoonful of hot soup, which he had been blowing like a young Eolus, and went out of the kitchen.

"This is the first time for a long while that Madame Georges and Mademoiselle Marie have not taken their seat in the corner, to assist at our supper," said the père châtelain; "I am hungry, but I don't eat with the same appetite." "Madame Georges has gone up to the room of Mademoiselle Marie; for when she returned from her walk, she was quite unwell, and has gone to bed," answered Claudine, the robust peasant girl who had accompanied Fleur de Marie home. "Our good Mademoiselle Marie is only indisposed—I hope she is not sick?" asked the old labourer, anxiously. "No, no! Dieu merce! père châtelain; Madame Georges said it was nothing," answered Claudine; "otherwise she would have sent to Paris for M. David, this black doctor, who has already taken charge of her when she was sick. All the same, I know; but a black doctor is so surprising! For myself, I have no great confidence. A white doctor, very well; it's Christianlike."

"Hasn't M. David cured Mademoiselle Marie?" "Yes, père châtelain." "Well!" "All the same; a black doctor scares me." "Didn't he put old Mother Anique on her feet, who, in consequence of a wound in her legs, had not been able to move from her bed in three years?" "Yes, yes, père châtelain; but a black doctor: just think: all black, all black."

"Listen, my girl: what colour is your heifer Musette?"

"White, père châtelain, white as a swan; and a famous milker: can say that without making her blush."

"And your heifer Rosette?" "Black as a crow, père châtelain: a famous milker also—must be just to all." "And the milk of this black heifer, what colour is it?" "Why, white, to be sure: it is very simple, white as snow." "As white and good as that of Musette's?" "Why, yes, père châtelain." "Although Rosette is black?" "Although Rosette is black—what difference does it make in the milk, whether the cow is black, red, or white?" "None." "Absolutely none, père châtelain." "Well, then! my girl, why cannot a black doctor be as good as a white one?" "Marry! père châtelain; it was on account of the skin," said the girl, after a moment's hesitation. "But, in truth, since Rosette the black has as good milk as Musette the white, the skin can make no difference." These physiognomic reflections of Claudine on the difference between the races of the blacks and whites were interrupted by the return of Jean René, who blew on his fingers with as much vigour as he had blown on his soup. "Oh! how cold! how cold it is to-night! it freezes as hard as a stone," said he, coming in; "better be within doors than without such weather: how cold!"

"A frost commencing with an east wind will be hard and long; you ought to know that, boy. But who rang the bell?" asked the old labourer. "A poor blind man, and a child who conducts him, père châtelain."

CHAPTER VII

HOSPITALITY.

"And what does he want, this blind man?" asked the père châtelain of Jean René. "The poor man and his son have got lost in going to Louvres by the cross-road. As it is so cold and the night so dark, for the sky is now overcast, the blind man and his boy ask permission to sleep in the stable. Madame Georges is so good that she never refuses hospitality to an unfortunate; she will certainly consent to give a lodging to these poor people; but we must ask her. Go and see, Claudine."

"And where is he waiting, this poor man?" asked le père châtelain.

"In the little granary." "Why did you put him in the granary?"

"If he had remained in the court, the dogs would have torn him to pieces, he and the boy. Yes, père châtelain, I had as much as I could do—Be quiet, Turk! here, Medor! down, Sultan! I have never seen them so much enraged. And yet on this farm they are never set at beggars, as they are in some places." "Ma foi, my children, the poors' portion has been reserved for some purpose. Sit closer—so! Put two more covers on, one for the blind man, the other for his son; for surely Madame Georges will let them pass the night here."

"It is very astonishing that the dogs should have been so furious," said Jean René to himself; "there was Turk, above all, that Claudine took with her to-night to the parsonage; he was like a possessed. When I patted him to appease him, his hair stood up like a porcupine. What do you say to that, heiu! père châtelain, you who know everything?" "I say, mon garçon! I who know everything, that the dumb beasts know some things better than I do. During the hurricane this autumn, which changed the little

river into a torrent, when I returned at dark night, with my farm horses, seated on the old roan, may the devil take me, if I should have known how to pass the ford, for I couldn't see my hand before my face! Well! I laid the bridle on the neck of the old roan, and he found all alone what none of us could have found. Who taught him that?" "Yes, père châtelain; who taught him that, the old roan horse?" "He who teaches the swallows to build their nests under the eaves, and humming-birds in the midst of the rosebushes, mon garçon. Well! Claudine," said the old oracle to the dairy-maid, who entered carrying on her arm two pair of white sheets, diffusing an odour of sage and vervaive, "heiu! Madame Georges has ordered the blind man and his boy to be kept here to-night, hasn't she?"

"Here are the sheets to make their beds in the little room at the end of the corridor," said Claudine. "Go, and bring them in, Jean René. You, my girl, place two chairs by the fire; they must warm themselves a little before they can eat: they must be very cold."

The noise of the dogs was again heard, and the voice of Jean René trying to appease them. The door of the kitchen was pushed open; the Maître d'Ecole and Tortillard entered with precipitation, as if they had been pursued. "Take care of your dogs!" cried the Maître d'Ecole in affright. "They came near biting us."

"They have torn a piece of my blouse," said Tortillard, still pale with fear. "Don't be afraid, my good man," said Jean René, shutting the door; "but I have never seen our dogs so wicked: sure it is the cold makes them cross. The beasts, perhaps, have reason; they wish, perhaps, to bite, by way of getting warm!"

"Now, your turn!" said the labourer, stopping old Lysander just at the moment, as, growling, he was about to spring on the new-comers. "He had heard the other dogs bark, and thinks he must do as they do. Will you go to sleep at once, old savage? will you?"

At these words of the père châtelain, accompanied by a significant kick, Lysander retired, still growling, to his usual place at the fire. The Maître d'Ecole and Tortillard had remained at the door of the kitchen, not daring to advance.

Wrapped in a blue cloak with a fur collar, his hat drawn over his black cap, which almost concealed his face, the brigand held the hand of Tortillard, who leaned against him, looking at the peasant with defiance.

The features of the Maître d'Ecole were so hideous, that the inhabitants of the farm remained for a moment stupified, some with disgust, the others with affright; this impression did not escape Tortillard; the fear of the peasants reassured him; he was proud of the feelings his companion inspired. This first movement over, the père châtelain, only thinking of fulfilling the duties of hospitality, said to the Maître d'Ecole, "My good man, draw near to the fire: you will first warm yourself. Afterward you will sup with us, for we were about to sit down when you came. There, sit there. But what a head I have! it is not to you, but to your son, I must speak, since you are, unfortunately, blind. Here, my child: conduct your father to the fire."

"Yes, my good sir," answered Tortillard, in a nasal and hypocritical voice; "may the 'bon Dieu' return your charity! Follow me! take care," added he to the brigand, guiding him to the fireplace. At first Lysander howled in a low tone; but, having scented for a moment the Maître d'Ecole, he uttered that kind of mournful cry which is commonly called the death-howl.

"Hell!" said the Maître d'Ecole to himself; "is it, then, blood that these cursed animals scent? I wore these pantaloons the night of the assassination of the cattle-merchant." "I declare, it is astonishing," whispered Jean René: "old Lysander has set up the death-howl at the strangers."

The cries of Lysander were so piercing, so plaintive, that the other dogs heard it, and, according to the habits of the canine race, they repeated or answered these horrible howlings. Although but little superstitious, the labourers looked at one another with affright. And, truly, what was passing seemed very singular. A man they could not look at without horror entered the house; then the dogs, until then very quiet, became furious, and uttered those plaintive cries which, according to the popular belief, indicated the approaches of death.

The brigand himself, notwithstanding his infernal audacity, shuddered for a moment on hearing the funeral cries which burst forth on his arrival—he—an assassin.

Tortillard, skeptical, brazen, like a boy of Paris, corrupted, as we may say, at his mother's breast, alone remained indifferent at the moral effect of this scene. No longer afraid of being bitten, this miserable abortion laughed at that which alarmed the people of the farm, and made the Maître d'Ecole shudder. The first surprise being over, Jean René went out, and the cracks of his whip could soon be heard, dissipating the mournful forebodings of Turk, Sultan, and Medor. At the end of a few moments the frightful ugliness of the Maître d'Ecole inspired them more with pity than horror; they pitied the lameness of the little boy, and began to find his cunning face quite interesting, and praised much the great attention he showed to his papa.

The appetite of the people, for a moment forgotten, was awakened with new energy, and for some moments nothing was heard but the noise of the knives and forks. They could not, however, help remarking the tender care the child took of the blind man. Tortillard prepared everything for him, cut his bread, and poured out his drink with an attention quite filial. This was the fine side of the picture, now mark the reverse: as much from cruelty as by the spirit of imitation, natural at his age, Tortillard experienced a cruel enjoyment in tormenting the Maître d'Ecole, from the example of La Chouette, whom he was proud thus to copy, and whom he loved with a kind of devotion. How this perverse child did he feel the need of being beloved? How did he feel happy from the semblance of affection shown him by La Chouette? How could he finally have been affected at the faint remembrance of the caresses of his mother? It was once more one of these frequent anomalies, which, from time to time, happily protest against unity in vice. We have said that feeling, like La Chouette, great pleasure in having (he a poor little boy) for a *bête de souffrance* a muzzled tiger. Tortillard, seated at the table, had the wickedness to refine his pleasures by forcing the Maître d'Ecole to bear his ill-treatment without winking. He compensated, therefore, each of his ostensible attentions to his supposed father by a kick under the table, particularly addressed to the old wound in the leg, of which the Maître d'Ecole had spoken.

It needed all his fortitude to conceal his sufferings at each kick of Tortillard, as the little wretch always took care to commence his attacks when the brigand was about to drink or speak. Nevertheless, he maintained his impassability of expression, concealing his rage and feelings, thinking (and the son of Bras-Rouge reckoned on it) that it would be very dangerous for the success of his designs, if they found out what was passing under the table. "Here, poor papa, here is a nut nicely picked," said Tortillard, placing on his plate a walnut plucked from its shell.

"Very good, my child," said the père châtelain; then addressing the brigand, "you are very much to be pitied, my good man; but you have such a fine son, it must be a great consolation to you!" "Yes, yes, my misfortune is great, but without the tenderness of this dear child, I—" The Maître d'Ecole could not repress a piercing cry.

The son of Bras-Rouge had this time hit the centre of the wound; the pain was excruciating.

"Mon Dieu! what is the matter, poor dear papa?" cried Tortillard, in a tearful voice, and, getting up from his seat, he threw both his arms around his neck.

At the first movement of rage and anger the brigand had a mind to crush the child in his Herculean arms, and pressed him so closely to his breast, that the child, losing his breath, made a slight groan. But instantly reflecting that he could not do without his services, he let him go, and pushed him on his chair. In all this the peasant only saw an interchange of paternal and filial tenderness; the pallor and suffocation of Tortillard appeared to them to be caused by the emotion of this good son. "What is the matter, my good man?" asked the père châtelain. "Your cry just now has made your child pale. Poor little fellow! look, he can hardly breathe!" "It is nothing," answered the Maître d'Ecole, recovering his sang froid. "I am by trade a locksmith; sometime since, in working with the hammer a bar of iron, I let it fall on my legs, and it made such a deep burn, that it is not yet healed. Just now I hit it against the leg of the table, and I could not keep from screaming out." "Poor papa!" said Tortillard, recovered from *his* emotion, and casting a diabolical look at the Maître d'Ecole; "poor papa! yet it is true, my good gentlemen, they could never cure his leg. Alas! no, never! oh! I'd willing have it—so that he should no longer suffer, poor dear papa." The women looked at Tortillard with much affection. "Well, my good man," answered the père châtelain, "it is unfortunate for you that you did not come to the farm three weeks since, instead of to-night." "Why so?" "Because we had here for some days a doctor from Paris, who has a sovereign remedy for diseases of the leg. A good old woman of the village who hadn't walked for three years; the doctor applied some ointment—now she runs about like a Biscayan, and she means soon to walk to Paris to thank her saviour, Allée des Veuves, at Paris. You know it's a long road. But what is the matter? does the wound hurt you again?"

These words, Allée des Veuves, awakened such terrible recollections, that he could not refrain from shuddering and contracting his hideous features. "Yes," he answered, endeavouring to recover himself, "another spasm."

"Dear papa, be quiet, I'll rub your leg carefully to-night," said Tortillard. "Poor little fellow!" said Claudine, "how he loves his father!" "It is really a pity," continued the père Châtelain, addressing the Maître d'Ecole, "that this worthy doctor is not here; but I know he is as charitable as he is learned; in returning to Paris, let your son conduct you there, he will cure you, I am sure of it; his address is not difficult to remember, Allée des Veuves, No. 17. If you forget the number, no matter; there are not many doctors in that quarter, above all black doctors—for you must know he is black, this excellent Doctor David."

The features of the Maître d'Ecole were so dreadfully scarred, that his paleness could not be perceived. Nevertheless, he turned pale, frightfully pale, first at hearing the number of the house, and then the name of David, the black physician.

Of this black, who, by orders of Rodolphe, had inflicted on him a terrible punishment, of which at each moment he suffered the horrid consequences. This was a fatal day for the Maître d'Ecole. The morning he had endured the tortures of La Chouette and the son of Bras-Rouge; he arrives at the farm, the dogs raise the death-howl at his appearance, and wish to devour him; finally, chance conducts him to a house where some days sooner he would have met his executioner. Separately, these circumstances would have been enough to excite both the rage and fear of the brigand, but coming all at once, the blow was too violent. For the first time in his life he experienced a kind of superstitious terror—he asked himself if chance alone could have brought about incidents so strange.

The père châtelain, not perceiving the agitation of the Maître d'Ecole, continued: "Besides, my good man, when you go, we will give the address of the doctor to your son; it will oblige M. David to put him in the way of serving any one; he is so good, so good! it is a pity he always looks so sad. But come—let us drink a glass to the health of your future saviour."

"Thank you—I am not thirsty."

"Drink, then, dear good papa, drink, it will do you good—good for your stomach," added Tortillard, placing a glass in the hands of the blind man.

"No, no, I don't want to drink any more," answered he. "It isn't cider, but old wine," said the labourer; "there are many 'bourgeois' who don't drink half so good. Marry! this is no common farm—what do you think of our ordinary?" "It is very good," answered the Maître d'Ecole, mechanically, more and more absorbed with his sinister thoughts.

"Well! it is every day just so; hard work and good repast, good conscience and good bed; in four words behold our life: we are seven cultivators here, and without boasting we do as much as fourteen, but then we are paid as fourteen. To the daily labourers, one hundred and fifty crowns per month; to the dairy-maids sixty crowns; and, besides, we have one-fifth of what the farm produces. Marry! you can comprehend that we don't let the land have much rest; for the poor old nurse, the more she produces the more *we* have."

"Your master can get very rich by these means," said the Maître d'Ecole. "Our master? oh! a very different master from most masters. He has a way to get rich peculiar to himself." "What do you mean to say?" asked the blind man, who wished to enter into conversation to get rid of his gloomy thoughts; "your

master must be an extraordinary man?" "Extraordinary in every respect, my good man; but stop, chance has brought you here, since this village is some distance from the high road. You, perhaps, will never return here; you shall not leave it, at least, without knowing who our master is, and what he does with this farm; in two words, I am going to tell you this on condition you will repeat it to everybody. You will see—it is as good to tell as to listen to."

"I listen," answered the Maître d'Ecole.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MODEL FARM.

"And you will not be sorry," said the père châtelain. "Just imagine, one day our master said to himself, 'I am very rich, good; but that don't make me eat two dinners. If I were to make those dine who don't dine at all, and better even than those good people who can't always get enough? 'Ma foi,' that suits me—to work! And our master did go to work. He bought this farm, which then was of no great value, and did not employ more than three ploughs; I know this, for I was born here. Our master added more ground—you shall know directly wherefore. At the head of the farm he placed a worthy woman, as respectable as she was unfortunate—that is the way he always chooses. He said to her: 'This house shall be like the house of God, open to the good, but shut to the wicked; lazy beggars must be driven away, but to those who are willing to work, always give assistance: this will not humiliate those who receive, but will profit those who give; the rich who are not charitable do not deserve their riches.' It is our master who has said this; but, 'ma foi,' he did more than say it—he acted. Formerly there was a road direct from here to Ecouen, which shortened the distance a good league; but, marry! it was so broken up, so rough, that no one could pass; it was death to the horses and carriages; a little labour and some money, furnished by the neighbouring farmers, would have put the road in order; but just as much as every one wished to see the road mended, just so much did every one hold back the labour and money. Our master seeing this, said, 'The road must be made; but as those who should contribute do not, as it is an accommodation road, it will be of service to those who have horses and carriages one of these days, but it shall profit first those who have but their two arms, industry, and courage.' Thus, for example, a stout fellow, does he knock at the door, saying, 'I am hungry, and I want to work.' 'Mon garçon, here is some good soup, a pick-axe, and a shovel; some will show you the Ecouen road; grade twelve feet each day, and at night you shall have forty sous, six feet twenty sous, three feet ten sous, otherwise nothing. I will inspect the work every evening and see what each one has done.'"

"And when you think that there are too scoundrels mean enough to eat the soup, and steal the pick-axe and spade!" said Jean René, with indignation, "that must have disgusted him with doing good." "That's true," said several of the labourers.

"Come, my children!" continued the père châtelain, "only see, one should not plant nor sow, because there are caterpillars, or devils, and other vermin, which destroy the leaves or consume the grain? No, no, the worms must be destroyed; the 'bon Dieu,' ever bountiful, causes new buds to shoot forth, new corn to grow; the damage is repaired, and it is hardly to be perceived that the worm has passed there. Is it not so, my good man?" said the old labourer to the Maître d'Ecole. "Without doubt, without doubt," answered he, seeming to reflect profoundly.

"As for women and children, there is also work for them, according to their strength, added the père châtelain.

"And yet," said Claudine, "the road does not get along fast." "Marry! my girl, that proves that there are not many wanting work in these parts."

"But for an infirm person, like me, for example," said the Maître d'Ecole, suddenly, "will they not grant me, for charity's sake, a place for shelter, a piece of bread for the short time that remains for me to live? Oh! if that could be, my good people, I'd pass the rest of my life in blessing your master."

The brigand spoke then sincerely. He did not repent of his crimes, but the peaceable and happy life of the labourers excited so much the more his envy, when he thought of the frightful future reserved for him by La Chouette; a future he had been far from anticipating, and which made him regret still more in having sent for his accomplice, which prevented forever the possibility of living again with the honest people the Chourineur had placed him with. The père châtelain looked at him with astonishment. "But, my poor man," said he, "I did not think you were entirely without resources?"

"Alas! mon Dieu, yes. I lost my eyesight by an accident. I am going to Louvres to seek assistance from a distant relation; but you understand; people sometimes are so selfish, so hard-hearted," said the Maître d'Ecole.

"Oh! no one could be so selfish," answered the père châtelain: "a good, an honest workman as you are, unfortunate, with such a nice child, so good a son, would soften a stone. But the master who employed you before your accident, why doesn't he help you?" "He is dead," said the Maître d'Ecole, after a moment's hesitation; "he was my only friend."

"But the hospital for the blind?" "I am not old enough to enter." "Poor man! you are much to be pitied!"

"Well, do you think that, if I do not find at Louvres the assistance that I hope for, that your master, whom I respect already without knowing him, would have pity on me?"

"Unfortunately, do you see, the farm is not an hospital? ordinarily, we allow the infirm to pass a night or day here, then we give them some money, and the bon Dieu has them in his holy keeping." "Then I have no hope to interest your master in my sad fate?" said the brigand, with a sigh of regret. "I tell you our rules, my good man; but our master is so generous, so kind, that he is capable of doing everything."

"You think so?" cried the Maître d'Ecole, "can it be possible that he would consent to let me live here in a corner? I should be happy with so little."

"I tell you our master is capable of doing anything. If he consents to keep you on the farm, you will not have to conceal yourself in a corner; you would be treated as we are; then, like to-day, we would find something for your son to do suitable to his age and strength; good

counsels and good examples would not be wanting for him; our venerable cure would instruct him with the other children of the village, and he would grow up in grace, as is said. But for all this, you must speak to-morrow morning frankly to *Nôtre Dame de Bon-Secours*." "What!" said the Maître d'Ecole. "We call our mistress so. If she becomes interested for you, your business is done. As regards charity, our master never refuses anything to our lady."

"Oh, then I will speak to her; I will speak to her!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, joyously, already imaging himself delivered from the tyranny of La Chouette.

This hope found no echo in Tortillard, who felt no disposition to profit by the offers of the old labourer, and grow up in grace under the auspices of a venerable curé. The son of Bras-Rouge had no rural penchants, and not at all a pastoral turn of mind; besides, faithful to the traditions of La Chouette, he would have seen with lively displeasure the Maure d'Ecole withdraw himself from their common despotism; he wished, therefore, to recall to the reality the brigand, who was wandering already amid rustic and smiling illusions.

"Oh, yes!" repeated the Maître d'Ecole, "I will speak to her, to Nôtre Dame de Bon-Secours; she will have pity on me, and—"

Tortillard gave him at this moment, quietly, a vigorous kick, and touched the right spot. The pain interrupted and abridged the phrase of the brigand, who repeated, after a nervous shuddering, "Yes, I hope that this good lady will have pity on me." "Poor dear papa!" said Tortillard; "but you reckon, then, for nothing my good aunt, Madame la Chouette, who loves you so much? Poor Aunt la Chouette! oh! she will never abandon you in this way! do you see? She would sooner come and reclaim you with our Cousin Barbillon." "This good man has relations among the fishes and birds," whispered Jean Rene, maliciously, and giving a blow with his elbow to Claudine, his neighbour.

"Get out; no heart! to laugh at these unfortunate beings," answered, in a low tone, the dairy-maid, giving in her turn a blow with her elbow to Jean Rene, hard enough to break almost his ribs. "Madame la Chouette is one of your relations?" asked the labourer of the Maître d'Ecole.

"Yes, one of our relations," answered he, mournfully.

Supposing that he should find at the farm a place of unhoped-for refuge, he feared that the Borgnesse, through wickedness, would come and denounce him; he feared also that the strange names of his pretended relations, Madame la Chouette and M. Barbillon, mentioned by Tortillard, might awaken their suspicions; but as regards this his fears were in vain; Jean Rene saw only the chance for a joke, which was very badly received by Claudine. "Is this the relation you go to seek at Louvres?" asked the pere châtelain.

"Yes," said the brigand; "but I think my son is wrong in reckoning too much on her."

"Oh! my poor papa, I am not deceived; no; she is so good, my Aunt la Chouette. You know very well it is she who sent you water with which I dress your leg, and told me how to use it. It was she who said, 'Do for your poor papa what I would do myself, and the bon Dieu will bless you!' Oh! my Aunt la Chouette; she loves you, but she loves you so much, that—"

"It is well, it is well," said the Maître d'Ecole, interrupting Tortillard; "that will not prevent my speaking to the lady to-morrow, and implore her assistance in my favour with the respectable proprietor of this farm; but," added he, to change the conversation and put a stop to the impudent talking of Tortillard, "but, concerning this farm, you promised to tell me what there was particular in the organization, or in what respects it differed from other farms."

"I promise you this," said the père châtelain; "and I am going to fulfil my promise. Our master, after having thus imagined what he called the alms of labour, said to himself, 'There are establishments for the encouragement of the breed of horses, cattle, improvements in ploughs, and many other things—"ma foi!" My opinion is, that it would be time well spent to invest something to ameliorate, to improve men. Good cattle is very well; good people will be much better, but more difficult. With heavy oats and fine pasture, clear water, and pure air, constant care and good shelter, horses and cattle will thrive to your wishes, and give satisfaction; but for man, ah! it is another thing; it is not so easy to make a man good and honest as it is to make an ox fat. The pasturage profits the beast, because, grateful to his taste, it pleases as well as fattens him; well, my opinion is, that to make a man profit by good counsels, you must make him sensible that it is to his advantage to follow them."

"Just as the ox finds it to his account to eat the fine grass; is it not, pere châtelain?" "Just so, 'mon garçon.'"

"But, pere châtelain," said another labourer, "I have heard of a kind of farm where young criminals, who, notwithstanding this, behaved very well, learned agriculture, and were treated like young princes." "It is true, my children, and it is very praiseworthy; it is humane and charitable never to despair of the wicked; but we must also make the good not despair. An honest, industrious young man, being desirous to do right, and learn to work, presenting himself to this farm of young ex-robbers, would be asked, 'My boy, are you anything of a robber, or a vagabond?' 'No.' 'Well! there's no place for you here.'"

"It is quite true what you say, père châtelain," said Jean Rene. "They do for rougues what they will not do for honest men; they improve the beasts, but not the men."

"It is to set an example, and remedy this, that our master, as I tell this good man, has established this farm. I know well," said he, "that there is a recompense for honest folks above; but above—marry! it is far off—above! and many, (we must pity them, my children) have not sharp enough eyes, nor long enough breath, to reach there; and, besides, where will they find time to look above? During the day, from sunrise to sunset, bent to the earth, they dig and redig it again for their masters; the night, worn out, they sleep on their truckle beds. On Sundays they get drunk at the taverns, to forget the fatigues of yesterday and those of the morrow: and thus it is these labours produce nothing for these poor people! After their hard work, is their bread less black, their bed any softer, their children less puny, their wives any stronger to nourish them—nourish them! she who has no bread to eat when she is hungry! no! no! no! But, notwithstanding all this, I know well, my children, that their bread is black, but it is bread;

hard is their couch, but it is a bed; sickly are their children, but they live. The unfortunate children would, perhaps, support their fate lightly, if they thought every one lived as they did. But they go to the city or the town on market days, and there they see white bread, thick and warm mattresses, children blooming like the roses of May, and so surfeited that they throw cakes to the dogs. Marry! then, on returning to their clay hovels, their black bread, their truckle beds, these poor people say, seeing their poor, suffering, emaciated, starving child, to whom they would gladly have brought one of the cakes they saw thrown to the dogs, 'Since there must be rich and poor, why were we not born rich? it is unjust. Why shouldn't each one have a turn?' Without doubt, my children, what they say is very unreasonable, and does not serve to make the yoke any lighter; and yet this yoke, hard and heavy as it is, they are destined to bear forever, with no hope of lightening it, and no hope of knowing, some day, the happiness arising from prosperity. All their lives in that manner—marry! it seems long—long as a day of continued rain without one little gleam of sunshine. Then they go to work in sorrow and disgust. Finally, the most of them say, 'Why should we work harder or longer? if the harvest is heavy or light, what is it to us! why tire ourselves for nothing? Let us remain strictly honest; crime is punished, let us commit no crimes; to do well is without recompense, let us not do well; let us have the qualities of good beasts of burden: patience, strength, and docility.' These thoughts are all wrong, my children; from this feeling to idleness there is no great distance; and from idleness to vice there is still less. Unfortunately, those who, neither good nor bad, do neither good nor bad, are of the greatest number; it is, then, those, said our master, whose condition we must ameliorate, neither more nor less than if they had had the honour to have been horses, or cattle with horns on their head, and wood on their backs. Let us make it their interest to be active, wise, laborious, instructed, devoted to their duties; let us prove to them that, in becoming better, they will become materially happier: every one will profit by it, and so that they will profit by good counsels, give them here below a taste of the happiness that awaits them above. His plan made, our master gave notice in the neighbourhood that he wanted six labourers, and as many girls, for the farm; but he wished to select these from the best people in the district—those who could bring the best recommendations. They would be well paid as we are, that is to say, like princes, nourished better than the 'bourgeois,' and should have divided among them one fifth of the whole products; they should remain two years on the farm, to give place to other labourers chosen on the same conditions; after five years, they could return again if there was any vacancy. Thus, since the establishment of the farm, labourers and workmen in the vicinity say, 'Let us be active, honest, and industrious; let us be remarked for our good conduct, and some day we may get a place on the farm of Bouqueval; there we will live as if in paradise for two years; we will improve in our calling, we will carry off a snug little sum, and then we can command any place, having been at the Bouqueval farm, being our recommendation.' 'I am already engaged to go on the farm of Arnouville, at M. Dubreuil's,' said Jean René. 'And I am engaged for Gonesse,' answered another labourer.

"You see, my good man, in this way every one profits: the farmers of the environs doubly profit; there are only twelve places to give, but there are more than fifty candidates; now, those who can't obtain the place, are none the less deserving, is it not so? and, as they say, better luck next time; they remain, and make so many the more good people in the neighbourhood. Look here (with all respect), for one horse who gains the prize at a race, there are always a number to dispute the prize; well, those who don't gain, still they are very valuable, and can try another time. Heiu! my good man, when I told you that our farm was no ordinary one, and that our master was no common master—did I speak false?" "Oh no," cried the Maître d'Ecole, "and the more his goodness, his generosity, seems great, the more I hope he will have pity on my sad fate. A man who does so much good, so nobly, with so much intelligence, can never regard one benefaction more or less. But let me know at least his name, and that of the Dame de Bon-Secours," said the Maître d'Ecole earnestly, "that I may bless them in advance."

"I can comprehend your impatience," said the labourer; "ah! marry, you no doubt expect to hear high sounding names? ah, yes! they are names as sweet and gentle as those of the saints. Nôtre Dame de Bon-Secours is called Madame Georges; our master's name is Rodolphe." "My wife! my executioner!" murmured the brigand, thunderstruck at this revelation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NIGHT.

Rodolphe!! Madame Georges!!!

The maître could not believe that he had been deceived by a fortuitous resemblance of names; before he had inflicted the terrible punishment, Rodolphe had told him that he had for Madame Georges the liveliest interest. And, then, the presence of the negro David proved to the Maître d'Ecole that he had not been mistaken. He recognised something providential, a fatality, at this discovery, which overthrew the hopes that he had founded on the generosity of the master of this farm.

His first movement was to fly. Rodolphe inspired him with invincible terror; perhaps at this moment he might be at the farm. Hardly had he recovered from his stupor, than he rose from the table, took the hand of Tortillard, and cried in a wild manner, "Let us go—conduct me—let us go hence!"

The labourers looked at one another in surprise.

"You go! now? You must not think of it, my poor man," said the père châtelain. "Ah! come, what bee has stung you? are you a fool?" Tortillard, seizing adroitly this idea, breathed a deep sigh, nodded his head in the affirmative, and, putting his finger on his forehead, he gave the labourers to understand that the reason of his pretended father was not very strong. The old labourer answered with a sign of intelligence and compassion. "Come, come, let us go!" repeated the Maître d'Ecole, seeking to drag the child out. Tortillard, absolutely deciding not to leave a warm shelter to wander about the fields this cold night, said, in a moaning voice,

"Mon Dieu! poor papa, calm yourself; the attack will soon pass off; don't go out such a cold night, it will do you harm. I would prefer to see you angry with me, than to take you from here at such an hour." Then, addressing the labourers, he said, "Won't you help me to prevent my poor papa from going out, my good gentlemen?" "Yes, yes! be easy, my child," said the père châtelain; "we will not open the door for your father—we will make him sleep here!" "You shall not force me to remain here!" cried the Maître d'Ecole; "and, besides, I'll incommode your master, Monsieur Rodolphe. You told me the farm was not an hospital. Thus, once more, I say, let me go." "Incommode our master? Be easy. Unfortunately, he does not live at the farm, he does not come as often as we should wish. But if he was here, you would not incommode him at all. This house is not an hospital, it is true; but I told you that the infirm, as much to be pitied as you are, can always have a lodging."

"Your master is not here, then, to-night?" said the Maître d'Ecole, in a more assured tone. "No! he will probably come, according to custom, in five or six days. Thus, you see, there is no reason in your objections. It is not probable that our good lady will come down to-night, otherwise she would convince you. Has she not ordered your bed to be made? Besides, if you don't see her to-night, you can speak to her to-morrow before your departure." "No, no!" said the brigand, in alarm;" I have changed my mind. My son was right; my relation at Louvres will take pity on me. I will go and find her." "As you please," said the père châtelain, believing he was conversing with a crazy man. "You shall go to-morrow morning; but as for setting out to-night, don't think of it." Although Rodolphe was not at the farm, the fears of the Maître d'Ecole were not quieted; notwithstanding he was so frightfully disfigured, he still dreaded that his wife might recognise him. And she might come in from one moment to another; in that case, he doubted not but that she would denounce him, and cause him to be arrested, persuaded that, in inflicting the terrible punishment, Rodolphe had, above all, satisfied the hatred and vengeance of Madame Georges. But he could not leave the farm; he found himself at the mercy of Tortillard. He resigned himself, then, to his situation; but, to avoid being surprised by his wife, he said to the labourer, "Since you assure me that I shall put you to no trouble, I accept the hospitality you offer me; but as I am very much fatigued, I will go to bed, if you will allow me; I wish to start to-morrow at daylight."

"Oh! to-morrow morning, when you please! we are early risers here; and for fear that you may be lost again, some one will show you the road." "I will, if you wish, conduct the poor man," said Jean René; "since madame has told me to take the cart to bring home some bags of silver from the notary at Villiers-le-Bel." "You will show the road to this poor blind man, but you will go on your legs," said the père châtelain; "madame has changed her minds; she has reflected, and not without reason, that it was not worth while to have so large a sum of money at the farm; it will be time enough to go after the money on Monday; until then, it is as well there as here."

"Madame knows better than me what to do, but what is there to fear here, for money, père châtelain?"

"Nothing, mon garçon, 'Dieu merci!' But it is all the same; I would prefer to have here five hundred sacks of wheat, than ten sacks of crowns. Come," said he, addressing the brigand and the little Tortillard; "come, my good man, and you, my child, follow me," added he, taking a candle. Then, preceding the two guests of the farm, he conducted them to a small chamber, at the end of a long corridor, into which opened several doors.

The ploughman placed the light on the table, and said to the Maître d'Ecole, "Here is your lodging-place; may the 'bon Dieu' give you a good night's rest, my good man! as to you, my child, you will sleep well, it belongs to your years."

The brigand went and seated himself gloomily on the bed, to which he had been conducted by Tortillard. The little cripple made a sign to the ploughman as he left the room, and joined him in the corridor. "What do you want, my child?" asked the père châtelain. "Mon Dieu! my good sir, I am much to be pitied! sometimes poor papa has spasms in the night, like convulsions; I cannot help him all alone; if I am obliged to call for help, can they hear me from here?"

"Poor little fellow," said the ploughman, with interest; "be comforted. Do you see that door there, alongside of the staircase?"

"Yes, my good sir, I see it." "Well! one of our boys always sleeps there; you have only to go and wake him, the key is in the door; he will come and assist you."

"Alas! sir, this boy, perhaps, will not be strong enough. Could you not come, you who are so good, so kind?"

"I, my child! I sleep, as well as the other men, in a building away at the end of the court; but be quite easy, Jean René is very strong; he would take a bull by the horns. Besides, if you should actually need some one to assist you, he will go and call our old cook; she sleeps up stairs, in a room alongside of our lady, and, in case of need, she makes an excellent nurse."

"Oh! thank you, thank you! my good sir; I will go and pray for you, for you are very charitable to have so much pity for my poor papa." "Well, my child, good-night. I hope you will have no need of assistance for your father; go in, perhaps he wants you." "I go; good-night, sir." "God bless you, my child!" said the old ploughman; and he slowly retraced his steps to the kitchen.

Hardly was his back turned, than the little cripple made a movement supremely ridiculous and insulting, well known to the boys of Paris; this consists in striking the nape of the neck with the palm of the left hand, repeatedly, and each time extending forth the right hand wide open.

With diabolical cunning, this dangerous child already had ascertained the information desired by La Chouette. He knew already that the building where he was to sleep was

only occupied by Madame Georges, Fleur de Marie, an old cook, and a farmboy. Tortillard, on entering the bedchamber, took good care to keep at a convenient distance from the brigand. He heard him come in, and said to him in a low tone, "Where do you come from now, scoundrel?" "You are very curious, No-eyes" "Oh! you shall pay for all you have made me suffer and endure this night, you devil's imp!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, getting up furiously and groping his way along the wall to guide him. "I'll choak you! you wicked serpent!"

"Poor papa; we are so gay, playing blind-man's buff with our dear child," said Tortillard, chuckling and escaping in the easiest way the pursuits of the Maître d'Ecole. He, at first carried away, without reflecting, with rage, was soon obliged to give up the chase. Forced to submit to his brazen persecution, until the time should arrive that he could revenge himself without danger, the brigand, choaking down his powerless anger, threw himself on the bed, swearing and cursing.

"Poor papa, have you the toothache, that you swear in this manner? And 'M. le Curé,' what would he say if he heard you? he'll make you perform penance."

"Well! well!" continued the brigand after a long silence, "laugh at me, amuse yourself with my misfortunes, coward as you are! It it is all very fine; ah! it is very generous." "Oh! what stuff! generous! you are in a pet!" cried Tortillard, shouting with laughter; "pardon me! with such ideas as those, you ought to have worn mittens when you did the business for those you robbed, before you became blind in both eyes!"

"But I have never done you any harm—you. Why do you torment me thus?" "Because, in the first place, you said bad things to La Chouette; and when I think, the gentleman wished to stay here, by wheedling the peasants—perhaps the gentleman would like to live on asses' milk?" "Scoundrel as you are! If there had been any possibility of my remaining here, at this farm, which I wish the thunder may strike now! you would almost have prevented it with your insolence."

"You remain here! oh, that's a good joke! and who would have been the '*beast of suffering*' for Madame la Chouette? Me! perhaps? Thank you, I'd rather be excused!"

"Wicked abortion!" "Abortion! come, so much the more reason; I say just like my Aunt la Chouette, there is nothing more amusing than to make you as mad as the devil—you, who would kill me with your fist; it is much more delicate than if you were weak. You are a funny fellow—get out—to-night at the table—*Dieu de Dieu!* what a comedy I played all alone by myself—equal to anything at La Gaîté! At each kick I gave you quietly, rage brought the blood to your head, and your white eyes became red at the edges; they only wanted a little blue in the centre; with that, they would have been tricoloured; two real cockades for a constable—what!"

"Come, come, you love to laugh, you are lively; bah! it is natural at your age; I am not angry," said the Maître d'Ecole, in an affected and unconcerned manner, hoping to soften Tortillard; "but, instead of blackguarding me, you'd better remember what La Chouette told you, she whom you love so much; you ought to examine everything, and take impressions. Did you hear? they spoke of a large sum of money that they are to have here on Monday. We will return with our friends, and we will do some good business. Bah! I was a great fool to wish to stay here. I should have had enough in a week of these good-natured peasants. Is it not so, my boy?" said the brigand, by way of flattering Tortillard. "You really would have given me pain—word of honour," said the son of Bras-Rouge, chuckling.

"Yes, yes, there is a good affair to be done here; and even if there is nothing to steal, I will return to this house with La Chouette to revenge myself," said the brigand, in a voice trembling with rage and passion; "for it certainly was my wife who excited against me this infernal Rodolphe; in making me blind, has he not placed me at the mercy of the whole world, of La Chouette, of a chap like you? Well! since I cannot be revenged on him, I will be revenged on my wife! Yes, she shall pay for all; even if I have to set fire to this house, and perish myself under its ruins. Oh! I wish—"

"You wish you had hold of her, your wife, hey! old man! I tell you she is not ten steps from you; that is vexing! If I pleased, I'd conduct you to the door of her chamber, for I know where it is. I know, I know, I know!" added, or, rather, chanted Tortillard.

"You know which is her chamber?" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with savage joy; "you know?"

"Ah! come now," said Tortillard; "I am going to make you beg on your hind legs, like a dog asking for a bone. Attention, old Azor!"

"You know where is the room of my wife!" repeated the brigand, turning towards Tortillard. "Yes, I know; and what is more, there is only one of the boys who sleeps in the house; I know where is his door, the key is in it: crack! one turn, and he is fixed. Come! stand up, old Azor!" "Who told you this!" cried the brigand, rising involuntarily. "Good Azor, in the room next to your wife's sleeps the old cook; another turn of a key, and we are masters of the house, masters of your wife, and of the young girl in the gray mantle, whom we wish to carry off. Now, give us your paw, old Azor; hold up your head for your master, right away!"

"You lie, you lie! How could you know all this?"

"I am lame, but I am not a fool. Just now I made this old fool of a ploughman believe that during the night you had convulsions, and I asked him where I could find assistance if I needed it. Then he told me I might wake the boy or the cook, and he showed me where they slept—the one below, the other above, alongside of your wife, your wife, your wife!" answered Tortillard, chanting as usual.

After a long silence, the Maître d'Ecole said in a calm voice, with sincere but frightful resolution,

"Listen. I have had enough of life. Just now—well—yes—I acknowledge it—I had a hope, which now makes my fate appear still

more frightful; the prison, the galleys, the guillotine, are nothing compared to what I have endured since this morning; and this I shall have to endure forever. Conduct me to the chamber of my wife; I have my knife—I will kill her. I shall be killed afterward; it's all the same to me. Hatred suffocates me—I shall be revenged—that will comfort me. What I now endure is too much—is too much for me, before whom every one trembled. Stop! do you hear? if you knew what I suffered, you would have pity on me. How, now! it seems as if my head would burst—my brain is on fire—my blood will suffocate me."

"A cold in the head, old man? I know it. Sneeze; it will clear it out," said Tortillard, screaming with laughter. "Will you have a pinch?" And striking the back of his left hand closed, as if he had struck a snuff-box, he sung,

"In my box I have good snuff,
You shan't have any, that's enough.

"Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! they wish to make me mad!" cried the brigand, becoming almost insane, from a concentration of hatred, rage, and implacable revenge. The exuberance of the strength of this monster could only be equalled by its impotence.

Let the reader imagine a famished wolf, harassed during an entire day by a child through the bars of his cage, and scenting at two steps from him a victim which would at once satisfy his hunger and rage. At the last sarcasm of Tortillard, the brigand almost lost his senses. In default of a victim, he wished, in his madness, to shed his own blood. Blood choked him.

For a moment he was decided to kill himself; if he had had a loaded pistol in his hand, he had not hesitated. He fumbled in his pocket and drew out a long knife, opened it, and raised it to strike; but, rapid as were these movements, reflection, fear, vital instinct, preceded them. Courage was wanting to the murderer; his arm fell on his knees.

Tortillard had followed these movements with an attentive eye; when he saw the inoffensive denouement of this tragic velleity, he cried, chuckling, "Waiter, a duel! *plumez des canards*." The Maître d'Ecole, fearing that he should lose his reason in a last and useless burst of rage, did not wish, as we may say, to hear this new insult of Tortillard. Despairing to escape from that which he called the cruelty of the child, the brigand wished to make a last effort, by addressing himself to the cupidity of the son of Bras-Rouge.

"Oh!" said he to him, in a voice almost supplicating, "conduct me to the door of my wife; you shall take what you wish from her chamber, and then leave me alone; you shall cry murder, if you will! I shall be arrested, I shall be killed on the spot; so much the better! I shall die revenged. Oh! lead me; there must be some gold, some jewels in her room; I tell you you shall take all—for yourself alone—do you understand? for yourself alone. I only ask you to lead me to her door."

"Yes, I understand well; you wish I should lead you to her door, and then to her bed, and then that I should tell you where to strike, and then that I should guide your hand: is it not so. you wish that I should serve as a handle to your knife, old monster!" answered Tortillard, with an expression of contempt, of rage, and of horror, which, for the first time during that day, rendered serious his weasel face, heretofore impudent and bold. "I would be killed first—do you understand?—than to be forced to conduct you to your wife." "You refuse?" The son of Bras-Rouge made no answer. He drew near with naked feet to the Maître d'Ecole, who was seated on the bed holding his large knife in his hand; then with marvellous dexterity snatched the weapon, and with one bound gained the other side of the chamber. "My knife! my knife!" cried the brigand, stretching out his arms. "No, for you would be capable to ask to speak to your wife to-morrow, and then kill her, since you say you have enough of life, and you are coward enough not to dare to kill yourself."

"He defends my wife, now!" cried the bandit, whose mind began to wander. "Is he a devil, then, this little monster? Where am I? Why does he defend her?" "To make you mad," said Tortillard, and his expression resumed its mask of impudent raillery. "Ah! it is so!" murmured the Maître d'Ecole, almost in a state of insanity; "well! I shall set fire to the house! We will burn all together! all! I prefer this furnace to the other. The candle—the candle!" "Ah! ah! ah!" cried Tortillard, bursting out with renewed laughter; "if some one had not blown out your candle—yours—forever, you would see that ours has been out for an hour." And Tortillard sung,

"Ma chandelle est morte,
Je n'ai plus de feu."

The Maître d'Ecole uttered a heavy groan, stretched out his arms, and fell at full length upon the floor; struck with a rush of blood to his head, he remained without movement.

"I understand, old man!" said Tortillard; "it's a feint to bring me alongside of you, and fetch me a clip. When you are tired of lying on the floor, you'll get up."

And the son of Bras-Rouge, decided not to go to sleep, for fear of being surprised by the Maître d'Ecole, remained seated on his chair, with his eyes attentively fixed upon the brigand, persuaded that it was only a snare laid for him, and that he was in no danger. To employ himself agreeably, he drew from his pocket a small purse of red silk, and counted slowly, with greedy eyes, the seventeen pieces of gold it contained.

The reader will recollect that Rodolphe, in giving the purse to Madame d'Harville, the day of the fatal rendezvous, had told her to go up to the garret of the Morels under pretence of giving them assistance. Madame d'Harville mounted the staircase rapidly, holding the purse in her hand, when Tortillard, descending from the quack's, spied the purse, pretended to fall in passing the marchioness, giving her a violent push, and in the confusion carried it off. Madame d'Harville, alarmed, and hearing the steps of her husband, hurried on to the garret, without having the power to complain of the audacious robbery of the little lame boy.

After having counted and recounted his gold, Tortillard, hearing no more noise about the house, went with naked feet, cautiously shading the candle with his hand, to take impressions of the locks of the four doors which open-

ed on the corridor, ready to say, if he should be seen by any one, that he sought assistance for his father.

On entering, he found the Maître d'Ecole in the same position; for a moment alarmed, he listened, and heard that he breathed regularly; he believed he was still playing his game. "Always the same, then, old man?" said he to him.

Chance had saved the Maître d'Ecole from a congestion of the brain which, no doubt, would have been mortal. His fall had occasioned a copious bleeding at the nose.

He afterward fell into a sort of feverish torpor, half sleep half delirium, and then he dreamed this strange, this frightful dream!

CHAPTER X.

THE DREAM.

This was the dream of the Maître d'Ecole:

He saw Rodolphe in the house of the Allée des Veuves. Nothing is changed in the saloon where the brigand underwent his horrible punishment. Rodolphe is seated behind the table, on which are placed the papers of the Maître d'Ecole, and the little Saint-Esprit of lapis-lazuli which he had given to La Chouette. The face of Rodolphe is grave and sad. At his right the negro David, impassible, silent, stands erect; at his left is the Chourineur; he regards the scene with an alarmed air. The Maître d'Ecole is no longer blind, but he sees through limpid blood, which fills the sockets of his eyes. Every object appeared of a red colour. Like as the birds of prey hover in the air over the victim they charm, before devouring, a monstrous owl, having for a head the hideous visage of the Borgnesse, hovers over the Maître d'Ecole. She fixes on him continually a round, flaming, greenish eye. This continued regard bears on his heart with an immense weight.

As he becomes habituated to the obscurity, he sees objects that at first were imperceptible; an immense lake of blood seems to separate him from the table where Rodolphe is sitting. This inflexible judge, as well as the Chourineur and the negro, assume, by degrees, colossal proportions. These three phantoms at length touch the ceiling, which gives way to them. The lake of blood is calm, smooth as a red mirror. The Maître d'Ecole sees reflected his horrible image. But soon this image is effaced by the agitation of the waves, which now begin to rise. From their agitated surface comes up, like the fœtid exhalation of a swamp, a livid fog—livid like the lips of the dead. But, as this vapour rises, the figures of Rodolphe, of the Chourineur, and of the negro, continue to increase—to increase in a manner not to be described. In the midst of this mist the Maître d'Ecole sees appear pale spectres, murderous scenes in which he has been an actor. At first he sees a little old man, with a bald head, who wears a brown coat, and a green shade over his eyes; he is occupied, in a miserable chamber, in counting piles of gold, by the light of a lamp. Through the window, by the light of a pale moon, which silvers the tops of some tall trees agitated by the wind, the Maître d'Ecole sees himself outside: his hideous face is pressed against the window. He follows the smallest movements of the little old man with flaming eyes; then he breaks a glass—opens the window—springs with one bound on his victim—and plunges a long knife between his shoulders. The action is so rapid, the blow so prompt, so sure, that the corpse of the old man remains seated in his chair. The murderer endeavours to withdraw his knife from this dead body. He cannot. He redoubles his efforts. They are vain. Then he wishes to abandon the knife. Impossible. The hand of the assassin holds on to the handle of the poniard, like the blade holds to the body of the assassinated. The murderer hears then the sound of spurs and swords which strike the ground in a neighbouring apartment. To make his escape at all hazards, he tries to carry with him the dead body, from which he can neither detach his hand nor his knife. He fails in the attempt. This frail small corpse weighs like a mass of lead. Notwithstanding his Herculean shoulders, notwithstanding his desperate efforts, the Maître d'Ecole cannot even raise this enormous weight. The key turns in the lock—the noise increases—the door opens. The vision fades away, and then the owl flaps his wings and cries, "*This is old Richard of the Rue du Roule. Your debut as assassin! assassin! assassin!*" For a moment obscured, the vapour which covers the lake of blood becomes transparent, and another scene is presented.

The day begins to dawn, the mist is heavy and dark; a man, dressed like a cattle merchant, is stretched dead on the side of a high-road. The trampled ground, the torn grass, prove that the victim has made a desperate resistance. This man has five bleeding wounds on his breast. He is dead, and yet he whistles for his dogs; he calls for help, crying, "Murder! murder!" But he whistles, but he calls by the five large wounds, whose gaping mouths move like lips which speak. These five calls, the five simultaneous whistles, coming from the corpse through the mouths of its wounds, are frightful to hear. At this moment the owl moves its wings, and parodies the funeral groans of the victim, in uttering five shouts of laughter, but a laughter shrill, savage, like the laugh of madmen, and cried, "The cattle merchant of Poissy. Assassin! assassin! assassin!" Prolonged subterranean echoes repeat, at first loudly, the sinister laugh of the owl, and then it seems to die away in the bowels of the earth. At this noise two large black dogs, black as ebony, with eyes sparkling like firebrands, set on to the Maître d'Ecole, begin to bark, and turn round—round—round him with astonishing rapidity. They almost touch him, and their bayings appear so distant that they appear to be brought on the winds of the morning. By degrees, the spectres fade away like shadows, and disappear in the livid vapour, which continually rises.

A new exhalation covers the surface of the lake of blood, and rests on its bosom. It is a sort of greenish fog, transparent, resembling, as it were, the vertical cut of a canal filled with water. At first is perceived the bed of the canal, covered with a thick mud, composed of innumerable reptiles, ordinarily imperceptible to

the eye, but which. enlarged as if seen through a microscope, assume monstrous appearances, enormous proportions, relative to their real size. It is no longer mud, it is a compact, living, crawling mass, an inextricable entanglement which swarms and increases; so crowded, so compact, that a dull and almost imperceptible undulation seems to raise the level of this mud, or, rather, bank of impure animalculæ. Above flows slowly—slowly—thick, muddy, sluggish water, which bears along, in its dull course, the filth incessantly vomited from the gutters of a large city; fragments of all sorts—bodies of animals. Suddenly the Maître d'Ecole hears the noise of a body which falls in the water heavily. The spray from the disturbed water wets his face. Through a mass of watery bubbles, which covers the surface of the canal, he sees a woman sinking rapidly; she struggles—she struggles in vain, and he sees himself, and La Chouette, running precipitately from the banks of the canal of St. Martin, carrying a box covered with black cloth. After this first immersion, he sees the woman reappear on the surface of the water, waving her arms, like some one not knowing how to swim endeavouring in vain to save themselves. Then he hears a great cry. This extreme, desperate cry finishes with the dull, gurgling sound of a drowning person, and the woman sinks, for a second time, beneath the water. The owl, which flits though stationary, mocks the convulsive shriek of the drowning person, just as she mocked the groans of the cattle merchant. In the midst of the shouts of mournful laughter, the owl repeats, "*Glou! glou! glou.*" The subterranean echoes re-echo these cries. Submerged a second time, the woman suffocates, and makes a violent movement for breath; but instead of air, it is water she respires. Then her head falls backward her face becomes blue and bloated, her neck livid and inflated, her arms become stiff, and, in a last convulsion, the agonized sufferer moves her feet, which repose on the mud. She is then surrounded with a mass of black filth, which mounts with her to the surface of the water. Hardly has she drawn her last breath, than she is already covered with a myriad of microscopical reptiles, horrible and voracious vermin of the mud.

The body floats for a moment, then descends slowly, horizontally, the feet a little lower than the head, and begins to follow the current of the canal. Sometimes the corpse turns itself, and faces the Maître d'Ecole; then the spectre looks at him fixedly with two glassy opaque eyes—its violet lips move.

The Maître d'Ecole is some distance from the drowned woman, and yet she whispers in his ears, *glou—glou—glou*, accompanying these singular words with a noise like an empty bottle filling with water. The owl repeats, *glou—glou—glou*, flapping its wings, and cries,

"*The woman of the Canal Saint Martin, assassin! assassin!*"

The echoes reply; but instead of being lost in the bowels of the earth, they became louder and louder, and seem to draw near. This vision disappears.

The lake of blood, beyond which the Maître d'Ecole always sees Rodolphe, becomes of a bronzed black, then it turns red, and changes into a liquid furnace, like melted lead; then this lake of fire ascends, mounts—mounts towards the sky like an immense water-spout.

Soon it is a horizon flaming like iron heated to a white heat. This immense sky dazzles and burns at the same time the eyesight of the Maître d'Ecole; nailed to his place, he cannot turn away his face. Then on the bottom of this burning lava he sees pass slowly, one by one, the black and gigantic ghosts of his victims.

The magic lantern of remorse! of remorse! of remorse! cries the owl, flapping its wings and shouting with laughter. Notwithstanding the intolerable pain which this incessant contemplation causes him, the Maître d'Ecole has his eyes intently fixed on the spectres which move in this inflamed vision. Then he experienced something frightful.

Passing through all the degrees of a torture without name, and from regarding so fixedly this terrible scene, he feels his eye-balls become hot, burning, dissolving, calcined in their cavities, as if they were in sockets of red-hot iron. But now, suddenly, his intolerable anguish is appeased, as if by enchantment. An aromatic breeze, of delicious freshness, has passed over his still burning orbits. This breeze is a delightful mixture of those spring perfumes which the meadow-flowers exhale when wet with morning dew. The Maître d'Ecole hears around him a slight noise like that of a gentle wind playing among the foliage, like that of living water gushing and murmuring in its rocky and mossy bed. Thousands of birds warble, from time to time, the most delicious melodies; when they cease, infantine voices of angelic purity chant strange, unknown words, winged words, thus to speak, which the Maître d'Ecole hears mounting to the skies, shuddering. A sentiment of moral happiness, of indefinable languor and calmness, by degrees takes possession of him. Cheerfulness, rapturous enjoyment, a radiation of soul, of which no physical impression, however joyous, can give any idea! The Maître d'Ecole feels himself to be floating gently in a luminous ethereal sphere; it seems to him that he is raised to an immeasurable distance above all things human.

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After having enjoyed for some moments this felicity without name, he again finds himself in the gloomy abyss of his habitual thoughts. He dreams always, but he is no longer the muzzled brigand who blasphemes and curses himself in his fits of impotent rage.

A voice resounds, sonorous and solemn. It is the voice of Rodolphe. The Maître d'Ecole, alarmed, trembles; he has vaguely the consciousness of dreaming, but the terror which Rodolphe inspires is so great, that he makes, but in vain, every effort to escape this new vision. The voice speaks—he listens.

Rodolphe's manner is not harsh; it is sad and compassionate.

"Poor wretch," said he, "the hour of repentance has not yet sounded for you. God alone knows when it will. The punishment of your crimes is still incomplete. You have suffered, you have as yet made no expiation; destiny pursues its work of stern justice. Your accomplices have become your tormentors; a woman, a child rule you, torture you. In in-

flicting a punishment terrible as your crimes. I said to you—recall my words: 'You have criminally abused your strength; I will paralyze it. The strongest, the most ferocious have trembled before you; you shall tremble before the most weak.'

"You have left the obscure retreat, where you could have lived for repentance and expiation. You have been afraid of silence and solitude. Just now you envied, for a moment, the peaceful life of the labourers of this farm—but it was too late—too late! Almost without defence, you throw yourself among assassins and murderers; you wished to forget all by new crimes. You have defied those who wished to take it out of your power to injure your fellow-creatures, and this defiance has been in vain. Notwithstanding your audacity, notwithstanding your wickedness, notwithstanding your strength, you are chained. The thirst for crime chokes you; you cannot satisfy it. A few moments since you wished to kill your wife; she is there, under the same roof as yourself; she sleeps without defence; you have a knife, her chamber is a few steps off; no obstacle prevents your reaching her; nothing protects her from your fury—nothing but your impotence.

"The dream just passed, that which you now dream, may be a great lesson—they may save you. The mysterious imagery of this dream has a profound meaning.

"The lake of blood in which have appeared your victims, is the blood which you have shed; the burning lava, which replaced it, is the consuming remorse which you should have felt, so that some day, God taking pity on your long sufferings, would call you to himself, and cause you to taste the ineffable joys of forgiveness But it shall not be thus. No! no! these warnings shall be useless—far from repenting, you will regret each day, with horrible blasphemies, the day you committed these crimes. Alas! from this continual struggle between your sanguinary desires, and the impossibility to satisfy them, between your habits of ferocious oppression and the necessity of submitting to beings as weak as they are cruel, it will result for you in a fate so frightful—so horrible!—oh! poor wretch!" And the voice of Rodolphe faltered.

For a moment he was silent, as if emotion and horror had prevented him from proceeding.

The Maître d'Ecole felt his hair raise on his head. What, then, was this fate, which even his executioner pitied?

"The lot which awaits you is so frightful," continued Rodolphe, "that God in his inexorable and all-powerful vengeance, would wish you alone should expiate the crimes of all men, since the punishment is so frightful. Evil! evil to you! fatality wills that you should know the chastisement that awaits you, and she wills that you can do nothing to avoid it. Let the future be known to you."

It seemed to the Maître d'Ecole that his sight was restored. He opened his eyes—he saw.

But what he saw struck him with such horror, that he uttered a piercing cry, and starting, awoke from this horrible dream.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LETTER.

Nine o'clock was striking as Madame Georges entered softly into the chamber of Fleur de Marie. The sleep of the young girl was so light that she awoke immediately. A brilliant winter's sun shone gayly through the blinds and curtains of Persian chints, lined with rose-coloured muslin, spreading a vermilion tint throughout the chamber of La Goualeuse, and giving to her pale and charming face the colour which it wanted. "Well! my child," said Madame Georges, seating herself on the bed of the young girl, and kissing her forehead, "how do you find yourself?" "Better, madame, I thank you." "You have not been awakened early this morning?" "No, madame." "So much the better. This unfortunate blind man and his son, to whom we gave a lodging last night, would leave the farm at daybreak; I feared that the noise they made in opening the doors might awaken you."

"Poor people! why did they go so soon?"

"I do not know. Last evening, when you were quiet, I went down to the kitchen to see them; but they had found themselves so much fatigued they had asked permission to retire. The Père Chatelain told me that the blind man did not appear to be in his right senses; and all our people were struck with the touching attention paid him by his son. But, tell me, you have had some fever; I do not wish you should expose yourself to the cold to-day; you must not go out of the room."

"Madame, pardon me; I must go to-night at five o'clock to the parsonage; M. le Curé expects me."

"That would be imprudent; you have passed a bad night, I am sure of it: your eyes are heavy, you have slept badly."

"It is true. I have again had frightful dreams. I saw in my sleep the woman who ill treated me when I was a child. I started from my slumbers, alarmed; it is a ridiculous weakness of which I am ashamed."

"And this weakness afflicts me, since it makes you suffer, poor child!" said Madame Georges, with tender interest, seeing the eyes of the Goualeuse filled with tears; throwing herself on the neck of her adopted mother, she concealed her face in her bosom.

"Mon Dieu! what is the matter, Marie? you frighten me!"

"You are so kind to me, madame, that I reproach myself for not having confided to you what I have confided to the curé; to-morrow he will tell you himself; it will cost me too much to repeat to you this confession." "Come, come, child, be reasonable; I am sure that there is more to praise than blame in this great secret that you have told to our good abbé. Do not weep so much, you afflict me." "Pardon, madame, but, I cannot tell why, for two days past my heart sinks within me. Tears come into my eyes unbidden. I have gloomy presentiments. It seems to me some great calamity is about to overtake me." "Marie, Marie, I will scold if you allow yourself thus to be affected by imaginary terrors. Have we not real troubles enough to afflict us?"

"You are right, madame, I am wrong; I will try to overcome this weakness. If you knew,

mon Dieu! how much I reproach myself for not being always gay, smiling, happy, as I ought to be; alas! my sadness must appear to you like ingratitude!"

Madame Georges was endeavouring to console the Goualeuse, when Claudine entered, after having knocked at the door.

"What do you want, Claudine?" "Madame Pierre has arrived from Arnouville in the cabriolet of Madame Dubreuil; he brings this letter for you; he says it is very urgent."

Madame Georges read aloud as follows:

"My dear Madame Georges—You will render me a great service, and you will relieve me from great embarrassment, by coming quickly to the farm. Pierre will drive you over, and will take you back after dinner. I do not really know what to do; M. Dubreuil is at Portoise about the sale of his wool; I have recourse, then, to you and Marie. Clara embraces her dear little sister, and awaits her with impatience. Try to come at eleven o'clock, to breakfast. Your sincere friend,

"Femme Dubreuil."

"What can be the matter?" said Madame Georges to Fleur de Marie. "Happily, the tone of the letter proves that it is nothing very serious." "Shall I accompany you, madame?" asked the Goualeuse.

"Perhaps it is not very prudent, for it is very cold. But, after all, it may be of service to you; you can wrap yourself up well."

"But, madame," said the Goualeuse, reflecting, "M. le Curé expects me at the parsonage this evening at five o'clock."

"You are right; we will return before that time, I promise you."

"Oh! thank you, madame; I shall be so happy to see Mademoiselle Clara."

"Again," said Madame Georges, in a tone of mild reproach, "Mademoiselle Clara! Does she say Mademoiselle Marie in speaking of you?" "No, madame," answered La Goualeuse, casting down her eyes. "It is I who—"

"You! you are a cruel child, who only thinks of tormenting yourself; you forget already the promises you made me just now. Dress yourself quickly and warmly. We can arrive before eleven o'clock at Arnouville." Then going out with Claudine, Madame Georges said, "Let Pierre wait a moment; we will soon be ready."

CHAPTER XII.

RECOGNITION.

Half an hour after this conversation, Madame Georges and Fleur de Marie got into one of those large cabriolets so much used by the farmers in the environs of Paris; this carriage, drawn by a vigorous horse, and driven by Pierre, soon rolled over the smooth road which led from Bouqueval to Arnouville. The vast buildings and numerous dependencies of this farm bore witness of the importance of this magnificent property, which Mademoiselle Césarine de Noirmont had brought in marriage to M. le Duc de Lucenay.

The cracking of Pierre's whip notified Madame Dubreuil of the arrival of Fleur de Marie and Madame Georges. On descending from the carriage, they were joyously received by the fermière and her daughter.

Madame Dubreuil was about fifty years of age; her expression mild and affable; the features of her daughter, a pretty brunette, with blue eyes and rosy cheeks, impressed one with goodness and candour.

To her great astonishment, when Clara sprung to her neck, the Goualeuse saw that her friend was dressed like a peasant girl instead of being attired as a young lady. "How, you also, Clara, you disguised as a country girl?" said Madame Georges, embracing the young girl, "Must she not imitate her sister Marie in everything?" said Madame Dubreuil.

"She has had no peace until she also had her cloth jacket and her woollen petticoat, just like your Marie. But no matter, Madame Georges," said Madame Dubreuil, sighing; "come, and let me tell you all my troubles."

On arriving in the saloon, with her mother and Madame Georges, Clara seated herself alongside of Fleur de Marie, gave her the best place by the fire, showed her a thousand attentions, took her hands in hers to assure herself they were not cold, embraced her again and again, calling her her wicked little sister, for waiting so long before she came to see her. If the reader will recollect the conversation between the Goualeuse and the curé, he will comprehend that she received these caresses with a mixture of humility, happiness, and fear. "And what has happened, then, my dear Madame Dubreuil," said Madame Georges, "and how can I be of service to you?" "Mon Dieu! in many ways. I will explain this to you. You do not know, I believe, that this farm belongs, in her own right, to Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay. It is to her direct that we make our accounts, without having anything to do with the duke's intendant." "In effect, I was ignorant of this." "You will see why I tell you now. It is, then, to Madame La Duchesse, or to Madame Simon, her first femme de chambre, that we pay our rents. Madame la Duchesse is so kind, so good, although a little quick, that it is a real pleasure to have anything to do with her; Dubreuil and I would go through fire to serve her. Marry! it is quite reasonable: I knew her when she was a little girl, when she came here with her father, the late Prince de Noirmont Lately she asked us for six months' rent in advance. Forty thousand francs, that is not to be picked up in the road, as they say; but we had this sum in reserve, the 'dot' of our Clara, and the next day Madame la Duchesse had her money in fine golden louis. These great ladies have need of so many luxuries! And yet it is only within a year that madame has been at all exact in taking up her rents; formerly she appeared never to be in want of money. But now it is very different."

"As yet, my dear Madame Dubreuil, I cannot yet see how I can be of service to you." "Stop, stop! you'll see; I tell you all this to show you what confidence the duchess has in us, without saying a word about her being the god-mother of Clara, whom she is very fond of. Last night, then, I received by express this letter from Madame la Duchesse."

"It is absolutely necessary, my dear Madame Dubreuil, that the little pavilion in the orchard

should be in a state to be occupied the day after to-morrow; have everything carried there, carpets, curtains, etc., etc. In fine, let nothing be wanting, and make it as '*comfortable*' as you can."

"Comfortable! you understand, Madame Georges; it is underlined, moreover!" said Madame Dubreuil, looking at her friend with an air at once embarrassed and meditative; then she continued: "Make a fire night and day in the pavilion, to drive away the dampness, for it is a long time since it has been occupied. You will treat the person who will come to stay there as you would treat me; a letter which this person will hand you, will inform you what I expect from your zeal, always so obliging. I count on you once more, without fear of your failing; I know how kind you are, and I know your fidelity. Adieu, my dear Madame Dubreuil. Embrace my pretty god-daughter, and believe in my affectionate regard.

"NOIRMONT DE LUCENAY.

"P.S.—The person who is to occupy the pavilion will arrive the day after to-morrow, in the evening. Above all, do not forget, I beg you, to make the pavilion as *comfortable* as possible."

"Do you see? again this devil of a word underscored!" said Madame Dubreuil, putting in her pocket the letter of the Duchesse de Lucenay. "Well! nothing can be plainer," answered Madame Georges.

"How, nothing plainer?" "You have not understood then? Madame la Duchesse wishes, above all, that the pavilion shall be as *comfortable* as possible." "It was for this I have sent for you. Clara and I have almost killed ourselves in thinking what this word meant, and we can't find out. Yes, Clara has been to boarding-school at Villiers le Bel, and has gained I don't know how many prizes in geography and history. Well! what use is it? she is no farther advanced than I am on the subject of this odd word; it must be some word used at court or in the fashionable world. But, never mind, you can easily imagine our embarrassment: Madame la Duchesse wishes, above all, that the pavilion should be comfortable; she underlines the word, she repeats it twice, and we can't find out what she means!" "Dieu Merci! I can explain to you this great mystery," said Madame Georges, smiling. "*Comfortable*, on this occasion, means a commodious room, well arranged, well enclosed, warm, in fine, where nothing is wanted that is necessary and even superfluous."

"Ah, mon Dieu! I understand, but, then, I am much embarrassed!" "How is that?"

"Madame la Duchesse speaks of carpets, furniture, and many other et cetera; but we have no carpets here, our furniture is very common, and, besides, I do not know whether the person we expect is a lady or gentleman, and all this must be ready by to-morrow night. What shall I do! what shall I do! here there are no resources. Truly, Madame Georges, it almost drives me wild!"

"But, mamma," said Clara, "if you take the furniture of my chamber while you are getting new furniture, I will go and pass two or three days with Marie at Bouqueval!" "Your chamber! your chamber, my child; do you think it is good enough!" said Madame Dubreuil, shrugging her shoulders; "is it enough—enough *comfortable!* as Madame la Duchesse says. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! where do they find such words!"

"This pavilion is, then, ordinarily uninhabited?" asked Madame Georges. "Without doubt, it is the little white building which stands all alone at the end of the orchard. M. le Prince built it for Madame la Duchesse when she was a child: when she came to the farm with her father, she always rested there. It has three pretty rooms, and at the end of the garden a Swiss dairy, where Madame la Duchesse amused herself to play milkwoman: since her marriage, we have seen her at the farm but twice, and each time she passed some hours in the little pavilion. The first time—it is about six years ago—she came on horseback with—"

Then, as if the presence of Fleur de Marie and Clara hindered her from saying more, Madame Dubreuil said,

"But I talk, I talk; yet all this does not relieve me from my troubles. Come, then, to my assistance, my poor Madame Georges; come, then, to my assistance!"

"Let us see, now, what there is in the pavilion at present!" "Not much; in the principal room, a straw mat on the floor, a rush-bottomed sofa, arm-chairs of the same, a table, some chairs, and that's all. From this to being *comfortable* there is a long distance, you see." "Were I in your place, this is what I would do: it is eleven o'clock; I would send to Paris an intelligent man."

"Our superintendent; he has no superior."

"Very well; in two hours at the farthest he can be in Paris: he must go to an upholsterer in the Chaussée de Antin, no matter whom; he will give him a list that I will make for you, after having seen the pavilion, and he will say that, cost what it may—" "Oh! certainly; as long as Madame la Duchesse is content, I shall regard nothing." "He will say to him, then, that, cost what it may, all that is noted on this list must be here this night, and also three or four workmen to arrange everything."

"They can come by the Gonesse coach, which leaves Paris at eight o'clock in the evening." "And as there is nothing to do but to transport furniture, nail down carpets, and hang curtains, all can be easily ready by to-morrow evening."

"Ah! my good Madame Georges, from what embarrassment you save me! I would never have thought of this. You are my providence; and now you will have the goodness to make me the list I want, so that the pavilion shall be—"

"Comfortable? yes, certainly."

"Ah! mon Dieu! another difficulty! we don't know whether it is a gentleman or lady we are to expect. In her letter, Madame la Duchesse said a person: it is very perplexing!"

"Act as if you expected a lady, my dear Madame Dubreuil; if it is a man, he will like it all the better." "You are right; always right" A servant came and announced that the breakfast was ready. "We will breakfast directly," said Madame Georges; "but, while I write the list of what is necessary, have the three rooms measured, the height, length, and breadth, for

the curtains and carpets." "Well, well! I'll go and tell all this to the superintendent."

"Madame," said the servant, "there is also there this milkwoman of Stains: her furniture is in a little cart drawn by an ass!" "Marry, it is not very heavy, her furniture!"

"Poor woman!" said Madame Dubreuil, with interest.

"Who is this woman?" asked Madame Georges.

"A peasant of Stains, who had four cows, and who made a living by selling her milk every morning in Paris. Her husband was a farrier. One day, having need of some iron, he accompanied his wife, agreeing to meet her on his return home at the corner of the street where she usually sold her milk. Unfortunately, this was in a horrible part of the city: when her husband returned, he found her quarrelling with some drunken wretches who had overturned her milk into the gutter. The blacksmith tried to make them understand reason; they maltreated him; he defended himself, and in the scuffle he received a blow with a knife, which stretched him dead on the ground." "Ah! how dreadful!" cried Madame Georges; "and did they arrest the assassin?"

"Unfortunately, no; in the tumult he escaped. The poor widow assures me that she can easily recognise him, for she has seen him several times with some of his comrades in that part of the town; but so far all researches have been useless to discover the assassin. In short, since the death of her husband she has been obliged to sell her cows, and a little land that she had to pay her debts. The farmer of the chateau of Stains recommended her to me as an excellent creature, as honest as unfortunate; for she has three children, the eldest of which is not more than twelve years; I happened to have a place vacant; I have given it to her, and she has now come to remain with us." "This goodness on your part does not surprise me, my good Madame Dubreuil." "Tell me, Clara," continued the fermière, "do you wish to go and show this good woman her room, while I go and tell the superintendent to get ready to go to Paris?" "Yes, mamma; Marie, come with me." "Doubtless; could one go without the other?" said the fermière. "And I," added Madame Georges, seating herself before a table, "I'll commence my list, so as not to lose any time, for we must be back at Bouqueval by four o'clock."

"At four o'clock! you are in a great hurry," said Madame Dubreuil." "Yes, Marie must be at the parsonage by five o'clock." "Oh! if it is an engagement with our good Abbé Laporte, it is sacred," said Madame Dubreuil. "I will write the orders in consequence—these two children have so much to say—we must give them time to talk." "We will go, then, at three o'clock, my dear Madame Dubreuil."

"It is understood. But I must thank you once more! what a happy idea it was to send for you," said Madame Dubreuil. "Go, Clara; go, Marie!" While Madame Georges wrote, Madame Dubreuil went in one direction, and the two young girls another with the servant who had announced the arrival of the milkwoman from Stains. "Where is this poor woman?" asked Clara. "She is with her children, her little cart and donkey, in the barnyard, mademoiselle."

"You shall see her, Marie—the poor woman," said Clara, taking the arm of La Goualeuse; "how pale she is, and how sad she looks in her widow's mourning. The last time she came to see mamma she quite overcame me; she wept bitterly in speaking of her husband; and then, suddenly drying her tears, she burst out in a rage against his murderer. Then—she made me afraid, she looked so wicked; but, truly, her feelings are natural! the unfortunate! How many unfortunate people there are; eh! Marie?"

"Yes, yes, unquestionably," answered La Goualeuse, sighing, "there are many unhappy people; you are right, mademoiselle."

"Come, come!" cried Clara, stamping her feet; "now see, once more you have said *you*;* and you call me mademoiselle. Are you angry with me, Marie?" "I! grand Dieu!" "Well, then, why do you say *you*? You know my mother and Madame Georges have already scolded you for that. I warn you, I'll make them scold you still more; so much the worse for you!" "Clara, pardon me; I was not thinking."

"Not thinking—when you see me after eight days' separation!" said Clara, sadly. "No, no, it is not that: look here, Marie—I shall begin to think you are proud."

Fleur de Marie became pale as death, and answered not a word. At the sight of her, a woman dressed as a widow had uttered a cry of horror and anger.

This woman was the person who each morning had sold milk to the Goualeuse when she lived with the Ogresse of the tapis-franc.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MILKWOMAN.

The scene which we are about to describe took place in one of the courts of the farm, in presence of the labourers and women, who had just returned from work to take their midday repast.

Under a shed was to be seen a little cart drawn by an ass, and containing the rustic furniture of the widow; a little boy of twelve years of age, aided by two children still younger, had commenced to unload this vehicle. The milkwoman was about forty years of age, with a rough, hard-visaged countenance, whose eyes were red from recent weeping. On perceiving Fleur de Marie, at first she uttered a piercing scream; but soon grief, anger, indignation contracted her features; she threw herself on the Goualeuse, took her brutally by the arm, and, showing her to the people of the farm, cried; "Here is a wretch who knows the assassin of my husband. I have seen her speak twenty times to this brigand! When I sold milk at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille Draperie, she came to buy a sou's worth every morning; she ought to know who the scoundrel is who gave the blow: like all her fellows, she belongs to this clique of bandits. Oh! you shall not escape me, hussy as you are!" cried the exasperated milkwoman, and she seized the

* Thou is always used among intimate friends.

other arm of Fleur de Marie, who, trembling, lost, wished to fly. Clara, stupified at this sudden attack, had not been able to say a word; but, at this renewed violence, she cried, "But are you mad! grief has taken away your senses! you are mistaken!" "I mistaken!" answered the woman, bitterly. "Oh! no, no! I am not mistaken. Look, look! how pale she is—the wretch! how her teeth chatter! Justice shall force her to speak; you shall come with me to the mayor, do you hear? Oh! you need not resist. I will hold you—I will carry you sooner!" "Insolent that you are!" cried Clara, much exasperated; "go away from here—to treat my friend thus—my sister!" "Your sister—mademoiselle, go away! it is you who are mad!" answered the widow, roughly: "your sister! a girl from the streets, who for six months I have seen in the cité!" At these words the labourers began to murmur against Fleur de Marie; they naturally took the part of the milkwoman, who was of their class, and whose misfortunes interested them.

The three children, hearing their mother raise her voice, ran to her and clung round her weeping, without knowing what was the matter. The appearance of these poor little things, also dressed in mourning, increased the sympathy that the widow inspired, and augmented the indignation of the peasants against Fleur de Marie.

Clara, frightened at these almost menacing demonstrations, said to the people of the farm, in a trembling voice, "Make this woman go away from here; I repeat to you that sorrow makes her crazy. Marie, Marie, pardeu! Mon Dieu, this mad woman knows not what she says." The Goualeuse, pale, trembling, with her head down to escape all looks, remained silent, annihilated, helpless, and made no movement to escape from the rough grasp of the milkwoman. Clara, attributing this to the fright caused by this scene, said again to the labourers, "Do you not hear me, then? I order you to drive this woman away. Since she persists in her conduct, to punish her insolence, she shall not have the place my mother promised her; she shall never put her foot on this farm again." Not a single labourer moved to obey the orders of Clara; one of them dared to say,

"Marry, mademoiselle, if this is a girl of the streets, and she knows the assassin of the husband of this poor woman, she will come and explain before the mayor." "I repeat that you shall never come here again," said Clara to the milkwoman, "unless you instantly ask pardon of Mlle. Marie for your rudeness." "You drive me away, mademoiselle! very well," answered the widow, with bitterness. "Come, my poor orphans," added she, embracing her children, "load the cart again; we will go and seek our bread elsewhere; the bon Dieu will have pity on us; but at least, in going, we will take with us this creature before the mayor, who will oblige her to denounce the assassin of my poor husband, since she knows the whole band! Because you are rich, mademoiselle," continued she, looking at Clara insolently, "because you have friends among such creatures as this, you must not, on that account, be so hard to poor folks!"

"It is true," said a labourer, "the milkwoman is right."

"Poor woman, she has right on her side."

"Some one has killed her husband; must she remain silent?"

"It is unjust to send her away. Is it her fault if the friend of Mlle. Clara, turns out to be a girl of the streets?"

"An honest woman should not be turned away, a mother of a family, on account of such a creature!"

And the murmurings became menacing, when Clara cried,

"God be praised! here is my mother."

Madame Dubreuil, returning from the pavilion in the orchard, crossed the court. "Well, Clara, well, Marie," said she, approaching the group; "come to breakfast; come, my children, it is already late!" "Mamma," cried Clara, "defend my sister from the insults of this woman," and she pointed to the widow; "pray send her away. If you knew what she has had the impudence to say to Marie."

"How? she has dared?" "Yes, mamma. Look, poor little sister, how she trembles; she can hardly support herself. Ah! it is a shame for us, that such a scene should take place here. Marie, pardon us, I entreat you!"

"But what does this mean?" asked Madame Dubreuil, looking around her with a troubled air, after having remarked the appearance of the Goualeuse. "Madame will be just, she will, very sure," murmured the labourers.

"Ah! here is Madame Dubreuil; it is you who will be turned out," said the widow to Fleur de Marie.

"It is then true!" cried Madame Dubreuil, to the milkwoman, who still held Fleur de Marie by the arm; "you dare thus to speak to the friend of my daughter? Is it thus you return my kindness? will you leave this young person alone?"

"I respect you, madame, and I am grateful for your kindness," said the widow, relinquishing the arm of the Goualeuse; "but before you accuse me and drive me away with my children, question this girl. She will not have the effrontery to deny that I know her, and that she knows me also." "Mon Dieu! Marie, do you hear what this woman says?" cried Madame Dubreuil, with surprise.

"Are you called, yes or no, the Goualeuse?" said the milkwoman to Marie. "Yes," said the unfortunate girl, in a low voice and cast-down manner, and without looking at Madame Dubreuil. "Yes; they called me thus." "Ah! do you see!" cried the provoked labourers; "she acknowledges it! she acknowledges it!" "She acknowledges—but what? what does she acknowledge?" cried Madame Dubreuil, half frightened at the avowal of Fleur de Marie. "Let her answer, madame," said the widow. "She will confess that she was in an infamous house of the Rue aux Fèves, in the cité, where I sold her a sous worth of milk every morning. She will confess that she has often spoken before me to the assassin of my husband. Oh! she knows him well, I am sure. A pale young man, who was always smoking, and who wore a cap, a blouse, and had long hair; she must know his name. Is it not true? Answer, wretch!" cried the milkwoman. "I may have spoken to the assassin of your husband; for there is, unfortunately, more than one murderer

in the cité," said Fleur de Marie, in a voice almost extinct; "but I do not know of whom you speak." "How! what does she say?" cried Madame Dubreuil with affright; "she has spoken to assassin." "Creatures such as she is, only know such kind of people," answered the widow.

At first, stupified by such a strange relation, confirmed by the last words of Fleur de Marie, Madame Dubreuil, comprehending then everything, drew back with disgust and horror, drawing violently and roughly her daughter towards her, who had approached the Goualeuse to sustain her, and cried,

"Ah! what abomination! Clara, take care. Do not approach this person. But how could Madame Georges receive her at her house? How did she dare to present her to me, and suffer my daughters—mon Dieu! mon Dieu! but this is horrible! I can hardly believe what I see! But no, Madame Georges is incapable of such indignity. She has been deceived, as we have been. If not, this is abominable on her part." Clara, much afflicted at this cruel scene, believed herself in a dream. In her youthful innocence, she did not comprehend the terrible criminations with which they loaded her friend. Her heart was broken, tears filled her eyes, on seeing the stupor of the Goualeuse, dumb, trembling as a criminal before her judges. "Come, come, my daughter," said Madame Dubreuil to Clara; then turning towards Fleur de Marie, "And you, unworthy creature, le bon Dieu will punish you for your hypocrisy. To dare to suffer that my daughter—an angel of virtue—should call you her friend—her sister! you, the refuse of what is most vile in the world! what effrontery! To dare to associate with honest people, when you deserve, without doubt, to join your fellows in prison." "Yes, yes," cried the labourers, "she must go to prison. She knows the assassin. She is perhaps his accomplice." "Do you see the hand of heaven!" said the widow, shaking her fist at the Goualeuse. "As to you, my good woman," said Madame Dubreuil, "far from sending you away, I will reward the service you have rendered me in unmasking this creature."

"Right! Our mistress is just," murmured the labourers.

"Come, Clara," continued the fermière, "Madame Georges must explain her conduct to us, or I will never see her again; for if she has not been deceived, her conduct towards us has been most scandalous." "But, my mother, see this poor Marie." "Let her sink with shame, if she pleases; so much the better! Despise her. I do not wish you to remain a moment with her. She is one of those creatures to whom a young girl like you cannot speak without dishonouring themselves." "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! mamma," said Clara, resisting the efforts of her mother to carry her off, "I do not know what all this means. Marie is perhaps culpable, since you say so; but see, see—she is fainting; have pity on her, at least." "Oh! Mademoiselle Clara, you are good—you pardon me. It is, indeed, unwillingly that I have deceived you. I have often reproached myself," said Fleur de Marie, casting on her protectress a look of ineffable gratitude. "But, my mother, have you then no pity?" cried Clara, in a touching voice. "Pity! for her? Come, if it were not for Madame Georges, who will take her away, I would turn this wretch out of doors as a pest," answered Madame Dubreuil; and she endeavoured to lead off her daughter, who, turning towards the Goualeuse for the last time, cried, "Marie! my sister! I do not know of what they accuse you, but I am sure you are not culpable, and I love you always." "Hush, hush," said Madame Dubreuil, putting her hand over the mouth of her daughter, "hush; happily, every one present can bear witness, that after this odious revelation, you have not remained a moment with this lost girl. Is it not so, my friends?" "Yes, yes, madame," said a labourer, "we are witnesses that Mademoiselle Clara has not remained a moment with this girl, who is doubtless a thief, since she knows assassins."

Madame Dubreuil carried off Clara. The Goualeuse remained alone in the midst of the menacing group which was formed around her. Notwithstanding the reproaches with which Madame Dubreuil had overwhelmed her, her presence and that of her daughter had, in some degree, supported Fleur de Marie as to the consequences of this scene; but, after the departure of the two women, finding herself at the mercy of the peasants, her strength failed her, and she was obliged to lean against the fence for support. Nothing could be more touching than the position of this unfortunate. Nothing more threatening than the words, than the attitude of the peasants who surrounded her. With her head hanging down, her face concealed between her two hands, her neck and bosom veiled by the square ends of the red Indian kerchief which was tied round her little peasant's cap, the Goualeuse, immovable, presented the most touching picture of grief and resignation. At some distance from her, the widow of the murdered man, triumphant and still exasperated against Fleur de Marie, pointed to the young girl with gestures of hatred and contempt. The people of the farm, grouped around, did not conceal the hostile sentiments which animated them; their rough and gross countenances expressed, at once, indignation, anger, and a sort of brutal and insulting raillery; the women showed themselves the most furious, the most revolting. The touching beauty of the Goualeuse was not one of the least causes of the hatred against her.

Man nor woman could not forgive Fleur de Marie for having been, until then, treated as an equal by their masters.

And, besides, some of the labourers of Arnouville, having been unsuccessful applicants for situations at the farm of Bonqueval, felt towards Madame Georges rather unfriendly, a feeling which could be of no advantage to her protégée. The first movements of uneducated natures are always extreme—excellent or detestable.

But they become horribly dangerous when the multitude believe their brutalities authorized by the real or imaginary wrongs of those who act from motives of rage or hatred.

"We must carry her before the mayor," cried one.

"Yes, yes; and if she can't walk, we will push her."

"And to think that she dares to dress like one of us honest country-girls," added one of the ugliest women of the farm.

"With her holy, touch-me-not air," answered another, "one would have given her the sacrament without confession."

"Has she had the impudence to go to mass?"

"The brazen-face! why did she not take communion at once?"

"And she must associate with our masters, that's more."

"As if we were not good enough for her!"

"Happily, every one has their turn."

"Oh! you must speak and say who is the murderer," cried the widow. "You belong to the same band. I am not sure I did not see you that very day. Come, come, you need not sob, now you are known. Show us your face; it is fine to look at." And the widow brutally tore down the hands of the young girl, which concealed her face bathed with tears. The Goualeuse, at first overcome with shame, began to tremble with affright on finding herself at the mercy of the enraged beings; she joined her hands, turned towards the milkwoman her supplicating and tearful eyes, and said, in her sweet voice, "Mon Dieu! madame, it is two months since I retired to the farm of Bouqueval. I was not then a witness of the misfortune of which you speak; and—" The timid voice of Fleur de Marie was drowned with threatening cries. "Lead her to the mayor—let her explain."

"Come, march! my beauty."

And the menacing group drew nearer and nearer to the Goualeuse; she crossed her hands, and, looking from side to side, seemed to implore assistance.

"Oh!" said the widow, "you need not look for help; Mademoiselle Clara is no longer there to defend you; you shall not escape us." "Alas! madame," said she, trembling, "I do not wish to escape; I only ask to answer what is demanded, since it may be of use to you. But what harm have I done to all these people who surround and threaten me?"

"You have had the impudence to associate with our masters, when we, who are a thousand times better than you are, could not do it. That's what you have done to us."

"And, besides, why did you wish to drive away from here this poor widow and her children?" said another. "It was not I, it was Mademoiselle Clara, who wished—" "Come, come, then," said another labourer, interrupting her, "you didn't even ask pardon for her; you were willing to see her bread taken away!" "No, no: she didn't ask pardon for them!" "Ain't she wicked!" "A poor widow—mother of three children!" "If I did not ask her pardon," said Fleur de Marie, "it was because I had not the strength to say a word."

"You had strength enough to speak to assassins."

Thus, as it always happens in popular movements, these peasants, more stupid than wicked, irritated, excited themselves at the sound of their own words, stirred themselves up merely from the force of their own threats and revilings, against their victim. Thus the mob hastens, often by a progressive advancement, to the accomplishment of the most ferocious and unjust acts. The threatening circle of peasants drew nearer and nearer to Fleur de Marie—all speaking at once—the widow of the blacksmith was forgotten. Only separated from the horse-pond by the slight fence against which she was leaning, the Goualeuse was afraid of being thrown in the water, and cried, stretching forth her hands in a supplicating manner, "But, Mon Dieu! what do you wish of me? 'par pitié,' do me no harm!"

And as the milkwoman, with threatening gestures, drawing nearer and nearer, planted her fists directly in her face, Fleur de Marie cried, with affright, "I beg you, madame, do not push me so, or I'll fall into the water." These words of Fleur de Marie gave these rough people an idea of one of those *jokes*, which often leave the victim half dead on the spot: one of the most furious cried, "A ducking! let us give her a ducking!"

"Yes, yes—to the water! the water!" was repeated with a burst of laughter and frantic applause. "That's it—a good ducking! it won't kill her." "That will teach her to come and mix with honest people." "Yes, yes—to the water! to the water!" "The ice has been broken this morning on purpose." "The street-walker shall remember the good people of the farm of Arnouville!"

On hearing these inhuman cries, these barbarous jokes, seeing the exasperation of these irritated people as they advanced to seize her, Fleur de Marie thought she would have died. After the first fear succeeded a sort of bitter content: she saw the future under such black colours, that she mentally thanked Heaven for putting an end to her troubles: she did not utter another word of complaint; but, falling on her knees, crossed her arms religiously on her breast, shut her eyes, and, in prayer, awaited the result.

The labourers, surprised at the attitude and silent resignation of the Goualeuse, hesitated, for a moment, to accomplish their savage projects; but, upbraided for their weakness by the female portion of the assemblage, they began to shout to give them courage to achieve their wicked design. Two of the most outrageous were about seizing her, when a trembling, thrilling voice, cried,

"Stop!" at the same moment, Madame Georges, who had forced a passage through the midst of the crowd, stood alongside of the Goualeuse, took her in her arms, and raised her up, saying, "Stand up, my child; stand up, my dear daughter; one must kneel to God alone." The expression, the attitude of Madame Georges was so proudly courageous, that the crowd drew back, and remained silent. Indignation coloured her cheeks, ordinarily so pale. She looked at the labourers boldly, and said to them, with a loud and threatening voice, "Wretches! are you not ashamed to treat with such violence this unfortunate child!"

"She is a—" "She is my daughter!" cried Madame Georges, interrupting the labourers. "M. l'Abbé Laporte, whom every one blesses and venerates, loves her and protects her, and those he esteems ought to be respected by the whole world."

These simple words produced their effect. The curé of Bouqueval was, in the neighbourhood, regarded as a saint; many of the peasants were not ignorant of the interest he felt in the Goualeuse. Nevertheless, some mur-

murs were still heard: Madame Georges understood the reason, and cried,

"This unfortunate young girl, was she the vilest of creatures, was she abandoned by everybody, your conduct towards her would not be less odious. What do you wish to punish her for? And, besides, with what right? Where is your authority? Your strength! Is it not cowardly, disgraceful, for men to take for their victim a young girl without any defence! Come, Marie, come, my well-beloved child, let us return home; there, at least, you are known and appreciated." Madame Georges took the arm of Fleur de Marie; the labourers, ashamed of the brutality of their conduct, drew back respectfully. The widow alone advanced, and said, resolutely, "This girl shall not leave this place until she makes a deposition before the mayor, as to her knowledge of the assassin of my husband."

"My good friend," said Madame Georges, restraining herself, "my daughter has no deposition to make here: some other time, if justice finds it necessary to summon her as a witness, let it be done, and I will accompany her. Until then, no one has the right to interrogate her." "But, Madame, I tell you—" Madame Georges interrupted the milkwoman, and answered her, severely, "The misfortune of which you are a victim can hardly excuse your conduct: some day you will regret the violence that you have so cruelly excited. Mademoiselle Marie lives with me at the farm of Bouqueval; inform the judge who has received your first declarations; we will await his orders."

The widow could make no reply to these wise words; she seated herself on the ground, and began to weep bitterly, embracing her children. Some moments after this scene, Pierre brought the cabriolet; Madame Georges and Marie got into the carriage to return to Bouqueval. On passing before the house, the Goualeuse saw Clara: she was weeping, half concealed behind the persienne, but with her handkerchief she waved an adieu to Fleur de Marie.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONSOLATIONS.

"Ah! madame, what shame for me! what shame for you!" said Fleur de Marie to her adopted mother, when she found herself alone with her in the little saloon of Bouqueval. "You are doubtless angry at Madame Dubreuil, and this on my account. Oh! my presentiments! God has thus punished me for having deceived this lady and her daughter. I am the subject of discord between you and your friend." "My friend is an excellent woman, my dear child, but a poor weak head. Besides, as she has a good heart, to-morrow she will regret, I am sure, her foolish conduct of to-day." "Alas! madame, do not believe I wish to justify her by accusing you; mon Dieu! but your kindness for me has made you blind. Put yourself in the place of Madame Dubreuil—learn that the companion of your cherished daughter—was—what I was—say, can any one blame her maternal indignation?"

Madame Georges could not find a word to answer to this question of Fleur de Marie, who went on:

"This scene which I have undergone, to-morrow will be known to the whole country! It is not for myself that I feel; but who knows now if the reputation of Clara will not be forever stained, because she called me her sister, friend. I should have followed my first resolution—to have resisted the feeling which drew me towards Mademoiselle Dubreuil—and, even at the risk of inspiring her with aversion, withdrawn from the friendship she offered me. But I have forgotten the distance that separated us. Thus, you see, I am punished, ah! cruelly punished, for I have, perhaps, caused an irreparable wrong to this young person, so virtuous and so good"

"My dear child," said Madame Georges, after some moments' reflection, "you are wrong to reproach yourself so much; your past life has been culpable, but is it nothing, by your repentance, to have merited the protection of our venerable curé? Is it not under his auspices, under mine, that you have been presented to Madame Dubreuil? Yourself alone inspired her with the attachment she has so liberally shown you! Did she not ask you herself to call Clara sister? And, besides, as I told her just now, for I ought not and wish not to conceal anything from you, could I, certain as I was of your repentance, noise abroad the past, and thus render your situation more painful? impossible! perhaps in making you despair, in delivering you to the scorn of people who, as unfortunate, as forsaken as you have been, would not, like you, preserve the secret instinct of honour and virtue? The revelations of this woman are to be deplored—fatal; but should I, on foreseeing it, have sacrificed your future repose to an eventuality almost improbable?"

"Ah! madame, that which proves how much my position is forever false and miserable, is, that from affection for me you have had reason to conceal the past, and that the mother of Clara had also reason to despise me on account of this past; to despise me, as everybody will despise me hereafter; for the scene at the farm of Arnouville will be spread everywhere—everything will be known. Oh! I shall die with shame! I never can look at any one again!" "Not even at me! Poor child!" said Madame Georges, bathed in tears, and opening her arms to Fleur de Marie; "and yet you will move in my heart but the tenderness, the devotion of a mother. Courage, then, Marie! have the consciousness of your repentance. You are here surrounded with friends; well, this house shall be the world for you; we will meet these revelations you fear so much. Our good abbé will call together the people of the farm, who already love you so much; he will tell them the truth of the past. Believe me, my child, his word has such authority that this revelation will render you more interesting still." "I believe you, madame, and I will be resigned. Yesterday, in our conversation, M. le Curé spoke to me of sorrowful expiations: they have commenced—I ought not to be astonished. He told me, besides, that my sufferings would be some day counted for me. Sustained in these trials by you and by him, I will not complain." "You will go to see him in a few

moments; never will his counsels be more needed or salutary. It is now half past four: get ready to go to the parsonage, my child. I am going to write to M. Rodolphe what has occurred at Arnouville. I will send my letter by express; then I will join you at the abbé's, for it is important that we should confer together."

A few moments afterward the Goualeuse set out for the parsonage by the hollow road, where, the evening previous, the Maître d'Ecole and Tortillard had agreed to join La Chouette.

CHAPTER XV.

REFLECTIONS.

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Thus, as has been seen from her conversations with Madame Georges, and with the Curé of Bouqueval, Fleur de Marie had so nobly profited by the counsels of her benefactors, had so completely imbibed, as it were, their principles, that the more she dwelt on her past objections, the more she despaired. Still more unfortunately, her mind became developed as her excellent natural impulses increased and flourished in the midst of the atmosphere and honour in which she lived. With a mind less elevated, a sensibility less exquisite, an imagination less lively, Fleur de Marie would have been easily consoled. She had repented—a venerable priest had pardoned her; she would have forgotten the horrors of the city in the midst of the calm repose of the rustic life that she partook with Madame Georges: at length she gave herself up without fear to the friendship offered to her by Mademoiselle Dubreuil; and that, not from a disregard of the faults she had committed, but from a blind confidence in the words of those whose excellence she was conscious of. They said to her, "Now your conduct renders you the equal of honest people;" she could see no difference between herself and honest people. The unfortunate scene at the farm of Arnouville had painfully affected her; but she could not, so to speak, have foreseen this occurrence, in shedding bitter tears, experiencing a lively remorse, at sight of Clara sleeping innocently and softly in the chamber of the former boarder of the Ogresse.

Poor girl! had she not often applied to herself in the silence of her long, sleepless nights, criminations much more poignant than those with which the inhabitants of the farm had overwhelmed her! That which was killing Fleur de Marie slowly, was the analysis, the incessant examination into that with which she reproached herself; it was, above all, the constant comparison of the future which the inexorable past had imposed on her, with that future of which she might have dreamed except for this.

The spirit of analysis, of examination and comparison, is almost always inherent in a superior mind. Among proud and haughty beings, this spirit produces doubt and disgust towards others. In timid and shrinking minds, this spirit leads to doubt and suspicion against one's self. The first are condemned—they acquit themselves. The second are acquitted—they condemn themselves. The Curé of Bouqueval, notwithstanding his sanctity, Madame Georges, notwithstanding her virtues, or, rather, both of them by reason of their virtues and their sanctity, could not imagine what the Goualeuse suffered, since her mind, freed from its stains, could contemplate all the depths of the abyss in which she had been plunged. They did not know that the fearful "souvenirs" of the Goualeuse had almost the power, the strength of reality; they did not know that this young girl, of an exquisite sensibility, of a poetic and thoughtful imagination, of a quickness of impressions, much to be lamented for this susceptibility; they did not know that this young girl passed not a single day without recalling, without almost feeling with sufferings mingled with fear and disgust, the disgraceful miseries of her former mode of life. Let one imagine a young girl of sixteen years, pure and virtuous, having the consciousness of this purity, cast, by some infernal power, into the infamous tavern of the Ogresse, and insuperably subjected to the domination of this wretch! Such was for the Fleur de Marie the reaction of the past on the present. Can we thus comprehend this kind of retrospective feeling, or, rather, this moral "contre-coup," from which the Goualeuse suffered so cruelly, that she regretted oftener than she had dared to avow to the abbé, that she had not died as she had lived?

From the little experience in life, and the few reflections that are generally made on it, what we are about to say must not be taken for a paradox. That which rendered Fleur de Marie worthy of interest and pity is, that not only had she never loved, but her senses had always remained dormant and frozen.

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The "naïves" confidence of Clara Dubreuil, on the subject of her love for the young farmer whom she was about to marry, had wounded the heart of Fleur de Marie; she also felt that she could have loved tenderly, that she could have loved in every sense, in all that was devoted, noble, pure, and great; and yet this was not to be permitted to her, either to inspire or experience. For, if she loved, she would choose by the standard of her own mind, and the more the choice would be worthy of her, the more she must feel herself unworthy.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MEETING.

The sun was sinking in the west, the plain was silent, deserted. Fleur de Marie approached the entrance of the hollow road, which must be crossed before she could reach the parsonage, when she saw a little lame boy, with a blue cap, come out of the ravine; he seemed to be weeping, and as he perceived the Goualeuse in the distance, he ran towards her. "Oh! my good lady, have pity on me if you please," cried he, joining his hands in a supplicating manner. "What do you want? what is the matter, my child?" asked the Goualeuse, with interest. "Alas! my good lady, my poor grandmother, who is very old, very old, has fallen there, in descending the ravine; she has hurt herself very much. I am afraid she has broken her leg. I

am too weak to help her up. Mon Dieu! what shall I do if you don't come and help me? Poor grandmother! perhaps she will die." The Goualeuse, touched with the grief of the little lame boy, cried, "I am not very strong, either, my child, but I can, perhaps, help you to assist your grandmother. Let us go quickly to her. I live at the farm yonder. If the poor old woman can't walk there with us, I will send for—"

"Oh! my good lady, the bon Dieu will bless you, surely. It is this way—two steps—in the hollow road. As I said, it is in going down the bank she has fallen." "You don't belong, then, to this part of the country?" asked the Goualeuse, following Tortilland, whom the reader has doubtless recognised. "No, my good lady, we come from Ecouen." "And where are you going to?" "To a good curé, who lives on the hill, there," said the son of Bras-Rouge, to augment the confidence of Fleur de Marie.

"To the Abbé Laporte's, perhaps?" "Yes, my good lady, to the Abbé Laporte's; my poor grandmother knows him very well—very well."

"I am just going to see him," said Fleur de Marie, going down lower and lower into the hollow road.

"Grandma! here I am, here I am! be patient. I bring you some help," cried Tortillard, to inform the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette to hold themselves in readiness to seize their victim. "Your grandmother has not fallen thus far from here?" asked the Goualeuse. "No, my good lady; behind that large tree, where the road turns, at twenty steps from here." All at once Tortillard stopped. The noise of the gallop of a horse resounded quite near. "Once more all is lost!" said Tortillard to himself. The road made a turn at a short distance from the place where the son of Bras-Rouge was standing with the Goualeuse. A horseman appeared at this turn; when he came up to them he stopped. Then was heard the trot of another horse, and some moments after came a servent dressed in a brown riding-coat, with silver buttons, white leather breeches, and top boots. A narrow belt of yellow leather confined behind his saddle the Mackintosh of his master.

The master, dressed plainly in a thick, bronze-colour riding-coat and light-gray trousers, rode with perfect grace a bay horse, of pure blood and singular beauty. The horse of the groom, who stood in waiting at some steps from his master, was also of full blood and breeding. In this horseman with a dark and charming face, Tortilland recognised M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy, who was generally reputed to be the "amant" of Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay. "My pretty girl," said the viscount to the Goualeuse, whose beauty struck him, "will you have the kindness to show me the road to the village of Arnouville?"

Marie, casting down her eyes before the bold stare of the young man, answered, "As you go out of the hollow road, monsieur, you will take the first path to the right; this will conduct you to an avenue of cherry-trees, which leads directly to Arnouville." "A thousand thanks, my pretty child. You direct me much better than an old woman that I found two steps from here, stretched at the foot of a tree; I could get nothing from her but groans." "My poor grandmother," murmured Tortillard, in a sorrowful tone. "And now another word," added M. de Saint Rémy, addressing the Goualeuse; "can you tell me if I can easily find at Arnouville the farm of M. Dubreuil?"

The Goualeuse could not prevent herself from trembling at these words, which recalled to her the painful scene of the morning; she answered, "The farm buildings border on the avenue that you must follow in going to Arnouville, monsieur."

"Once more, I thank you, my pretty child!" said M. de Saint Rémy; and he set off on a full gallop, followed by his groom.

The charming features of the viscount were somewhat relaxed during the time he spoke to Fleur de Marie; but, as soon as he was alone, they became contracted, from some deep and profound anxiety.

Fleur de Marie, recalling to her mind the unknown for whom the pavilion at Arnouville had been furnished in such haste, doubted not but that it was for this person. The gallop of the horses shook for some time the hard-frozen ground; the noise became less; it ceased. Tortillard breathed again. Wishing to notify and prepare his accomplices, he cried, "Grandmother! here I am, with a good lady, who comes to your assistance!" "Quick, quick, my child! this gentleman on horseback has made us lose time," said the Goualeuse, hastening her steps. Hardly had she reached the spot, when La Chouette whispered, "She is mine, Fourline!" Then, springing at the Goualeuse, the Borgnesse seized her by the throat withone hand, while, with the other, she stopped her mouth. In the mean time Tortillard threw himself at the feet of the young girl, which he clasped in his arms to prevent her moving. All this passed so rapidly, that La Chouette had not had the time to examine the features of La Goualeuse; but while the Maître d'Ecole was creeping out of the hole where he had been concealed, the old woman recognised her former victim.

"Pegriotte!" cried she, at first stupified; then added, with savage joy: "It is, then, you! Ah! it is the devil who sends you to me; it is your fate, then, always to fall under my claws! I have my vitriol in the carriage; this time your pretty mug sha'n't escape, for you make me sick with your virgin face Take hold, my man! be careful she don't bite. Hold tight while we bundle her up."

With two powerful hands the Maître d'Ecole seized the Goualeuse, and before she could utter a cry, La Chouette threw the mantle over her head, and wrapped her up closely. In a moment Fleur de Marie, tied and gagged, was in no situation either to make a movement or utter a cry for assistance.

"Now, you take charge of the bundle," said La Chouette. "Eh! eh! eh! it is not quite so heavy as the negro of a woman that was drowned in the canal of St. Martin: is it, my man?" And as the brigand shuddered at these words, which recalled the frightful dream of the past night, the Borgnesse continued: "Ah, now! what is the matter, Fourline? one would think you shivered! Since this morning, for instance, your teeth chatter as if you were looking for some one." "Old deceiver! he is looking at the flies," said Tortillard. "Come, quick, let us be off, my man! carry Pegriotte." "Very

well!" added La Chouette, seeing the brigand take Fleur de Marie in his arms like a sleeping child. Quick to the carriage—quick!"

"But who is going to lead me?" asked the Maître d'Ecole, in a mournful voice, and clasping tightly in his arms his light and fragile burden. "Old 'Tetard!' he thinks of everything," said La Chouette. And throwing off her shawl, she untied a red handkerchief which covered her bony neck, twisted it, and said, "Open your muzzle, take the end of this in your jaws; bite hard. Tortillard shall take the other end in his hand; you will only have to follow him—a good blind man must have a good dog. Here, 'Moutard!'" The little cripple made a bound, imitated the barking and yelping of a dog in a low tone, took the handkerchief in his hand, and thus conducted the Maître d'Ecole, while La Chouette hurried on to advise Barbillon. We have not attempted to describe the terror of Fleur de Marie when she found herself in the power of the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette. She felt her weakness, and made no resistance. Some moments afterward, the Goualeuse was placed in the carriage driven by Barbillon; although it was dark, yet the blinds were carefully drawn, and the three accomplices, with their almost expiring victim, were rapidly conveyed to the plain of St. Denis, where Tom awaited them.

PART IV.

CHAPTER I.

CLEMENCE D'HARVILLE.

The reader will excuse us for having abandoned one of our heroines in a situation so critical, a situation whose dénouement we will give by-and-by. The exigencies of this multiple tale, unfortunately too much varied in its unity, force us to pass continually from one personage to another, to keep up, as much as is in our power, the interest of the work (that is to say, if we have succeeded in creating any interest in a work, as difficult as it is conscientious and imperfect).

We have yet to follow some of the actors in this story to miserable garrets, where shudders with cold and hunger, a fearful, resigned, honest, and laborious poverty.

Into the prisons for men and women, sometimes fine and comfortable, sometimes dark and gloomy, but always vast schools of misery, a disgusting and vitiated atmosphere, where innocence withers and fades away; gloomy pandemoniums, where an accused may enter pure, but from whence he comes out almost always corrupted.

Into the hospitals, where the poor, treated sometimes with touching humanity, reject also sometimes the solitary bed which they moistened with icy sweat of fever. Into these mysterious asylums, where the poor neglected and forsaken being, brings into the world, bathing it with bitter tears, the child which she is never destined to see again. Into these horrible places, where madness, touching, ridiculous, stupid, hideous, or ferocious, shows itself under aspects always frightful; from the peaceful lunatic, who laughs sadly with that laugh which causes one to weep; to the phrensied madman, who roars like a ferocious beast in grappling the irons of his den. We have, besides, to explore—

But for what purpose do we make this long enumeration? Will we not alarm the reader? he has already been pleased to follow us into places strange enough; he would hesitate, perhaps to accompany us in our new peregrinations. Having said this, let us proceed.

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It will be recollected that the evening preceding the day on which the events that we have just related took place (the carrying off of the Goualeuse by La Chouette), Rodolphe had saved Madame d'Harville from an imminent danger, a danger created by the jealousy of Sarah, who had advised M. d'Harville of the meeting so imprudently granted by the marchioness to M. Charles Robert.

Rodolphe, quite overcome with this scene, had returned home after leaving the house in the Rue du Temple, putting off till the next day the visit that he had intended to make Mademoiselle Rigolette, and to the family of the unfortunate workman of whom we have spoken; for he believed them relieved from want by the money which he had transmitted to them by the marchioness, in order to render her pretended visit of charity more probable in the eyes of her husband. Unfortunately, Rodolphe forgot that Tortillard had stolen the purse, and the reader knows in what manner he committed this audacious robbery. Towards four o'clock the prince received the following letter. An old woman brought it, and went away without receiving any answer.

"Monseigneur,

"I owe you more than life; I will express to you to-day, therefore, my profound gratitude. To-morrow, perhaps, shame will make me silent. If you could do me the honour to come to me to-night, you would finish this day as you have commenced it, monseigneur, by a generous action.

D'Orbigny d'Harville.

"P.S. Do not give yourself the trouble to answer, monseigneur; I shall be at home all the evening."

Rodolphe, happy at having rendered Madame d'Harville an eminent service, nevertheless regretted the kind of forced intimacy that this circumstance would thus suddenly establish between him and the marquise. Incapable of betraying the friendship of M. d'Harville, but profoundly touched with the grace and attractive beauty of Clémence, Rodolphe had almost given up her society after a month's assiduities.

He also recalled, with emotion, the conversation he had overheard at the embassy of *** between Tom and Sarah. The latter assigned as a reason for her hatred and jealousy, that Madame d'Harville had, almost without knowing it, a serious affection for Rodolphe; Sarah was too sagacious, too cunning, too well acquainted with the human heart, not to have perceived that Clémence, believing herself neglected, perhaps despised, by a man who had made a profound impression on her—that Clémence, in her anger, yielding to the persuasions of a perfidious friend, could interest herself, almost unconsciously, in the imaginary misfortunes of

M. Charles Robert, and yet not entirely forget Rodolphe.

Other women, faithful to the recollections of the man they had at first preferred, would have remained indifferent to the melancholy looks of the Commandant. Clémence d'Harville was, then, doubly culpable; although she had yielded to an impulse of pity, yet a lively sentiment of duty, joined perhaps to the "souvenir" of the prince, a salutary remembrance, which watched over her by springing from the bottom of her heart, had preserved her from an irreparable fault. Rodolphe, thinking of his interview with Madame d'Harville, was a prey to opposite emotions. Firmly resolved to resist the feeling which drew him towards her, at one time he felt happy that he could reproach her for making such a choice as M. Charles Robert; and then, on the contrary, he regretted bitterly to see fall to the ground the illusion with which he had surrounded her.

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Clémence d'Harville awaited also this interview with anxiety; the two predominating sensations were confusion and shame when she thought of Rodolphe, and bitter aversion when she thought of M. Charles Robert. This aversion, this hatred, was caused by many reasons. A woman will risk her honour, her reputation for a man; but she will never pardon him for having placed her in a humiliating or ridiculous position. Now Madame d'Harville, exposed as a butt to the sarcasms, the insulting looks of Madame Pipelet, had nearly died from shame. This was not all.

Receiving from Rodolphe a notice of the danger which she ran, Clémence had run quickly up to the fifth story; the direction of the stairs was such, that, as she mounted, she perceived M. Charles Robert clothed in his splendid robe de chambre, at the moment when, recognising the light step of the woman he expected, he opened the door with a smiling, confident, and all-conquering air. The insolent foppery of the significant costume of the commandant, taught the marquise how much she had been grossly deceived by this man. Led on by the goodness of her heart, by the generosity of her character, to a proceeding which could ruin her, she had granted him this meeting not from love, but only from commiseration, that she might console him for the ridiculous part that the mauvais goût of M. de Lucenay had made him play before her at the embassy of * * *.

The timepiece in the small saloon which Madame d'Harville habitually occupied had just struck nine o'clock. The milliners and tavern-keepers have so much abused the style of Louis XV., and that of the Renaissance, that the marquise, a woman of much taste, had banished from her apartments this species of luxury, now become so vulgar, confining it to that part of the Hôtel d'Harville destined for grand receptions. Nothing could be more elegant and more "distingué" than the furniture of the room where the marquise awaited Rodolphe. The hangings and curtains, without any drapery, were of India stuff, of straw colour; on this brilliant ground were embroidered, in raw silk of the same shade, arabesques of the most charming and capricious designs. Double curtains of Alençon lace entirely concealed the windows. The doors of rose-wood, were enriched with mouldings of burnished silver, very beautifully carved, which framed, as it were, in each pannel, an oval medallion of Sévres porcelain, each one about a foot in diameter, representing birds and flowers of most exquisite finish and effect. The frames of the glasses and the curtain-rods were also of rose-wood, ornamented the same way, with reliefs in burnished silver. The frieze of the white-marble chimney and its two cariatides, of antique beauty and fine workmanship, were from the master-chisel of Marochetti, this artist having consented to execute this delicious chef-d'œuvre, remembering, doubtless, that Benvenuto did not disdain to model ewers and arms. Two candelabras and two candelsticks of silver gilt, made by *Gouttière*, suited well with the clock, which was a square block of lapis lazuli, placed on a socle of Oriental jasper, and surmounted by a large and splendid golden vase, enamelled and enriched with pearls and rubies, and belonging to the finest period of the Florentine "renaissance." Several excellent pictures of the Venitian school, of medium size, completed an "ensemble" of great magnificence. Thanks to a charming innovation, this handsome saloon was softly lighted by a lamp whose globe of unpolished glass was half concealed by a tuft of natural flowers, contained in a large and deep vase of blue japan, purple and gold, suspended from the ceiling, like a lustre, by three heavy chains of silver gilt, to which were attached and entwined the green tendrils of several climbing plants; some of the flexible branches, laden with flowers, escaped from the cap, hung gracefully, like a fringe of fresh verdure, on the porcelain, enamelled with gold purple, and azure.

We insist on these details, doubtless rather trifling, to give an idea of the natural good taste of Madame d'Harville (almost always a symptom of a good mind), and because that certain unknown griefs, certain mysterious troubles, seem still more poignant when they are contrasted with the appearance of that which makes, in the eyes of the world, life happy and envious. Seated in an arm-chair, entirely covered with the straw-colour India stuff, as was the rest of the furniture, Clémence d'Harville, with her hair dressed plainly, wore a robe of black velvet, which displayed to great advantage the exquisite embroidery of her collar and "manchettes" of English lace. As the time approached for her interview with Rodolphe, the emotion of the marquise redoubled; however, her confusion gave place to the most resolute thoughts; after long reflection, she determined to confide to Rodolphe a great—a cruel secret, hoping that her extreme frankness would conciliate, perhaps, an esteem of which she showed herself so jealous. Revived by gratitude, her first penchant for Rodolphe was awakened with renewed force. One of those presentiments which rarely deceive a loving heart, told her that chance alone had not led the prince, at such a juncture, to save her; and that, in ceasing for some months to visit her, he had obeyed a sentiment very different from aversion. A vague apprehension raised also in the mind of Clémence doubts on the sincerity of Sarah's affection. At the end of a few min-

utes, a valet de chambre, after having discreetly knocked at the door, entered and said, "Will Madame la Marquise receive Madame Ashton and mademoiselle?"

"Certainly—certainly, as always," answered Madame d'Harville. And her daughter then slowly entered into the saloon.

She was a child of four years of age, who would have been charming if it had not been for her unhealthy looks and her extreme delicateness. Madame Ashton, her governess, held her by the hand; Claire, notwithstanding her feeble state, ran towards her mother, stretching out her arms. Two knots of cherry-coloured riband confined on either side her brown hair; her health was so unsettled that she wore a little dress of brown wadded silk, instead of one of those pretty robes of white muslin, trimmed with ribands of the same shade as those she wore in her hair, which leaves exposed the rosy neck and arms, so charming to see in children of robust health. The large black eyes of this child seemed enormous, so much were here cheeks sunken in. Notwithstanding this frail appearance, a smile full of gentleness and grace was spread over the features of Claire when she was seated on the lap of her mother, who embraced her with a tenderness at once sad and impassioned. "How has she been since, Madame Ashton?" asked Madame d'Harville of the governess. "Pretty well, Madame la Marquise, although for a moment I feared—" "Once more!" cried Clémence, pressing her child to her heart with an involuntary movement of affright. "Happily, madame, I was deceived," said the governess; "the 'accès' did not occur; Mademoiselle Claire became calmer; she experienced but a moment's weakness; she has slept this afternoon, but she would not retire for the night without first embracing Madame la Marquise."

"Poor little angel!" said Madame d'Harville, covering her child with kisses; she returned the caresses with infantine joy, when the valet de chambre opened the folding doors of the saloon and announced, "His Serene Highness, my Lord the Grand-duke of Gerolstein!" Claire, mounted on the lap of her mother, had thrown her arms around her neck and embraced her closely. At the sight of Rodolphe, Clémence blushed, placed her child gently on the carpet, made a sign to Madame Ashton to take away her daughter, and stood up.

"You will permit me, madame," said Rodolphe, smiling, after having respectfully saluted the marquise, "to renew my acquaintance with my former little friend, who, I fear, has forgotten me;" and, stooping down, he held out his hand to Claire. She at first stared at him curiously with her two large black eyes; then recognising him, she made a slight sign with her head, and threw him a kiss from the ends of her delicate fingers. "You know monseigneur, my child?" asked Clémence; she nodded her head affirmatively, and sent another kiss to Rodolphe. "Her health appears better than when I last saw her," said the prince to Clémence.

"Monseigneur, she is a little better, yet still suffering."

The marquise and Rodolphe, equally embarrassed in thinking of the conversation that must ensue, were almost satisfied at seeing it retarded for a few moments by the presence of Claire; but the governess having discreetly led off the child, Rodolphe and Clémence found themselves alone.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONFESSION.

The chair of Madame d'Harville was placed to the right of the chimney-piece, against which Rodolphe leaned lightly. Never had Clemence been more struck with the noble and gracious air of the prince; never had his voice seemed to her more sweet and animating.

Feeling how painful it must be for the marquise to commence this conversation, Rodolphe said to her, "You have been, madame, the victim of a shameful treason: a scandalous accusation of the Countess Sarah M'Gregor had nearly caused your ruin."

"Can it be true! monseigneur?" cried Clémence. "My presentiments did not deceive me, then; and how did your highness discover it?"

"Yesterday, by chance, at the ball of the countess, I discovered their infamous designs. I was seated in a retired part of the winter garden. Ignorant that a mass of shrubbery separated me from them, which yet permitted me to hear their conversation, the Countess Sarah and her brother came to converse together of their projects, and of the snare they had laid for you. Wishing to inform you of the danger with which you were threatened, I went, in great haste, to the ball of Madame de Norval, thinking to find you. You had not appeared there. To write you this morning was to expose my letter to the chance of falling into the hands of the marquis, whose suspicions were already awakened. I preferred to go and wait for you at the Rue du Temple, to baffle the schemes of the Countess Sarah. You will pardon me for conversing so long on a subject that must be disagreeable to you? Without the letter which you had the goodness to write me, never would I have spoken to you of all this." After a moment's silence, Madame d'Harville said,

"I have only one way, monseigneur, to prove to you my gratitude. It is to make an avowal to you that I have never yet made to any one. This avowal will not justify me in your eyes, but perhaps it will make you find my conduct less culpable."

"Frankly, madame," said Rodolphe, smiling, "my position towards you is very embarrassing."

Clémence, astonished at his remark, looked at Rodolphe with surprise. "How, monseigneur?"

"Thanks to a circumstance that you will imagine without doubt. I am obliged to play the grandpapa, in relation to an adventure which, from the moment you escaped from the snare which the odious Countess Sarah laid for you, merits not to be thought of so seriously; but," added Rodolphe, with a slight shade more of gravity, "your husband is to me almost a brother; my father had vowed to his father the most affectionate gratitude. It is, then, very cordially that I felicitate you on having obtained for your husband repose and reliance." "And it is also that because you honour Ma-

dame d'Harville with your friendship, monseigneur, that I hold to inform you of the whole truth, both on a choice which must seem to you as unfortunate, as it really is, and on my conduct, which offends him who your highness almost calls his brother." "I shall always be, madame, happy and proud of the smallest proof of your confidence. However, permit me to say, respecting the choice of which you speak, that I know you had as much regard to a feeling of compassion as to the entreaties of the Countess M'Gregor, who had her reasons for wishing to ruin you. I know also that you hesitated a long time before you concluded on a proceeding which you now so much regret."

Clémence looked at the prince with surprise.

"That astonishes you? I will tell you my secret some other time, so that you shall not think me a sorcerer," continued Rodolphe, smiling; "but your husband—is he completely reconciled?"

"Yes, monseigneur," said Clémence, casting down her eyes in confusion; "and I acknowledge to you, it is impossible to me to hear him ask pardon for having suspected me, and to be so happy at my modest silence respecting my good works."

"He is happy in his illusions: do not distress yourself; keep him always, on the contrary, in his gentle error. If it was not improper for me to speak lightly of this adventure, and if it were not concerning you, madame, I would say that a woman is never more charming to her husband than when she has something to conceal. One has no idea of all the seducing 'caleneries' that a bad conscience inspires, nor imagine how many beautiful flowers are caused to bloom from a perfidy. When I was *young*," added Rodolphe, smiling, "I always felt, in spite of myself, a kind of vague indifference to any uncommon expressions of tenderness; and as on my own part I never felt more at my ease than when I had done something that required to be pardoned, as soon as they showed themselves as dissemblingly amiable as I wished myself to appear, I was certain that this charming harmony concealed a mutual infidelity."

Madame d'Harville was more and more surprised at hearing Rodolphe speak so lightly of an adventure which might have had for her such terrible consequences; but, soon thinking that the prince, by this affectation of levity, endeavoured to lessen the importance of the service he had rendered her, she said, deeply touched with this delicacy, "I comprehend your generosity, monseigneur. It is permitted for you now to joke about the perils from which you have saved me. But that which I now have to say to you is so serious, so sad, it has so much to do with the events of the morning, your advice can be so useful to me, that I beg you to remember that you have saved my honour, my life—yes, monseigneur, my life. My husband was armed; he told me, in the excess of his acknowledgments, that he wished to kill me!"

"Grand Dieu!" cried Rodolphe, with lively emotion.

"It was his right," answered Madame d'Harville, bitterly.

"I conjure you, madame," said Rodolphe, very seriously, "to believe me incapable of remaining indifferent to anything that interests you; if just now I joked, it is because I did not wish to add to your sorrows, which have caused you so much disturbance. Now, madame, I will seriously listen, since you do me the honour to say my counsels may be of service to you."

"Oh! of great service, monseigneur! But, before I ask them of you, permit me to say a few words on the past, of which you are ignorant—of the years which preceded my marriage with M. d'Harville."

Rodolphe bowed; Clémence continued: "At sixteen I lost my mother," said she, unable to restrain a tear; "I will not tell you how much I adored her; imagine, monseigneur, the ideal of all earthly goodness; her tenderness for me was extreme; in this she found a profound consolation for bitter griefs. Not fond of society, of delicate health, naturally very sedentary, her greatest pleasure was to charge herself with my education; for her solid and varied knowledge permitted her to fulfil better than any one the task she had assumed for herself. Judge, monseigneur, of her astonishment, of mine, when at sixteen years, at the moment when my education was almost finished, my father, making as a pretext the weak health of my mother, announced to us that a young widow, very much distinguished, whom great misfortunes had rendered very interesting, would finish what my mother had commenced. My mother refused at first to comply. I begged him not to place between us a stranger. He was inexorable, notwithstanding our tears. Madame Roland, widow of a colonel who died in the Indies, as she said, came to live with us, and was installed as my instructress."

"How! it is this Madame Roland who your father married almost immediately after your marriage?" "Yes! monseigneur." "She was then very handsome?" "Passably so, monseigneur." "Very intellectual, then?" "Filled with dissimulation—cunning—nothing more: she was about twenty-five, very blonde, hair almost white, and large blue eyes; her expression was humble and affected; her character perfidious even to cruelty."

"And her education?" "Absolutely ignorant, and I cannot comprehend how my father, until then the very slave of appearances, had not thought that the incapacity of this woman would scandalously betray the true motive of her presence in his house. My mother observed to him, that Madame Roland was profoundly ignorant; he answered in a tone which admitted of no reply, 'that educated or not, this young and interesting widow should preserve in his house the position in which he had placed her.' From this moment my poor mother comprehended all, and was deeply affected—deploring less, I think, the infidelity of my father, than the troubles this aberation must produce, and which even I might find out."

"But, in effect, your father, it seems to me, made a bad calculation in introducing this woman into his house."

"Your astonishment would be much increased, monseigneur, if you knew that my father is one of the most precise and rigid men I ever knew. To have arrived at such an entire forgetfulness of all convenience, must have been owing to the excessive influence of Madame Roland; an influence so much the more certain, as she concealed it under the mask of a violent affection for him."

"How old was your father about this time?" "Sixty years."

"And he believed in the love of this young woman?"

"My father had been one of the most fashionable men of his day. Madame Roland, from instinct or from some advice—"

"From advice? And who could advise her?"

"I will tell you all directly, monseigneur. Supposing that a man of fashion, when he becomes old, takes so much the more to be flattered on his personal advantages, as these praises would recall the gay days of his youth; this woman, would you believe it, monseigneur? flattered my father on the grace and charms of his features; on his inimitable elegance of shape and figure; and he was sixty years old. Every one appreciated his fine mind; yet he fell blindly into this gross snare. Such has been—such is yet, I doubt not, the cause of the influence of this woman over him. Hold, monseigneur; notwithstanding my sad reflections, I cannot but smile in recollecting that, before my marriage, I have often heard it said and sustained by Madame Roland, that what she called *real maturity*, was the finest portion of human existence: this *real maturity* did not commence, in her opinion, until towards fifty-five or sixty years." "The age of your father?" "Yes, monseigneur. 'Then alone,' said Madame Roland, 'the mind and experience attain their greatest development; then only a man eminently placed in the world enjoys all the consideration he can possibly attain; then alone the "ensemble" of his features, the fine grace of his manners, attain their perfection; the face offering, at this time of life, a rare and Divine mixture of gracious serenity and calm gravity. Finally, a slight tinge of melancholy, caused by the deceptions which experience ever teaches, completed the irresistible charms of a *real maturity*—charms only to be appreciated,' added Madame Roland, 'by women of mind and judgment, who have the good taste to turn their backs on the puerility of the giddy men of forty years, whose character offers no security, and whose features, of an insignificant juvenility, are not sufficiently poetized by that majesty of expression which reveals the profound knowledge of life.'"

Rodolphe could not prevent himself from smiling at the ironical manner with which Madame d'Harville traced the portrait of her stepmother. "There is one thing that I never pardon in foolish, ridiculous people," said he to the marquise.

"What is that, monseigneur?" "It is to be wicked—that prevents one from laughing at them at one's ease." "It is, perhaps, a calculation on their part," said Clémence.

"I believe it, and it is a pity; for, by example, if I could forget that this Madame Roland necessarily has caused you much sorrow, I should be much amused at this invention of the *real maturity*, opposed to the lively follies of those conceited young puppies of forty, who, according to this woman, seem hardly to have thrown off their dress of pages, as our grandfathers would have said."

"My father is at least, I believe, happy in the illusions with which, even now, my stepmother surrounds him. Thus, monseigneur, since my father is happy, I should not, perhaps, complain of Madame Roland; but her odious conduct towards my mother—the unfortunate part, too active, that she has taken respecting my marriage, cause my aversion towards her," said Madame d'Harville, after a moment's hesitation.

Rodolphe regarded her with surprise.

"M. d'Harville is your friend, monseigneur," continued Clémence, in a firm tone. "I know the gravity of the words I have just uttered: directly you shall tell me if they are just. But I return to Madame Roland, installed as my instructress, notwithstanding her acknowledged incapacity. My mother had, on this subject, a painful explanation with my father, and signified to him that, wishing, at least, to protest against the intolerable position of this woman, henceforth she would not appear at the table if Madame Roland did not at once leave the house. My mother was sweetness, goodness itself; but she became of indomitable firmness, when her personal dignity was in question. My mother was inflexible—she kept her promise. From this moment we lived completely secluded in her apartment: my father from that time showed me as much coldness as he did to my mother, while Madame Roland did, almost openly the honours of our house, yet still as my instructress."

"Your mother must have suffered much."

"More on my account than on her own, monseigneur, for she thought of the future. Her health, already very delicate, became still more feeble: fatality willed it, that our family physician, M. Sorbier, died. My mother placed every confidence in him; she bitterly regretted him. Madame Roland had for physician and friend an Italian doctor of great merit, as she said: my father, imposed upon, consulted him sometimes, was pleased with him, and proposed him to my mother, who took him, alas! and it was he who took charge of her during her last illness." At these words the eyes of Madame d'Harville became filled with tears. "I am ashamed to acknowledge this weakness, monseigneur," added she; "but, for the very reason that this doctor had been recommended by Madame Roland, I felt an aversion for him. I saw, with a kind of fear, my mother grant him her confidence; yet, as regards science, the doctor Polidori—"

"What do you say, madame?" cried Rodolphe.

"What is the matter, monseigneur?" said Clémence, startled at the expression of Rodolphe.

"But no," said the prince to himself. "I am doubtless mistaken—this is five or six years ago—while they told me that Polidori has been in Paris, under an assumed name, for not more than two years. It is certainly he who I saw yesterday—this quack Bradamante—yet—two physicians of the same name: what a singular coincidence! Madame, a word about Polidori; what age was this Italian?" "About fifty, I should think." "And his face; his countenance?" "Wicked. I shall never forget his green eyes; his nose hooked like the beak of an eagle."

"It is he! It is certainly he!" cried Rodolphe.

CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION OF THE STORY.

"And do you think, madame, that Doctor Polidori dwelt then in Paris?" asked Rodolphe of Madame d'Harville.

"I do not know, monseigneur. About a year after the marriage of my father, he left Paris: one of my friends, whose physician this Italian was at this time, Madame de Lucenay—"

"The Duchess of Lucenay?" said Rodolphe.

"Yes, monseigneur." "But why this surprise?"

"Allow me to be silent on this head. But at this time, what did Madame de Lucenay say about this man?"

"That she received from him often, since his departure from Paris, letters very amusing, descriptive of the countries he visited. Now, remember, that about a month since, asking Madame de Lucenay if she still received news from M. Polidori, she answered with an embarrassed air, that for a long time she had not heard of him, that none knew what had become of him, and that many persons thought he was dead." "It is singular," said Rodolphe, remembering the visit of Madame de Lucenay to the quack Bradamanté.

"You know this man, then, monseigneur?"

"Yes, unfortunately for me. But, pray, continue your story; I will tell you directly who is this Polidori." "How! this physician?" "Rather say this man, stained with the most odious crimes." "Crimes!" replied Madame d'Harville, with affright. "He has committed crimes —this man? the friend of Madame Roland, and the physician of my mother! My mother died under his hands after a few days' illness! Ah! monseigneur, you alarm me! you tell me too much, or not enough."

"Without accusing this man of one crime the more—without accusing your stepmother of being an accomplice, I say that you ought to thank God that your father, after his marriage with Madame Roland, had no need of the services of Polidori."

"Oh! Mon Dieu!" cried madame d'Harville, in a touching accent. "My presentiments, then, did not deceive me?"

"Your presentiments?"

"Yes; just now I spoke to you of the aversion I felt for this man, because he had been introduced to us by Madame Roland. I did not tell you all, monseigneur." "How?"

"I feared to accuse an innocent person; to listen too much to the bitterness of my sorrows. But I am going to tell you all, monseigneur. The illness of my mother lasted five days; I had always nursed her. One evening I went to breathe the fresh air on the terrace of our house: at the end of a quarter of an hour, I re-entered by a long, obscure corridor. At the feeble gleam of light which escaped from the door of the apartment of Madame Roland, I saw M. Polodori go out; this woman accompanied him. I was in the shade; they did not see me. Madame Roland said some words to him in a low voice that I could not hear; the physician answered in a louder tone these words, '*After to-morrow.*' And as Madame Roland spoke to him again, he answered in a singular tone, '*After to-morrow. I tell you, after to-morrow.*'" "What did these words signify?" "They signified, monseigneur, the evening of Wednesday. M. Polidori said, '*after to-morrow*'—the Friday my mother was dead!" "Oh! this is frightful." "When I reflected on these words, *after to-morrow*, which seemed to have predicted the death of my mother, I thought that M. Polidori, knowing, from his medical science, how long my mother had to live, had hastened to inform Madame Roland—this woman, who had so many reasons to be rejoiced at her death. But never would I have dared to suppose—oh! no, no, even at this hour, I cannot believe in such a crime!" "Was Polidori the only physician who attended your unfortunate mother?"

The evening previous to her death, he brought in consultation one of his associates. According to what my father told me afterward, this doctor found my mother in a very dangerous state. After this fatal event, I was taken to one of my old relations. She had tenderly loved my mother. Forgetting the reserve due to my age, she taught me how much reason I had to hate Madame Roland. She enlightened me as to the ambitious hopes this woman would thence entertain.

"This information overwhelmed me; I then comprehended all my mother must have suffered. When I saw my father, my heart was almost broken; he came to take me with him to Normandy; there we were to pass the time of our first mourning. During the journey he wept much, and said he had no one but me to aid him to support this terrible blow. I answered that he, alone also, remained to me, since the loss of my adored mother. After some words on the embarrassment he should experience if at any time he might be obliged to be absent, he told me, as if it was the most natural thing in the world, that out of kindness for him and me, Madame Roland had consented to take the charge of his house, and serve me as guide and friend.

"Astonishment, grief, indignation, rendered me dumb. I wept in silence—my father asked me the cause of my tears. I replied, perhaps with too much bitterness, that I would never live in the same house with Madame Roland; for I despised this woman as much as I hated her on account of the grief she had caused my mother. He remained calm; combated what he called my childishness, and said to me, coldly, that his resolution was unconquerable, and that I should submit.

"I begged him to allow me to retire to the Sacré Cœur, where I had some friends: I would remain there till he thought proper to marry me. He observed to me that the time was passed when people were married at the grate of a convent; that my readiness to leave him would affect him very much, if he did not see in my words an independence which he could excuse, though he thought it not very sensible, and which would necessarily calm down; then he kissed my forehead, and called me a little vixen.

"Alas! in effect, it was necessary to submit. Judge, monseigneur, of my grief—to live every day with a woman whom I almost reproached as the cause of my mother's death. I foresaw the most cruel scenes between my father and me, no consideration preventing me from showing my aversion to Madame Roland. It seemed to me that thus I avenged my mother, while the smallest word of affection said to this woman, would appear to me a sacrilege." "Mon Dieu, how painful this existence must have been to you. I was far from thinking that you had already suffered so much, when I had the pleasure to see you oftener! Never did a word from you make me suspect—"

"Then, monseigneur, I had not to exculpate myself from an unpardonable weakness. If I speak to you so much at length on this part of my life, it is to make you understand in what a position I was placed when I married; and why, notwithstanding a warning which ought to have enlightened me, I married M. d'Harville. On arriving at Aubiers (the name of my father's country-place), the first person who came to

meet us was Madame Roland. She had been here since the death of my mother. In spite of her humble manner, she cast a glance of triumphant joy, illy concealed. I shall never forget the look, at once ironical and wicked, she gave me on our arrival; she seemed to say, 'I am here at home, you are the stranger.' A new sorrow was reserved for me; either from want of dicreet action or barefaced impudence, this woman occupied the apartments of my mother. In my indignation, I complained to my father of such proceedings; he answered me severely, that this should astonish me less, as it was necessary I should habituate myself to consider and respect Madame Roland as a second mother. I told him this would be a profanation of the sacred name; and, to his great indignation, I lost no occasion to show my aversion to Madame Roland; several times he reprimanded me before her. He reproached me for my ingratitude, my coldness towards this angel of consolation that Heaven had sent us. 'I beg, my father,' said I, one day, 'speak for yourself.' He treated me cruelly. Madame Roland, in her honeyed tones, interceded for me with profound hypocrisy. 'Be indulgent to Clèmence,' said she; 'the regrets with which the excellent person we mourn inspires her are so natural, so praiseworthy, that we must respect her grief, and pity her even in her anger.' 'Well!' said my father, pointing to Madame Roland with admiration, 'did you hear her! is she not too generous? too good? It is by throwing yourself in her arms you ought to answer.' 'It is useless, my father; madame hates me, and I hate her.' 'Ah! Clémence you give me much pain, but I pardon you,' added Madame Roland, lifting her eyes towards heaven. 'My friend! my noble friend!' cried my father, in a faltering voice, 'calm yourself, I conjure you; for my sake have pity on a fool who needs it for despising you thus!' Then turning on me his angry looks, 'Tremble,' cried he—'If you dare to outrage again the most charming being there is in the universe—make your apologies to her this moment.' 'My mother sees and hears me; she will never pardon such an action,' said I to my father, and I went out, leaving him occupied in consoling Madame Roland, and drying her hypocritical tears. Pardon me, monseigneur, for dwelling on these incidents, but they can alone give you an idea of the life I then led."

"I can almost imagine myself present at scenes so sadly true. In how many families have they before occurred, and how many times will they be repeated! Nothing can be more vulgar, and yet nothing can be more cunning, than the conduct of Madame Roland: but in what manner did he present her to the neighbourhood?" "As my instructress and his friend; and she was received as such. With the exception of some rare visits, caused by business, or some relations with the neighbourhood, we saw no one; my father, completely governed by his passion, ceding, without doubt, to the instances of Madame Roland, left off, at the end of three months, his mourning, under the pretext that mourning affected him too much. His coolness towards me augmented daily; his indifference reached such a point, that he left me a liberty quite unusual for a young person of my age. I saw him at breakfast; he afterward retired to his rooms with Madame Roland, who served him as secretary for his correspondence or business; then he went out with her in the carriage or on foot, and did not return until an hour before dinner. Madame Roland then dressed herself with great taste, and my father followed her example with a recherche very singular at his age; sometimes, after dinner, he received those persons whom he was obliged to see; afterward he made a party of backgammon until ten o'clock with Madame Roland, then he offered her his arm to conduct her to the chamber of my mother, kissed her hand respectfully, and retired. As for me, I could dispose of my day as I pleased, ride on horseback, followed by a groom, or take long walks in the woods which surrounded the chateau, sometimes overwhelmed with sorrow. I did not appear at breakfast; my father gave himself no trouble even—"

"What singular conduct! what abandonment!"

"Having several times met one of our neighbours in the woods where I ordinarily rode, I gave up these excursions, and I entered the park no more." "But what was the conduct of this woman towards you when you were alone with her?"

"We both avoided, as much as possible, these rencounters. Once only, in making allusion to some hard words which I had addressed to her the evening previous, she said to me coldly, 'Take care; you wish to quarrel with me; you will be defeated.' 'Like my mother?' said I; 'it is a pity, madame, that M. Polidori is not here to advise you what will happen—*after to-morrow*.' These words produced a great impression, which, however, she soon overcame. Now that I know, thanks to you, monseigneur, who this Dr. Polidori is, and of what he is capable, the kind of fright that Madame Roland showed on hearing me utter these mysterious words, would confirm, perhaps, horrible suspicions. But no, no; I do not wish to believe that. I should be too much alarmed to think that my father is at this moment almost at the mercy of my stepmother." "And what reply did she make when you uttered these words of the Doctor Polidori?" "She blushed at first; then, overcoming her emotion, she asked me coolly what I meant. 'When you are alone, madam interrogate yourself; you can answer.' A short time after this, a scene took place which decided my fate. Among a great number of family pictures, ornamenting a saloon where we assembled every evening, was the portrait of my mother. One day I found it gone. Two of our neighbours had dined with us; one of them, M. Dorral, a notary, had always shown for my mother the most profound veneration. On arriving in the saloon, 'Where is the portrait of my mother?' said I to my father. 'The sight of this picture caused me too much sorrow,' he answered in an embarrassed manner, with a glance of his eyes directing me to the strangers who witnessed the scene. 'And where is this portrait now, my father?' Turning towards Madame Roland, and interrogating her with a look and movement of impatience, 'Where have they put the portrait?' he asked her. 'In the storeroom,' she answered, casting at me a look of defiance, believing that the presence of our neighbours would prevent a reply. 'I conceive,' madam, said I, coldly, 'that the sight of my mother must be disagreeable to you; but this is no reason why you should send to the garret the portrait of the woman who, when you were wretched, charitably allowed you to live in her house.'"

"Very well!" cried Rodolphe. "This cold disdain was most cutting. 'Mademoise..e!'

cried my father. 'You will acknowledge, however,' said I, interrupting him, 'that a person who meanly insults the memory of a woman who gave her alms, merits but disdain and aversion.' My father for a moment was confounded; Madame Roland became purple with shame and rage; the neighbours, very much embarrassed, cast down their eyes and remained silent. 'Mademoiselle!' continued my father, 'you forget that madame was the friend of your mother; you forget that madame has watched and still watches over your education with maternal solicitude. You forget, also, that I profess for her the most respectful esteem. And since you allow yourself such proceedings before these gentlemen, I will say to you, that the ungrateful and cowardly are those who, forgetting the most tender cares, dare to reproach a noble unfortunate who merits interest and respect.' 'I will not allow myself to discuss this question with you, my father,' said I, in a submissive tone. 'Perhaps, mademoiselle, I shall be more fortunate!' cried Madame Roland, carried this time by anger beyond the bounds of her habitual prudence. 'Perhaps you will do me the favour not to discuss,' continued she, 'but to avow that, far from owing the least gratitude to your mother, I have only the recollection of the coolness she always showed me; for it was much against her will that I have—' 'Ah! madame,' said I, interrupting her, 'out of respect to my father, and out of shame for yourself, spare us these disgraceful revelations. You make me regret having exposed you to such humiliating confessions.' 'How! mademoiselle!' cried she, almost mad with rage; 'you dare to say—' 'I say, madame,' continued I, once more interrupting her, 'I say that my mother, in deigning to permit you to live in her house instead of driving you out of it, as she had the right to do, ought to have convinced you, by her contempt, that her tolerance towards you was imposed.'" "Better and better!" cried Rodolphe; "it was a complete execution. And this woman?"

"Madame Roland, by a very vulgar method, but very convenient, terminated this conversation; she cried 'Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!' and pretended a sudden illness. Thanks to this incident, the two witnesses of this scene went out under the pretext of seeking assistance; I imitated them, while my father overwhelmed her with the most anxious attentions. The next morning he came to me, and said, 'In order that for the future scenes like those of yesterday shall not be repeated, I declare to you, as soon as the time of my mourning has expired, I shall marry Madame Roland. You will henceforth have to treat her with the respect due to my wife. For private reasons, it is necessary that you should be married before me; the fortune of your mother, which is more than a million, is your dowry. From this day I shall actively employ myself to procure you a suitable marriage, by accepting propositions that have already been made to me on this subject; the persistence with which you attack, in spite of my admonitions, a person who is so dear to me, shows me the strength of your attachment for me. Madame Roland despises these attacks; but I will not suffer that such conduct shall be renewed before strangers, in my own house. In future you will not enter or remain in the saloon, except when Madame Roland or myself are there alone.' After this last conversation, I lived still more isolated. I only saw my father at the hours of repast; my life was so sad, that I awaited with impatience the moment when my father would propose to me a match, which I intended to accept, no matter with whom. Madame Roland having refrained from speaking ill of my mother, revenged herself otherwise; to exasperate me, she made use of a thousand things that had belonged to her: her armchair, her tapestry-frame, the books of her private library, even to a screen that I had embroidered for her, on which was her cipher. This woman polluted everything." "Oh! I conceive the horror that these profanations must have caused you." "I had no one to whom I could confide my sorrows. Yet I received a proof of interest which touched me, and which ought to have enlightened me as to the future: since the day I had treated Madame Roland so harshly before two witnesses, I saw no one. One day, to my great surprise, M. Dorral, the notary of whom I have spoken, came to seek me in the park, where I walked daily. 'Mademoiselle!' said he, 'I am afraid that the count should see me; read this letter, and burn it afterward; it contains something of importance to you.' And he disappeared.

"In this letter he told me that it was in agitation to marry me to M. le Marquis d'Harville; this seemed agreeable on all sides; I was assured of the good qualities of M. d'Harville; he was young, very rich, of a fine mind, and agreeable person. And yet the families of two young persons, to whom he had been successively engaged, had suddenly broken the projected marriage. The notary could not tell me the reason of this rupture, but he believed it his duty to inform me of it. The two young persons spoken of were daughters, one of M. de Beauregard, peer of France, the other of Lord Boltrop. M. Dorral confided all this to me, because that my father, very impatient to conclude my marriage, appeared to attach no importance to these facts."

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUATION OF THE STORY.

"In effect," said Rodolphe, after some moments of reflection, "I remember now that your husband, in the interval of a year, communicated to me the two projected marriages, which, about to be concluded, had been broken off, as he wrote me, on some discussions of moment."

Madame d'Harville smiled bitterly, and answered,

"You will know the truth directly, monseigneur. After having read the letter of the old notary, I felt as much curiosity as inquietude. Who was M. d'Harville? My father had never spoken of him. Soon Madame Roland, to my great astonishment, set out for Paris. Her absence was to last eight days at farthest; yet my father showed much grief at this separation; his temper became more sour; his coldness towards me was redoubled. One day I asked him how he was: 'I am suffering, and it is your fault.' 'My fault, my father?' 'Certainly! You know how much I am habituated to the society of Madame Roland, yet this admirable woman whom you have outraged, makes this journey, which withdraws her from me, for your interest alone.' This *interest* of Madame Roland alarmed me; I had a vague suspicion that it regarded my marriage. I leave you to imagine, monseigneur, the joy of my father at the return of my future stepmother. The next

day he sent for me; he was alone with her. 'I have,' said he to me, 'for a long time thought of your establishment. Your mourning will be finished in a month. To-morrow M. le Marquis d'Harville will arrive here; a young man, très distingué, very rich, and in everything capable of securing your happiness. He has seen you in society; he ardently desires this union; all the preliminaries are arranged. It will then absolutely depend on you, to be married within six weeks. If, on the contrary, from a caprice that will not force you, you should refuse this offer almost unhoped-for, I will marry, according to my intention, as soon as the time of my mourning is over. In this latter case, I must say to you, your presence in my house will only be agreeable if you promise to show to my wife the tenderness and respect she deserves.' 'I comprehend, my father. If I do not marry M. d'Harville, you will be married; and then, for you and for madame, it would no longer be undesirable if I should retire to the *Sacré Cœur*?' 'Right!' answered he, coldly."

"Ah! it is no longer weakness, it is cruelty!" cried Rodolphe.

"Do you know, monseigneur, what has always prevented me from entertaining against my father any resentment? It is that a kind of foresight tells me that some day he will pay, dearly pay, for his blind passion to Madame Roland. And, Dieu merci! this day has not yet come."

"And did you say nothing to him of what the old notary had told you in his letter concerning M. d'Harville?"

"Yes, monseigneur. That very day I begged my father to grant me a private interview. 'I have no secrets for Madame Roland; you can speak before her,' he answered. I remained silent. He said severely: 'Once more I tell you I have no secrets for Madame Roland. Explain yourself, then, clearly.' 'If you will permit me, my father, I will wait until you are alone.' Madame Roland arose and went out. 'Now you are satisfied!' said he to me; 'well! speak.' 'I feel no reluctance for the union you propose to me, my father; only I have heard that M. d'Harville has twice been on the point of being married—' 'Well, well!' said he, interrupting me; 'I know it! These ruptures have taken place in consequence of some difficulties in the settlements—the conduct of M. d'Harville has been beyond censure. If you have no other objection than this, you may consider yourself married, and happily married—for I only wish for your happiness."

"Doubtless Madame Roland was delighted at this union?"

"Delighted! Yes, monseigneur," said Clémence, bitterly; "oh! much delighted! for this union was her work. She gave the first idea of it to my father. She knew the true reason of the rupture of the first two engagements of M. d'Harville—that was the cause of her wishing me to espouse him." "But for what end?" "She wished to avenge herself on me, in wedding me thus to a frightful lot." "But your father?"

"Deceived by Madame Roland, he believed that the reasons he had assigned were the true ones."

"What a horrible plot! But this mysterious reason?"

"I will tell you directly, monseigneur. M. d'Harville arrived at Aubiers; his manners, his conversation, his figure pleased me: he seemed kind, good, but slightly melancholy. I remarked in him a contrast which astonished, yet was agreeable to me; his mind was richly cultivated, his fortune enviable, his birth illustrious, and yet sometimes his countenance, ordinarily energetic and resolute, expressed a kind of timidity almost fearful—a dejection, a distrust of himself which touched me much. I liked also to see him show so much kindness as he did to an old valet de chambre, who had been with him from his boyhood, and who alone waited on him. Some time after his arrival, M. d'Harville remained two days in his room. My father wished to see him. The old servant opposed it, pretending that his master's head was so much affected, that he could not see any one. When M. d'Harville made his appearance again, I found him very pale, very much changed. He seemed to be annoyed if any one spoke of his illness. As I became better acquainted with him, I discovered in him many agreeable qualities. He had so many reasons to be happy, that I gave him credit for moderation in his happiness. The time of our marriage concluded upon, he anticipated the least of my wishes in our future projects. If sometimes I asked him the cause of his melancholy, he spoke to me of his father, his mother, who would have been proud to see him married according to his wishes and hopes. I should have had bad taste not to receive reasons that were so flattering to me. M. d'Harville imagined how I had lived until then with Madame Roland and my father, although the latter, pleased with my intended marriage, which advanced his own, showed me great affection. In several conversations, M. d'Harville made me feel, with much tact and reserve, that he loved me still more on account of my past sorrows. I thought I ought on this subject to inform him that my father proposed to marry again; and as I spoke to him of the change that this union would have on my fortune, he did not let me finish, and gave me proofs of the most noble disinterestedness: the families to whom he had been on the point of being allied must be very sordid, thought I then, to have any difficulties with him."

"Just so I have ever found him," said Rodolphe; "filled with delicacy, affection, and generosity; but did you never speak to him of these engagements?" "I avow to you, monseigneur, seeing him so devoted, so good, several times this question came to my lips; but soon, from fear even of wounding this devotion, this goodness, I did not dare to approach the subject. The nearer the day of our marriage approached, the more he spoke of his happiness. Yet two or three times I saw him overwhelmed with sadness; one day he cast his eyes upon me; I saw a tear; he seemed oppressed; one would have said that he wished but to confide a secret to me. The recollection of the broken engagements came to my mind. I acknowledge I was afraid. I felt a presentiment that perhaps it was a question of the happiness of my whole life; but I was so situated at home that I surmounted my fears.

"The witnesses of M. d'Harville, M. de Lucenay and M. de Saint Rémy, arrived at Aubiers some days before my marriage; my nearest relations were alone invited. We were to start for Paris immediately after mass. I did not feel any love for M. d'Harville, but I was interested in him; his character inspired me with esteem. Except for the event which followed this fatal union, a more tender sentiment would doubtless have attached me to him forever.

We were married." At these words Madame d'Harville became pale; her resolution appeared to abandon her. Then she continued: "As soon as we were married, my father pressed me tenderly in his arms. Madame Roland also embraced me. I could not, before so many people, prevent this new hypocrisy; with her dry and white hand she squeezed my hand so as to give me pain, and whispered in a soft, perfidious voice, these words that I shall never forget: 'Think sometimes of me in the midst of your happiness; *for it is I who have made this marriage.*' Alas! I was far from comprehending the true sense of these words. Our marriage had taken place at eleven o'clock; we immediately got into the carriage, attended by my maid and the old valet de chambre of M. d'Harville. We travelled so rapidly that we were to arrive at Paris before ten o'clock at night. * * * * * * * * * * *

You comprehend then, monseigneur, the feelings with which I returned to Paris, to that city where my mother had died scarcely a year before. We arrived at the Hotel d'Harville."

The emotion of the young woman was redoubled; her cheeks were covered with a burning red, and she added, in a heart-rending tone,

"It is necessary that you should know all; if not, I should appear to you to be too despicable. Well," continued she, with desperate resolution, "I was conducted to my apartment—I was left alone—M. d'Harville rejoined me. Notwithstanding his protestations of tenderness, I wept bitterly. But soon my husband seized my arm with a force sufficient to break it, uttering a dreadful cry. I tried in vain to escape from his iron grasp. I implored his pity—he heard me no longer; his face was contracted with the most violent convulsions; his eyes rolled in their orbits with a rapidity that paralyzed me; his contorted mouth was filled with a bloody foam; his hand still held me fast; I made one more effort; his stiffened fingers at length released their grasp, and I fainted, while M. d'Harville was still struggling in the paroxysms of this frightful attack. Such was my 'nuit de noces,' monseigneur. Such was the vengeance of Madame Roland." "Unfortunate woman!" said Rodolphe, quite overcome. "I comprehend—epilepsy. Ah! it is frightful."

"And this is not all," added Clémence. "Oh fatal night, forever accursed. My child, the poor little angel, has inherited this fearful malady!" "Your child also! How?" "Her pallor—her weakness! It is this, mon Dieu! it is this; and the physicians think that the disease is incurable, because it is hereditary."

Madame d'Harville concealed her face in her hands; overcome by this mournful story, she had not the strength to utter a word.

Rodolphe also remained silent.

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CHAPTER V.

CHARITY.

Rodolphe blamed M. d'Harville much, but he promised himself to endeavour to excuse him in the eyes of Clémence, although well convinced, after her sad revelations, that the marquis was forever alienated from her heart.

Thought succeeding thought, he said to himself, "From duty, I have kept myself away from a woman I loved, and who, perhaps, has for me a secret 'penchant.' Either from the unoccupied state of her thoughts or from commiseration, she has just escaped the loss of honour and life for a fool whom she thought unhappy. If, instead of absenting myself from her, I had surrounded her with the attentions of love and respect, my reserve would have been such that her reputation would not have received the slightest stain; the suspicions of her husband would never have been awakened, while at this moment she is almost at the mercy of the silliness of M. Charles Robert, and he will be, I fear, so much the more indiscreet as he has the less reason to be. And, besides, who knows now if, notwithstanding the perils she has run, the heart of Madame d'Harville will rest always unoccupied? All return towards her husband is henceforth impossible. Young, handsome, with a character sympathizing with all who suffer for her, what dangers! what obstacles! For M. d'Harville, what anguish, what sorrow! What a fate is his!"

Clémence, leaning on her hand, her eyes wet with tears, her cheeks burning with confusion, avoided the looks of Rodolphe, so much had this revelation cost her.

"Ah, now," said Rodolphe, "I comprehend the cause of the sadness of M. d'Harville, a sadness I could not penetrate. I comprehend his regret—" "His regret!" cried Clémence; "say rather his remorse, monseigneur; for never has crime been more coolly meditated." "A crime, madame!" "And what is it, then, monseigneur, to bind to himself by indissoluble ties a young girl who confides in his honour, when he knows he is subject to a malady which inspires fear and disgust? What is it, then, to surely destine an unfortunate child to the same disease? What forced M. d'Harville to make two victims? A blind, insensate passion! No; he found my birth, my fortune, myself, convenient. He wished to make a suitable marriage, because a bachelor's life had become tiresome, without doubt." "Madame, pity at least!"

"Pity! Do you know who deserves my pity? It is my daughter. Poor victim of this odious union, how many nights, how many days have I passed near her! how many bitter tears have I shed over her mournful lot!"

"But her father suffers the same horrible fate!"

"But it is her father who has condemned her to a sickly infancy, to a withered childhood, and, if she lives, to a life of retirement and sorrow; for she shall never marry. Oh, no! I love her too well to expose her some day to weep over her infant as I weep over her. I have suffered too much from this treason to render me culpable, or an accomplice of a similar act!"

"Oh! you are right; the vengeance of your stepmother is horrible. Patience! perhaps, in your turn, you will be revenged!" said Rodolphe.

"What do you mean to say, monseigneur?" asked Clémence, astonished at the inflection of his voice.

"I have almost always had the happiness to see punished, oh! cruelly punished, the wicked that I have known," added he, in a tone that made Clémence tremble. "But the next morning, what did your husband say?" "He avow-

ed, with strange naïveté, that the families to whom he was about to be united had discovered the secret of his malady, and broke the projected alliances. Thus, after having been twice repulsed, he has again—oh, this is too infamous! And yet, he is what is called in society a man of honour and probity!"

"You, always so good, you are cruel!"

"I am cruel, because I have been shamefully deceived. M. d'Harville knew I was kind, why did he not at once address himself to my kindness in telling me the truth?"

"You would have refused him." "That would condemn him, monseigneur; his conduct was unworthy if he felt this fear." "But he loved you!"

"If he loved me, should he have sacrificed me to his egotism? Mon Dieu! I was so tormented, I was so anxious to leave my father's house, that if he had been frank, perhaps he would have touched me by the picture of his sufferings, of the solitude to which a fearful and fatal malady had consigned him. Yes, seeing him so upright, so unhappy, perhaps I should not have had the courage to refuse him; and, if I had thus taken the sacred engagement to submit to the consequences of my devotion, I should valiantly have kept my promise; but to compel my interest and pity, by first placing me in his power, and to require this interest, this pity, in the name of my duty as a wife—he who has betrayed his duties as an honest man—it is at once wicked and cowardly! Now, monseigneur, judge of my life! judge of my cruel deceptions! I had faith in the honesty of M. d'Harville, and he has most unworthily deceived me. His sad and timid melancholy had interested me, and this melancholy, which he said was caused by pious recollection, was only the consciousness of his incurable infirmity." "But, in fine, was he a stranger, your enemy, the sight of his sufferings ought to soften your anger; your heart is noble and generous."

"But can I calm these sufferings? If my voice could be heard, if a grateful look could reply to my attentions! But no! oh! you do not know, my lord, how frightful it is to see a man tear himself like a wild beast, notice nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing, and only come out of this phrensy to fall into a kind of fearful dejection. When my daughter has one of these attacks, I am almost wild; my mind is distracted. I kiss, weeping, her poor little arms, stiffened by the convulsions which destroy her. But she is my child—my child! and when I see her suffer thus, I curse a thousand times more her father. When the spasms are over, my irritation against my husband becomes less; then—yes—then I pity him; to my aversion succeeds a sentiment of sad commiseration. But, in fine, have I married at seventeen only to experience these alternations of hatred and sorrowful commiseration? to weep over an unfortunate child, who I shall, perhaps, not preserve!"

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"I cannot express to you, madame, how much your story has affected me; from the death of your mother until the birth of your daughter, how many devouring sorrows, how many troubles were concealed! You, so brilliant, so much admired, envied!"

"Oh! believe, monseigneur, when one suffers certain troubles, it is sad to hear it said, 'How happy she is!'"

"Is it not? Nothing is more painful; well, you are not the only one who suffers from the cruel contrast of what is, and what appears to be." "How, monseigneur?"

"In the eyes of everybody, your husband must appear still more happy than you are, since he possesses you; and yet is he not also much to be pitied? Can there be a more unfortunate life than his? His wrongs towards you are great; but he is frightfully punished. He loves you as you merit to be loved, and he knows you can only entertain for him an insurmountable repugnance. In his suffering, sickly child, he sees a constant reproach. This is not all, jealousy also comes to torture him." "And how can I help that, monseigneur?" "Give him no cause to be jealous?" "So be it; but because my heart belongs to no one, will it belong the more to him? He knows it cannot be so. Since the frightful scene that I have related to you, we live separate; but in the eyes of the world I have for him all the regard that 'convenance' commands, and I have told to no one, except yourself, monseigneur, a word of this fatal secret." "And I assure you, madame, that if the service I have rendered you merited a recompense, I believe myself a thousand times repaid by your confidence; but since you wish to ask my advice, and that you will allow me to speak frankly to you—" "Oh! I entreat you, monseigneur."

"Let me tell you, that from not employing one of your most precious qualities, you lose great enjoyments, which not only would satisfy the wants of your heart, but would divert you from your domestic sorrows, and would respond to this want of lively, poignant emotions, and I dare almost add (pardon my bad opinion of women), to that natural taste for mystery and intrigue, which has so much empire over them."

"What do you mean to say, monseigneur?"

"I wish to say that if you would *amuse* yourself in doing good, nothing would please you, could interest you more."

Madame d'Harville regarded Rodolphe with astonishment. "And you must comprehend," continued he, "that I do not speak of your sending carelessly, almost with disdain, your bounty to the unfortunate whom you do not know, and who often are not worthy of your bounty. But if you would *amuse* yourself like me, in playing from one time to another 'à la Providence,' you would acknowledge that certain good deeds have often all the interest of a romance." "I have never thought, monseigneur, of this manner of disguising charity as an *amusement*," said Clemence, smiling in her turn.

"It is a discovery that I owe to my regard for all that is 'ennuyeux;' a regard with which I have often been inspired, above all, after a conference with my ministers. But to return to our *amusing* benefactions: I have not, alas! the virtue of those disinterested persons who confide to others the charge of bestowing their alms. If it was only in agitation to send one of my chamberlains to carry some hundreds of 'louis' to each arrondissement of Paris, I avow to my shame, that I take no great pleasure in the thing; while to do good as I understand it, there is nothing in the world more *amusing*. I

hold to this word, because that for me it says all; that which pleases, everything that charms, everything that is attractive; and truly, madame, if you will become my assistant in some mysterious intrigues of this nature, you will see, I repeat, that, setting aside the nobleness of action, often nothing is more curious, more attractive, more pleasing, sometimes even more diverting, than these charitable adventures; and, besides, how many manœuvres to conceal your benefactions, how many precautions necessary to prevent your being known! how many different and powerful emotions, at the sight of poor and honest people who weep with joy at seeing you!" "Mon Dieu!" "Hold! the emotions of which I speak are about the same as you felt this morning in going to the Rue du Temple; simply clad, so as not to be remarked, you would also leave your house with your heart palpitating; you would also, inquiet and troubled get into a modest hack, the curtains of which you would let down so as not to be remarked; and then, also, casting your eyes from side to side for fear of being surprised, you would enter stealthily into some house of wretched appearance, just as you did this morning—I tell you, the only difference is, that you said to yourself; 'If I am discovered, I am lost;' and that you would say in this case, 'If I am discovered, I shall be blessed!' But, as you are modest concerning your own good qualities, you would employ all your cunning not to be blessed." "Ah! monseigneur," cried Madame d'Harville, weeping, you save me! I cannot tell you the new ideas, the consoling hopes that your words awaken in me. You say truly, that to busy one's heart and mind to make ones' self adored by those who suffer, is almost to love." What do I say? it is better than to love. When I compare the existence that I have a glimpse of, that to which a shameful error might have led me, the reproaches which I address to myself become still more bitter.

"I should be much afflicted," said Rodolphe, smiling, "for my whole desire is to aid you to forget the past, and to prove to you only that the opportunities for diversion of the mind are numerous. The means of good and evil are often the same; the end alone differs. In a word, if the good is as attracting, as amusing, as the evil, why prefer the latter? I am going to make a very vulgar comparison * * * *

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"It is perhaps too true, monseigneur," said Madame d'Harville, smiling. "Well! what say you? will you agree that we shall contrive together all sorts of benevolent enterprises; *charitable dissipations*, of which, as always, very good people shall be the subjects? We will have our rendezvous, our correspondence, our secrets, and, above all, we will conceal all from the marquis; finally, if you agree, we will be in lawful intrigue."

"I accept with joy, with gratitude, this association, monseigneur," said Clémence, gayly; "and to commence our romance, I will return to-morrow to these unfortunates, to whom this morning I could only give words of consolation; for, profiting by my trouble and affright, a little lame boy stole the purse you gave me. Ah! monseigneur," added Clémence, and her face lost its expression of sweet playfulness which had for a moment animated it, "if you knew what misery, what a horrible picture! No, no; I did not believe that such unfortunates existed. I blame myself, and accuse my destiny." Rodolphe, not wishing Madame d'Harville to see how much he was touched at this return to herself, which proved the beauty of her mind, answered gayly, "If you will permit it, I will except the Morels from our partnership; you must let me take charge of these poor people, and you will promise me, above all, not to return to that house, for I live there."

"You, monseigneur? What pleasantry!"

"Nothing more serious. A modest lodging, it is true; two hundred francs a year, besides six francs for my housekeeping, freelly granted each month to the portière, Madame Pipelet, the horrible old woman that you know; add to this, that I have for my neighbour the prettiest grisette of the 'quartier' of the Temple, M'lle. Rigolette, and you will agree that for a 'commis marchand,' who earns eighteen hundred francs (I pass for a clerk), it is quite suitable."

"Your presence, so unhoped for in this fatal mansion, proves that you speak seriously, monseigneur. Some generous action attracts you there, doubtless; but for what good work do you reserve me, then? what part do you destine for me?"

"That of an angel of consolation, and, excuse the villanous word, a demon of cunning and address; for there are certain delicate and grievous wounds that the hand of a woman alone can dress and cure: thus it is with some unhappy beings, so proud, so gloomy, so mysterious, that it needs a rare penetration to discover them—an irresistible charm to acquire their confidence." "And when can I display this penetration, this address you suppose I possess?" asked Madame d'Harville, impatiently. "Soon, I hope; you will have a conquest to make worthy of yourself, but it will be necessary to employ your most 'machiavéliques' resources."

"And what day, monseigneur, will you confide to me this great secret?"

"Do you see, you are now at the rendezvous? Can you do me the favour to receive me in four days?" "So late!" said Clémence, naïvely. "And the mysteries? and the 'convenance?' Judge, then! if we are thought to be accomplices, they will be afraid of us; but perhaps I shall have need to write you. Who is this old woman who brought me your letter to-night?" "An ancient femme de chambre of my mother—surety and discretion itself." "It is, then, to her I will address my letters: she will hand them to you. If you have the goodness to answer me, direct, 'Monsieur Rodolphe, Rue Plumet.' Your femme de chambre will put your letters in the postoffice." "I will put them in myself, monseigneur, as I take my usual walk." "Do you often go out alone, and on foot?" "When the weather is fine, almost every day." "Really! It is a custom which every woman should follow. But shall I not see M. d'Harville to-night?"

"No, monseigneur; the scene of this morning has so much affected him, that he is suffering," said the marquise, in a low tone. "Ah! I comprehend," answered Rodolphe, sadly; "come, come, courage! Your life wanted an

aim, your sorrows a palliative, as you said. Leave me to believe that you will find this relief in the future, of which I have spoken to you; then your soul will be filled, so filled with sweet consolations, that resentment against your husband will perhaps, no longer find a place. You will feel for him some of the interest that you have for your child. And as to this little angel, now that I know the cause of its malady, dare I almost tell you to hope a little."

"Can it be possible, monseigneur? and how?" cried Clémence, clasping her hands with gratitude.

"I have for my ordinary physician a man quite unknown, but very learned: he lived for a long time in America. I remember that he has spoken to me of two or three cures, almost marvellous, made by him of slaves afflicted with the same disease." "Ah! monseigneur, can disappointment be possible!"

"Take care not to hope too much: the deception would be too cruel: only let us not altogether despair." "What do I not owe you, monseigneur!" said Clémence, in a faltering tone; "you relieve me; you make me, in spite of myself, hope for my child; you point out to me a future which will be at once a consolation, a pleasure, and a reward. Was I not right when I wrote you that, if you would come here to-night, you would finish the day as you commenced it—by a good action."

"And add at least, madame, one of those good actions as I like them, in my egotism—full of attraction, pleasure, and charms," said Rodolphe, rising; for half past eleven had just struck. "Adieu, monseigneur; do not forget to give me news soon of these poor people in the Rue du Temple."

"I will see them to-morrow morning; for I had, unfortunately, forgotten that this little cripple had stolen your purse, and these poor creatures may be in a sad extremity. In four days, do not to forget it, I will come and explain to you the part you have to play. I only now have to tell you that a disguise will perhaps be necessary."

"A disguise! Oh! what joy! and which, monseigneur?" "I cannot tell you yet. I will leave you the choice."

CHAPTER VI.

MISERY.

The reader has doubtless not forgotten that an unfortunate family, the head of which, a journeyman jeweller named Morel, occupied the garret of the house in the Rue du Temple.

We will conduct him to this sad abode.

It is five o'clock in the morning. Without, the silence is profound, the night dark and frosty: it snows.

A candle, sustained by two sticks of wood on a little square plank, hardly pierces with its yellow flickering light, the darkness of the garret; a narrow nook, ceiled by the sloping roof, which forms with the floor a very acute angle. The greenish tiles were everywhere visible. The partitions were plastered with mortar, blackened by time, and covered with cracks and rents, through which could be seen the worm-eaten laths: a door off its hinges showed the way to the staircase. The floor, of a colour without a name, tainted, sticky, is covered here and there with bits of decayed straw, with old rags, and with those large bones which the poor buy of the most wretched retailers of rotten meat, to knaw the cartilages which may yet adhere to them.

Such frightful disorder always announces either misconduct or honest misery, but so desperate, so overwhelming, that the man, annihilated, degraded, feels no more the will, nor strength, nor need, to get rid of it; he crouches there like a beast in his den. During the day, this hole is lighted by a narrow oblong window, made in the roof, with a glazed sash, which opens and shuts on a hinge. At the time of which we speak, a thick coating of snow covered this window.

On the table, which was covered with stains of grease and tallow, shone and sparkled a handful of diamonds and rubies of the finest water. Morel was a workman in real, and not false stones, as he said, and as they thought in the house. Thanks to this innocent deception, the stones which were confided to him seemed of such small value, that he could keep them with him without fear of their being stolen.

So much riches placed at the mercy of so much misery! we will not speak of the probity of Morel.

Seated on a stool without a back, overcome by fatigue, by cold, by sleep, after a long winter's night passed in labour, the jeweller has let fall on the table his weary head, his benumbed arms; his face touches the grindstone, which is placed horizontally on the table, and ordinarily put in motion by a little wheel turned by hand; a saw of fine steel, and some other utensils, are seattered around: the artisan, of whom one only sees the bald head, surrounded by gray hair, is dressed in an old coat of coarse net, which he wears next to his skin, and a wretched pair of cotton trowsers; his list slippers, in tatters, scarcely cover his feet, blue with cold.

There reigns in this garret a cold so intense, so penetrating, that the artisan, notwithstanding the kind of sleep into which he is plunged from exhaustion, shivers at times from head to foot.

The length of unsnuffed candle-wick announces that Morel has slept for some time; his oppressed respiration is alone heard; for the other six inhabitants of this garret are not asleep.

Yes, in this narrow garret live seven persons.

Five children, the youngest four years of age, the eldest hardly twelve; and then their infirm mother; and then a woman of fourscore—the mother of their mother—an idiot.

Except the father of the family, a moment overcome because his strength is exhausted, no one sleeps: no, because cold, hunger, sickness, keep their eyes open—wide open.

One does not know how rare and precious sleep is for the poor, in which they recruit their strength and forget their sorrows. They awake so joyful, so refreshed, so much recruited for their labours, after one of these beneficent nights, that the least religious, in the catholic sense of the word, feel a vague sense

of gratitude, if not towards God, at least towards sleep—and he who blesses the effect, blesses the cause. On beholding the frightful misery of this artisan, compared with the value of the stones which have been confided to him, one is struck with one of those contrasts, which at once depress and elevate the soul.

Ever under the eyes of this man is the cruel spectacle of the sufferings of his family; everything overwhelms them, from hunger to idiocy; and he respects those jewels, of which a single one would snatch his wife, his children from the privations which slowly kill them. Without doubt, he does his duty as an honest man; but because this duty is simple, its accomplishment is not less praiseworthy—less to be admired! Do not the circumstances under which a duty is performed, render the practice still more meritorious? And, besides, this artisan, remaining so unfortunate, so honest, with this treasure in his possession, does he not represent the immense and formidable majority of men, who, forever destined to privations, but peaceable, industrious, and resigned, see every day, without hatred, and without bitter envy, glittering before their eyes the magnificence of riches? Is it not, in fine, noble, consoling, to think that it is not force, it is not terror, but a good sense of morality, which alone constrains the mighty popular ocean, whose waves might ingulf society entire, in its power casting aside the laws; like a stormy sea, bursting and breaking down the strongest dikes and ramparts.

But to return to this specimen, alas! too real, of frightful poverty and misery, which we shall endeavour to describe in all its frightful nudity. The jeweller possessed but one thin mattress and a piece of covering, which were devoted to the use of the idiotic grandmother, who, in her stupid and ferocious wilfulness, would not share her wretched bed with any one.

At the beginning of winter she had become furious, and had almost stifled the youngest of the children, who had been placed alongside of her—a little girl of four years, afflicted for some time with phthisic, and who suffered too much from the cold in the straw where she had slept with her brothers and sisters.

Such is the picture, complete, which the garret of the artisan presented, when the eye could pierce the gloom where the faint rays of the candle expired. Against the transverse wall, as it is less damp than the other parts of the 'mansarde,' is placed the bed of the idiot. As she can keep nothing on her head, her gray hair, cut very close, shows the form of her flattened skull; her heavy gray eyebrows shade her cavernous eyes, which shine with savage brilliancy; her hollow cheeks, livid, marked with a thousand wrinkles, cling, as it were, to her toothless gums; lying on her side, doubled up, her chin almost touches her knees; she shivers under a covering of gray woollen, too small to cover her entirely, and which discovers her bony legs and the lower part of an old garment in tatters with which she is clothed.

At a little distance from the resting-place of the grandmother is spread out the straw bed which serves for the five children, and in this manner: two incisions were made in the ticking, one at each end; then the children are slipped into the damp and musty straw; the ticking serves both for blanket and coverlid. Two little girls, one of whom is dangerously sick, huddle together in one end, three little boys in the other.

They are all dressed, if some miserable rags can be called clothing. Their flaxen hair, all uncombed and tangled, which their mother allows to grow, because it is some protection from the cold, half covers their pale, attenuated faces. One of the boys, with his stiffened fingers, draws to his chin the ticking to cover himself the better; the other, fearing to expose his hands to the cold, holds the end between his chattering teeth; the third one presses closely to his two brothers.

The second of the two girls, sinking under the phthisis, reclines languidly her poor little face, already of a bluish and morbid lividity, on the icy bosom of her sister of five years, who tries in vain to warm her between her arms and the straw with anxious solicitude. On another straw bed is stretched out the wife of the artisan groaning, exhausted by a slow fever, and by a painful infirmity which has prevented her from rising for some months.

Madeleine Morel is thirty-six years of age. An old blue cotton handkerchief, tied around her head, glaringly sets forth the bilious colour of her bony face. Her eyes are surrounded by deep brown circles; the blood flows from her chapped and feverish lips. Weak, feeble, with no energy, she had remained honest because her husband was honest; left to herself, poverty would have overcome and driven her to crime. She loved her husband and her children; but she had neither the courage nor the strength to restrain her complaints on their common misfortunes. The jeweller was often obliged, although his labour alone supported the family, to leave his work to console the poor valetudinarian. Under a wretched covering of coarse cotton, which was spread over his wife, Morel had placed some clothes so old and ragged that the pawnbrokers had refused to receive them. A furnace, a stove, and a cracked earthen pot, two or three cups, a bucket, a washing machine, a stone jug, placed under the angle of the roof near the disjointed door, which the wind shakes at each moment, is the whole property of this family. This desolate scene is lighted by the candle whose flame, agitated by the wind which whistles through the crevices of the roof, now casts its pale and flickering light on so much misery, and now illuminates with a thousand fires the diamonds and rubies exposed on the workbench of the sleeping artisan. With an involuntary movement, the eyes of these miserable beings—all awake, all quiet, from the grandmother to the youngest child—are fixed instinctively on the jeweller, their only hope, their only resource. In their selfishness, they are troubled to see him thus inactive, thus overcome by labour. The mother thought of her children; the children thought of themselves.

The idiot appeared to think of nothing. Yet suddenly she sat up, covered her bosom with her long yellow arms, looked at the light with winking, then rose softly, dragging after her, like a winding sheet, her ragged covering. She was very tall; her shaved head appeared proportionally small; her under lip moved with a

spasmodic movement; she advanced cautiously towards the work-table, like a child about to commit a misdeed. When she was near the candle, she held to the flame her two trembling hands; their thinness was such that the light shone through them, giving a sort of livid transparency.

Madeleine Morel followed from her bed the smallest movements of the old woman; she, continuing to warm her hands at the flame of the candle, looked down, and appeared to examine with imbecile curiosity the rubies and diamonds which sparkled on the table.

Absorbed in this contemplation, the idiot burned her hands in the candle—she uttered a hoarse cry.

At this noise, Morel awoke with a start, and quickly raised his head. He was about forty years of age, with a fine, open, intelligent face, but wrinkled—faded by poverty; an unshaved gray beard of many weeks' growth covered the lower part of his face, which was marked with the smallpox; his inflamed eyelids were red from the effect of his midnight vigils.

* * * * * * *

Awakening with a start, the jeweller found himself face to face with the idiot. "What is the matter? what do you want, mother?" said Morel; then he added in a low tone, fearing to awaken his family, whom he thought asleep:

"Go to sleep, mother—don't make any noise; Madeleine and the children are asleep." "I am not asleep—I am trying to warm Adéle," said the eldest of the little girls. "I am too hungry to sleep," said one of the boys; "it was not my turn to sup last night as my brothers did with Madame Rigolette." "Poor children," said Morel; "I thought that you were asleep, at least."

"I was afraid to wake you, Morel," said his wife, "otherwise I would have asked for some water; I am very thirsty; I have the fever on me." "Right away," answered the workman; "only I must first get your mother to bed—come, leave my jewels alone," said he to the old woman, who wished to take a large ruby, the sparkling of which had attracted her attention. "Come, go to bed, mother," repeated he. "This, this!" answered the idiot, showing the precious stone she coveted.

"I shall be angry," said Morel, raising his voice, to frighten the old woman, whose hand he softly repulsed. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Morel, how thirsty I am: come, give me some drink." "But how do you think I can do it? I cannot leave your mother with the jewels—she may love another diamond as she did a year ago—and God knows, God knows what it has cost us—this diamond—and what, perhaps, it will yet cost us!" "Felix, since you are not asleep, go and give some drink to your mother." "No, no, I will wait: he will take cold," answered Madeleine.

"I shall be no colder without the straw than within," said the child, getting up. "Ah now, come, come! will you stop," cried Morel, in a threatening tone, to drive away the idiot, who persisted in her endeavours to get hold of one of the stones.

"Mamma, the water is frozen in the jug," cried Felix.

"Break the ice then," said Madeleine.

"It is too thick—I cannot." "Morel, do break the ice," said Madeleine in an impatient tone, "since I have nothing else to drink: do not leave me to die of thirst." "Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! what patience; but how can I do it? I have your mother in hand," cried the unhappy workman. He could not compel her to retire to her bed, and beginning to be irritated at the resistance she met with, she uttered a sort of angry growl. "Call her then," said Morel to his wife; "sometimes she will listen to you."

"Mother, go to bed; if you are good, I will give you some coffee, that you like so much." "This, this!" answered the idiot, seeking this time to get possession of the coveted jewel by force. Morel kept her off with management, but in vain. "Mon Dieu! you know well enough that you will never control her without the whip," cried Madeleine; "it is the only way to make her quiet." "Yes, it must be; but although she is foolish—to threaten an old woman with a whip is revolting to me," said Morel.

Then addressing the old idiot, who tried to bite him, and whom he held back with one hand, he cried in a loud voice, "Take care of the whip! if you don't go to bed at once!" These threats were all in vain. He took a whip from under his work-bench, cracked it violently, and said, shaking it at the old woman, "Go to bed at once, go to bed!"

At the noise of the whip, the old idiot started quickly away from the table, then stopped, grumbled, and cast angry looks at her son-in-law.

"To bed, to bed!" repeated he, advancing and snapping the whip anew. Then the idiot regained her couch backward, and shaking her fist at the jeweller.

He, desirous of terminating this cruel scene, to give his wife drink, advanced very close to the idiot, and again snapped his whip loudly, saying, "To bed immediately!"

The old woman, in her fright, began to utter dreadful howls, threw herself on her couch, like a dog in his kennel, without ceasing to howl.

The frightened children, thinking that their father had struck the old idiot, cried, weeping, "Don't beat grandmother, don't beat her!"

It is impossible to describe the effect of this dismal scene, accompanied by the supplicating cries of the children, the furious howlings of the idiot, and the low complaints of the artisan's wife.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEBT.

Morel had often been present at similar scenes, quite as sad as those we have related; yet he cried, in a fit of despair, throwing his whip on the table,

"Oh! what a life! what a life!"

"Is it my fault, mine, if my mother is an idiot?" said Madeleine, weeping. "Is it mine?" asked Morel. "What do I ask? To kill myself with work for you all—day and night I am to work—I do not complain—as long as I have strength, I will go on; but I cannot work at my

trade, and be at the same time nurse for the crazy, the sick, and children! No; Heaven is not just, in fine—no, it is not just! It is too much misery for a single man," said the jeweller, in a heart-rending tone; and, quite overcome, he fell on his stool, his face concealed in his hands. "Since they would not take my mother in the hospital, because she was not mad enough, what do you wish me to do, me—there? When you torment yourself with what you cannot help, what good does it do?" "None," said the artisan, and he wiped a tear from his eye—"none, you are right; but when everything overwhelms, one is sometimes no longer his own master." "Oh! mon Dieu, mon Dieu, I am so thirsty, I shiver, yet the fever burns me," said Madeleine. "Wait, I will give you some drink."

Morel went to get the jug under the roof. After having, with some difficulty, broken the ice which covered the water, he filled a cup with this frozen liquid and approached the bed of his wife, who eagerly stretched out her impatient hands. But after a moment's reflection he said to her, "No, this is too cold while the fever is on; it will do you harm." "It will do me harm? so much the better; give me quickly, then," answered Madeleine, bitterly, "it will be so much the sooner finished; it will disembarrass you of me. You will then only have to take care of the fool and the children. The sick will be wanting one less." "Why do you speak so to me, Madeleine? I do not deserve it," said Morel, sadly. "Stop, do not grieve me, for I have only just strength enough left to work. My head is not very strong; it cannot stand it; and then what will become of you and your children? it is for you and them I speak; if it only concerned myself, to-morrow would settle all my troubles. Thank God, the river flows for every one! Poor Morel!" said Madeleine, weeping; "it is true, I was wrong to say what I did. Never mind; my intention was good; yes, for, in fine, I am useless to you and our children; for sixteen months I am confined to my bed. Oh mon Dieu! I am so thirsty; I beg you, give me to drink!" "Directly, I am trying to warm it in my hands." "How kind you are! and I could say such harsh things to you!"

"Poor woman, you suffer, and that quickens the temper; say anything you please to me, but don't say you wish to leave me." "But for what am I good? What use is our children to us? To overwhelm you with work."

"Doubtless! thus, thanks to you all, I find strength enough to labour sometimes twenty hours a day; even to becoming crooked and deformed. Do you believe that, except on this account, I would, for the love of myself alone, perform such work? Oh! no, life has not charms enough for me, and soon put a finish to it."

"Just so I think," answered Madeleine; "except for the children, I should have said to you long since, Morel, you have had enough, so have I; light a pan of charcoal, we will laugh at poverty. But these children! these children!" "You see they are good for something," said Morel, with admirable naïveté. "Come, drink but a small swallow at the time, for it is still cold." "Oh! thank you, Morel," said Madeleine, drinking with avidity. "Enough, enough. It was too cold; my ague increases," said Madeleine, returning the cup. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! I told you so; you suffer." "I have no longer the strength to tremble. It seems to me I am surrounded on all sides with ice." Morel took off his waistcoat, put it on the feet of his wife, and remained with his shoulders naked. The unfortunate man had no shirt. "But you will freeze, Morel!" "If I am too cold, I will put on my waistcoat directly." "Poor man! ah! you are right; Heaven is not just. What have we done that we should be so wretched? while others—" "All have their troubles, the great as well as the small." "Yes, but the great have troubles which do not empty their stomachs, and which do not make them tremble with cold." "Hold, when I think that with the price of one of those diamonds we could have what would allow us to live comfortably, it is revolting; and what good do they do, these diamonds? If we only said, what good do they do to others, you must go a good way. It is as if you said, what good does it do the gentleman, whom Madame Pipelet calls the commandant, to have hired and furnished the first story of this house, when he never comes? What good does it do him to have those good mattresses and blankets, since he lodges elsewhere?" "It is true, there is enough there for poor people like us to live on for a long time; without reckoning that Madam Pipelet makes a fire there every day to prevent the furniture from being injured by the damp. So much good heat lost; while we, and our children, freeze. But, you will say to me, We are not furniture. Oh! these rich! it is too hard!"

"No harder than others, Madeleine. But they don't know, do you see, what misery is. They are born happy, live happy, die happy: why should they think of us? and besides, I tell you, they don't know. How can they have an idea of the privations of others? Are they very hungry? great is their joy, they can only dine the better. Is it very cold? so much the better, they call it a fine frost; it is very plain: if they walk out, they return to the corner of a fine fireside, and the cold makes them find the fire comfortable; they cannot, then, pity us much, since to them hunger and cold contributes to their pleasure. They don't know, do you see, they don't know! We, in their places, would act as they do." "Poor people are, then, better than them all, since they keep one another. This good little Mlle. Rigolette, who has so often watched over me and the children, took Jerome and Pierre with her last night to partake of her supper. And her supper is only a cup of milk and some bread. At her age one has a good appetite; she must have deprived herself."

"Poor girl! yes, she is very kind. And why? because she knows what sorrow is. And as I say always, If the rich only knew!—if they knew!" "And this little lady who came to us yesterday with such an alarmed look, to ask us if we needed anything; now, she knows what it is to be unfortunate—well! why don't she return?" "She will return, perhaps; for she had a charitable and sweet expression." "Oh! with you, if one is only rich, they are always right. One would say that the rich were made of another kind of clay than the poor!"

"I do not say that," answered Morel, gently.

"I say, on the contrary, they have their defects: we have ours. The misery is, that they don't know. The evil is, again, that there are many agents to discover the beggars who have committed crimes, and that there are none to seek out the honest workman and his family, sinking under the weight of poverty, and who, for want of a little timely assistance, sometimes are led into temptation. It is right to punish evil; but perhaps it would be better to prevent it. You may remain honest until you are fifty; but extreme want and poverty may cause you to do wrong, and here is one rogue the more; while that if one had known—but why think of this? The world is just as it is. I am poor and desperate—I speak thus. Were I rich, I would talk of fêtes and pleasures. Well, poor wife! how do you feel now?" "Just the same—my legs are lifeless. But you are shivering; take your waistcoat, and blow out the candle, it is daylight." In fact, a dim light, glancing with difficulty through the snow which covered the window, began to display the interior of this wretched dwelling-place, and rendered its aspect still more frightful. The shades of night had concealed at least a part of its horrors.

"I am going to wait until it is light enough for me to recommence my work," said the artisan, seating himself on the edge of the straw-bed, and leaning his face on his hands. After a few moments' silence, Madeleine said to him, "When will Madame Mathieu come to get the stones you are now working on?" "This morning. I have only the face of one of the false diamonds to polish." "A false diamond! you who only cut precious stones, notwithstanding what they believe in the house!" "How? you don't know?—ah! true, when Madame Mathieu came the other day you were asleep. She gave me ten false diamonds, ten Rhine flint stones to cut, just of the same size, same manner, and same number of the fine stones she brought; those which are there with the rubies. I have never seen diamonds of a finer water; those ten stones are worth at least sixty thousand francs." "And why does she wish you to imitate them with the false stones?" "A great lady, to whom they belong—a duchess, I believe—has ordered M. Baudoin the jeweller to sell her set, and to have a false one made to replace it. Madame Mathieu, the broker in jewelry of M. Baudoin, told me this when she brought me the work, so that I could imitate them exactly. Madame Mathieu has given the same orders to four other workmen, for there are forty or fifty pieces to cut. I could not do them all; they must be all ready this morning, to give M. Baudoin time to see them. Madame Mathieu said, that the great ladies often, in secret, had their diamonds replaced by false ones."

"You see, then, that false stones produce the same effect as the true ones, and that the great ladies who wear these only for ornament, would never have the idea to sacrifice a diamond to succour such as we are." "Poor wife! be reasonable; sorrow makes you unjust; who is it that knows that we, the Morels, are unhappy?" "Oh! what a man! what a man! if they were to cut you into pieces, you would say, I thank you.'" Morel shrugged his shoulders with emotion. "How much does Madame Mathieu owe you this morning?" asked Madeleine. "Nothing; since I am in advance already one hundred and twenty francs."

"Nothing! and we finished yesterday our last twenty sous!" "Yes," said Morel in a mournful tone. "And what are we going to do?" "I don't know." "And the baker will not give us any more credit." "No: and yesterday I borrowed half a loaf from Madame Pipelet."

"Will Mother Burette lend us anything?" "Lend us! Now that she has all our things in pawn, on what would she lend us? on our children?" said Morel, with a bitter smile. "But my mother, the children, and you, you have only eaten a pound and a half of bread among the whole of you, yesterday. You must not die of hunger! and it is your fault: you would not be enrolled this year at the almshouse."

"Those only are enrolled who have furniture, and we have none. We are looked upon as boarders."

"But what shall we do, then?" "Perhaps this little lady, who came yesterday, will not forget."

"Yes; reckon on it: but Madame Mathieu will lend you five francs. You have worked for her for ten years, she cannot leave in such a situation an honest workman, with such a family." "I do not think she will be able to lend us anything. She has done all she could to advance me, little by little, this hundred and twenty francs. It is a large sum for her. Because she is a broker in diamonds, and that she has sometimes fifty thousand francs worth in her box, she is no richer for it. When she earns a hundred francs a month, she is well satisfied, for she has expenses also—two neices to bring up. Five francs for her, do you see, is like five francs for us; and there are times when one hasn't them—you well know it. Being already much in advance with me, she can hardly take the bread out of her own mouth."

"Now you see what it is to work for a broker instead of working for the rich jewellers; they are less exacting sometimes: but you will always let yourself be eaten with the wool upon your back. It is your fault."

"It is my fault!" cried the unhappy man, exasperated by this absurd reproach; "is it your mother or not who is the cause of all our misery? If I had not been obliged to pay for the diamond she lost, we should be in advance; we should have had the value of my labour; we should have the eleven hundred francs that we drew out of the saving's bank to add to the thirteen hundred that M. Jacques Ferrand lent us, whom God curse!" "You won't ask anything from him. After all, he is a miser; but that's nothing; you can but try."

"To him! him—ask him!" cried Morel; "I'd prefer to roast before a slow fire. Hold! don't speak of that man, you'll drive me mad." Saying these words, the countenance of the artisan, ordinarily sweet and resigned, assumed an energetic expression; his pale face became slightly coloured, he arose quickly from the bed where he was seated and walked the garret in great agitation. Notwithstanding his frail, deformed figure, the attitude, the features of this man expressed profound indignation. "I am

not wicked," cried he. "In my life I have never harmed any one; but, look here, this notary!* oh! I wish him as much harm as he has caused me." Then, putting his hands on his head, he murmured, in a sorrowing tone, "Mon Dieu! why, then, does an unhappy lot, which I have not merited, deliver me and mine, hands and feet tied, to this hypocrite? Shall he have, then, the right to use his riches to ruin, corrupt, and destroy all whom he wishes to ruin, corrupt, and destroy!"

"That's it, that's it, said Madeleine—"set yourself against him; you will be well advanced when he has put you in prison, as he can do from one day to another, for this note of thirteen hundred francs, for which he has a judgment against you these three months; he has you like a bird at the end of a string: I also detest this notary; but since we are in his power, we must—" "Let him dishonour our daughter—is it not?" cried the artisan in a voice of thunder. "Bon Dieu! be quiet then, these children are awake: they hear you." "Bah! bah! so much the better, it will be a good example for our two little girls; it will prepare them; some day he may have the notion; are we not in his power? as you say; come, say again he can put me in prison; come, speak frankly, we must abandon our child to him, is it not so?"

Then bursting into tears, he cried, "Oh! my children, my poor children, my Louise! my good and pretty Louise! too handsome, too handsome—it is from this that all our misfortunes come; if she had never been so handsome, this man would not have proposed to lend me this money. I am industrious and honest; the jeweller would have given me time; I should have been under no obligation to the monster, and he could not have abused the service he has rendered us, to try to dishonour my daughter; I would not have left her a day with him—but it must be so, it must be so—he has me in his power. Oh! poverty, poverty, how many outrages you compel one to swallow!" "But what could we do! He told Louise, 'If you leave my house, I will send your father to prison.'" "Yes, he speaks to her as if she was the vilest of creation." "If it was only that, it would be enough; but if she leaves him, he will send you to prison, and then what will become of us?" "If Louise earned twenty francs a month in another place, could we live upon that alone?" "Yes, it is to live that we let him, perhaps, dishonour Louise." "You always exaggerate: the notary pursues her, it is true, she has told us; but she is virtuous, you know it well."

"Oh! yes, she is virtuous, and active, and good! When this diamond was lost, and that, seeing us in trouble, she wished to go to service to lessen our expenses, did I not tell you how much it cost me? She a servant, ill treated, humiliated! she—naturally so proud, that in joking—do you remember it? we joked then, we called her the princess, because she said often that with neatness she would make one poor dwelling like a little palace." "Dear child! it would have been my pride to have kept her with us, even if I had worked all night. It is that also, when I saw her sweet face and her pretty black eyes before me, near my workbench, and I heard her sing, my task appeared less heavy! Poor Louise! so industrious, and withal, so gay! Even to your mother, who would do just as she wished—and you, what care she took of you! how she amused you! she found time to do everything; thus, with Louise, all our happiness, all is gone." "Stop! Morel, do not recal this to my mind, you break my heart," said Madeleine, weeping bitter tears. "And when I think that perhaps this old monster—Hold, do you see, at this thought my brain turns? I feel that I must go and kill him, and then myself afterward." "And us, what will become of us? And besides, once more you exaggerate; the notary may have said this to Louise as a joke; besides, he goes to mass every Sunday; he visits many friends; there are many persons who say it is safer to place money with him than in the Saving's Bank." "What does that prove? that he is rich and a hypocrite. I know Louise well; she is virtuous. Yes; but she loves us as one seldom loves; her heart bleeds at our misery; she knows that without me you would all die with hunger; and if the notary has threatened to put me in prison, the poor creature has been capable—oh! my head! I shall become mad.* * * * * * * * "Well! and why do you fear that?" "I fear, because I have remarked that for three months, every time that Louise comes here, and she embraces me, she blushes." "With pleasure at seeing you." "Or with shame—she becomes every day more sad." "Because she sees us every day more wretched; and besides, when I speak to her of the notary, she says that now he no longer threatens her with the prison for you.* * * * * * * And when one thinks," she continued, "that with one of the diamonds which are there on your bench, you could reimburse the notary, take our daughter away from him, and keep her at home!"—"When you have said this to me a hundred times, what good does it do? Certainly if I were rich, I should not be poor," answered Morel rather impatiently.

Probity was so natural, and, thus to say, so organic in this man, that he did not imagine that his wife, worn out, exhausted by misfortune, could entertain an idea of tempting his honesty. He continued, bitterly: "We must be resigned. Happy those who can have their children around them and protect them from evil; but a daughter of the poor, who can watch her? No one. Is she old enough to earn anything? She goes to her work in the morning, returns at night; during this time the mother attends to her work, the father to his. Time is our fortune, and bread is so dear, that we have not the leisure to watch over the conduct of our children; and yet the world cries out at the misconduct of poor girls, as if their parents had the means to keep them at home, or the time to watch over them when they are abroad. The privations we suffer are nothing in comparison to our sorrow in leaving our wife, our children, our parents It is, above all, to us that a family life would be salutary and consoling. Yet, as soon as our children are old enough, we are obliged to part with them!"

* The reader will recollect that Fleur de Marie had, when a child, been confided to the care of this notary, and that his housekeeper had abandoned the child to La Chouette, who agreed to take her for the sum of one thousand francs.

At this moment some one knocked loudly at the door of the garret.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JUDGMENT.

Much astonished, the artisan went and opened it. Two men entered into the garret. The one, tall and thin, with a base and pimpled face, surrounded by thick black and gray whiskers, held in his hand a large, leaded cane, wore a hat out of shape, a long, dirty, green surtout, closely buttoned. From its rusty collar of black velvet stuck out a long red neck, scaled like that of a vulture. This man was called Malicorne.

The other, much smaller, but of equally low appearance, red-haired, stout and short, was dressed in a kind of ridiculous sumptuousness. Diamond buttons confined the bosom of his shirt of doubtful purity, and a long chain of gold was suspended over a waistcoat of some faded Scotch stuff; over all he wore a paletot, of a yellowish gray. This man was called Bourdin. "Oh! it smells of poverty and death here!" said Malicorne, stopping at the door. "The truth is, it don't smell of musk: what devices!" answered Bourdin, with a gesture of disgust and contempt; then he advanced towards the artisan, who regarded him with as much surprise as indignation. Through the half-opened door could be seen the cunning, wicked face of Tortillard, who, having followed these unknown, looked, spied, listened. "What do you want?" asked the artisan. "Jérôme Morel," answered Bourdin. "I am he." "Journeyman jeweller?" "I am he." "Very sure?" "Once more, I am he. You make me angry. What do you want? Explain, or go out." "That's polite! thank you. I say, Malicorne, there's no *fat* here; it's not as it is at the Viscount de Saint Rémy—" "Hold!" said Morel, with indignation; "if you were not drunk, as you appear to be, I should be angry. Leave my room this moment!" "Ah, ah! ain't he droll, *the ramshorn*," cried Bourdin, making an insulting allusion to the deformed figure of the artisan. "I say, Malicorne, he has the impudence to call this his *room*—a hole where I would not put my dog!" "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Madeleine, so much alarmed, that until then she had not uttered a word. "Call for help; perhaps they are robbers—take care of your diamonds."

Seeing these two unknown approaching nearer and nearer to his work-bench, Morel feared some evil design, ran to the table, and with his hands covered the precious stones. Tortillard, still on the watch, heard the words of Madeleine, remarked the movement of the artisan, and said to himself, "Ah, ah! they called him a workman in false stones; if they were false, he would not fear their being stolen. Just as well to know: then Mother Mathieu, who comes here so often, is also, then, a broker of real stones. The diamonds she has in her box are real. Just as well to know: I'll tell that to La Chouette, La Chouette," said the son of Bras-Rouge, chanting.

"If you do not leave my room, I'll call the guard," said Morel. The children, frightened at this scene, began to weep, and the old idiot rose up in bed. "If any one has the right to call for the guard, it is us—do you hear, monsieur le déjeté!" said Bourdin. "As the guard must assist us to conduct you if you kick," added Malicorne; "we have not a justice of the peace with us, it is true; but if you insist upon his society, we will serve him up fresh from his bed, piping hot, boiling. Bourdin, go and bring him." "In prison—I?" cried Morel, in a stupor. "Yes, to Clichy." "To Clichy?" repeated the artisan, with a haggard air. "Ain't he dull of comprehension, this man?" said Malicorne. "To prison for debt; do you like that better?" added Bourdin. "You—you—are—how—the notary. Ah! mon Dieu!" and the workman, as pale as death, fell back on his bench, unable to add a word.

"We are officers—do you understand!" "Morel!—the note of the master of Louise! we are lost!" cried Madeleine, in a piercing tone. "Here is the judgment," said Malicorne, drawing from his portfolio a stamped act.

After having sung through his nose, as usual, a part of the deed, in a voice almost unintelligible, he articulated clearly the last words, unfortunately too significant for the artisan:

"Judgment in last resort; the tribunal condemns the Sieur Jerome Morel to pay to the Sieur Jacques Ferrand, by all lawful means, and even by his body, the sum of thirteen hundred francs, with interest from date of protest, he also to pay the costs.

"Ordered and judged at Paris, this 13th September, 1838."

"And Louise, then—and Louise?" cried Morel, almost wild, without appearing to understand this conjuring, "where is she? Has she left the notary, since he wishes to imprison me? Louise—my God! what has become of her?" "Who is Louise?" said Bourdin.

"Leave him, then," continued Malicorne, brutally; "don't you see he is fooling you? Come!" and he drew near to Morel—"come; to the left, march; forward, march; I want some fresh air; it is poisonous here." "Morel, don't go. Defend yourself," cried Madeleine, wildly. "Kill the scoundrels. Oh! you are a coward! You will let them take you away: you will abandon us!" "Do as if you were at home, madame," said Bourdin, in a sardonic manner; "but if your man raises his hand to me, I'll knock him down." Solely absorbed about Louise, Morel heard nothing that was said around him. Suddenly, an expression of bitter joy illumined his face: he cried, "Louise has left the house of the notary; I will go to prison cheerfully." But casting a look around him, he said, "And my wife—and her mother—and my other children—who will feed them? They will not give me jewels to work in prison—they will think my misconduct has sent me there. It is, then, our death—the death of all of us, that he desires—the notary." "Once! twice! shall we finish?" said Bourdin; "we are tired; finally, dress yourself, and march!" "My good gentlemen, pardon what I said just now!" cried Madeleine. 'You will not have the heart to take away Morel. What do you think will become of me and my five children, and my mother, who is foolish? There—do you see her there? she is crazy, my good gentlemen! she is crazy!"

"The old woman with the shaved head! Hold! it is true—she is shaved," said Malicorne; "I thought she had a white scull-cap." "My children, throw yourselves at the knees of these good gentlemen," cried Madeleine, wishing, by a last effort, to soften the officers; "pray them not to take away your father, our sole support."

Notwithstanding the order of their mother, the children wept, not daring to leave their resting-place. At this unaccustomed noise, at the sight of the men whom she did not know, the idiot began to howl, pressing against the wall.

"Ah, now! 'mille tonnerres,' will this finish?" cried Malicorne. "Do you think we are feasting here? Come, march! or I'll make you!" He placed his hand on the shoulder of the artisan, and shook him roughly. This menace, this gesture, inspired great terror among the children; the three little boys got out of their straw-bed, half naked, and came, weeping, to cast themselves at the feet of the officers, clasping their hands, and crying in a heart-rending tone, "Pardon! don't kill our father!" At the sight of three unfortunate children, shivering with cold and fright, Bourdin, notwithstanding his natural hardness of heart, and his being accustomed to such scenes, felt himself touched. His comrade, unfeeling, brutally disengaged his leg from the embraces of the children, saying, "Eh! get out, then, brats! what a dog's trade, if we always had to do with such beggars!"

A horrible episode renders this scene still more frightful. The eldest of the little girls, who had remained in the straw-bed with her sick sister, suddenly cried out, "Mamma, mamma, I don't know what is the matter with her—Adèle—she is all cold! She looks at me, but she don't breathe." The poor sick child had just expired without a groan, her eyes still fixed on her sister, whom she loved tenderly. It is impossible to describe the cry that was uttered by the wife of the artisan at this revelation, for she comprehended all. It was one of those convulsive, heaving cries, torn from the very bowels of a mother. "My sister looks as if she was dead! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! I am afraid!" cried the child, rushing out of the bed, and running to throw herself into the arms of her mother. She, forgetting that her almost paralyzed limbs could not sustain her, made a violent effort to get up, and go to her dead child; but her strength failed her, and she fell on the floor, uttering a last cry of despair. This found an echo in the heart of Morel; he aroused himself from his stupor: with a bound he was at the bedside, and caught up his child. He found her dead.

Cold and hunger had hastened her end, although her complaint, the fruit of misery, was mortal. Her poor little limbs were already stiff and frozen.

CHAPTER IX.

LOUISE.

Morel, with his gray hair erect from despair and fright, remained immovable, holding his dead child in his arms. He regarded her with a dry eye, fixed and sad. "Morel, Morel! give me my Adèle!" cried the unhappy mother, stretching out her arms towards her husband. "It is not true! no; she is not dead—you will see. I am going to warm her." The curiosity of the idiot was excited by the endeavours of the officers to get hold of the artisan, who would not be separated from the body of his child. The old woman ceased to howl, arose from her couch, drew near slowly, thrust her hideous head over the shoulder of Morel, and for some moments looked at the corpse of her grandchild.

Her features preserved their habitual expression of stupidity; at the end of a moment, she uttered a sort of deep, unearthly howl, like that of a famished beast; then, returning to her bed, she threw herself on it, crying, "Hunger! hunger!" "You see, gentlemen, a poor little girl of four years, Adèle. She is called Adèle. I kissed her last night and this morning—and now see her! Perhaps you will say it is one mouth less to feed, and that I am fortunate; is it not so?" said the artisan, with a haggard look.—His reason began to be shaken under so many shocks.

"Morel, I want my child; I want her!" cried Madeleine.

"It is true; each in turn," answered the artisan; and he placed the child in the arms of its mother. She, not less wandering than her husband, concealed in the straw of her bed the body of her child, hiding it from all eyes with a kind of savage jealousy; while the other children, kneeling, burst into sobs.

The officers, for a moment overcome by the scene, soon recovered their usual brutality of manner. "Ah, now! come, comrade," said Malicorne; "your child is dead; it is a misfortune; we are all mortal; we can do nothing, neither can you. You must follow us; we have yet another individual to catch, for game abounds to-day!"

Morel did not hear this man. Completely lost in thought, he said, "We must, however, put my little child in a shroud; watch her here, until they come to take her away. A shroud! but how? we have nothing! And the coffin! who will trust us? Oh! a coffin so small! a child only four years old! it ought not to be dear; and, besides, no hearse! it can be taken under the arm. Ah! ah! ah!" added he, with a shout of fearful laughter, "how happy I am! she might have died at eighteen, at Louise's age, and they would not have given me credit for a large coffin."

"Ah, now! but this fellow is capable of going crazy," said Bourdin to Malicorne; "he makes one feel afraid. Come, good! and the old idiot howling with hunger! what a family!" "Yet we must make a finish; although the arrest of this beggar is only tariffed at 76 francs, 75 centimes, we'll increase the amount, as is right, to 240 or 250 francs. It is the wolf who pays." "Who advances? for it is that fellow there who pays for the fiddles, since it is he who is going to dance." "When he has enough to pay his creditor 2500 francs for capital, interest, expenses, and all, it will be warm weather."

"Then it won't be as it is here, for it freezes," said the man, blowing on his fingers. "Let us finish this; tie him; he shall weep on

the road. Is it our fault, ours, if the little one is dead?"

"Such folks ought not to have children; come, come, comrade," added he, striking Morel on the shoulder, "we can wait no longer; since you can't pay—to prison!" "To prison, M. Morel!" cried a young and sweet voice; and a youthful girl, a brunette, fresh and rosy, entered quickly into the garret. "Ah, Mademoiselle Rigolette," said one of the children, "you are so good! Save papa; they wish to take him to prison, and our little sister is dead."

"Adèle is dead!" cried the young girl, whose large black eyes became filled with tears. "Your father in prison? that cannot be!" And, immovable, she, in turn, looked at the artisan, his wife, and the officers.

Bourdin approached Rigolette. "Come, my good girl, you who are cool and collected, make this good man listen to reason; his little child is dead, very well! but he must follow us to Clichy—to prison, for debt. We are constables." "It is true, then?" cried the young girl. "Very true! the mother has the little one in bed, we cannot take it from her; it takes her attention. The father ought to profit by this, to be off." "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! what misfortune!" cried Rigolette: "what misfortune! what can be done?" "Pay or go to prison; there's no alternative. Have you two or three thousand to lend them?" asked Malicorne, in a jeering manner. "If you have, go to your strong box and turn out the cash; we ask nothing better." "Ah! it is frightful," said Rigolette, with indignation—"to dare to joke before such misery!"

"Well, without joking," said the other bailiff, "since you wish to do some good, try to prevent the woman from seeing us carry off the husband. You will prevent both from spending a bad quarter of an hour." Although brutal, the advice was good; Rigolette followed it, and approached Madeleine. She, wild with grief, did not observe the young girl, who knelt down alongside of the bed with the other children. Morel recovered from his temporary alienation only to sink under the most poignant reflections. More calm, he was able to contemplate the horror of his position. Decided to this extremity, the notary must be unrelenting; the bailiffs did their duty. The artisan gave himself up. "Ah! now are we coming to the end," said Bourdin to him. "I cannot leave these diamonds here; my wife is half crazy," said Morel, showing the precious stones on his table. "The broker for whom I work will come to get them this morning, they are very valuable." "Good," said Tortillard, who still remained outside listening; "good, good, good—La Chouette shall know this."

"Grant me only until to-morrow," continued Morel, "so that I can return these diamonds to the broker." "Impossible! let us finish at once." "But I cannot, in leaving these diamonds, expose them to being lost." "Take them with you; our hack is below—we will go to your broker; if he is not at home, you can leave them at the office at Clichy; they will be as safe there as in the bank. Come, make haste, we will go without your wife and children perceiving it." "Grant me until to-morrow, so that I can bury my child," asked Morel, in a supplicating tone, almost choked with tears. "No; we have already lost more than an hour here." "The funeral would only make you more sad," added Malicorne. "Ah! yes; it would make me more sad," said Morel, bitterly. "You fear so much to make people sad! then, a last word." "Come, sacreblue! make haste," said Malicorne, with brutal impatience. "How long since you were ordered to arrest me?" "It was only yesterday that we received the order from the notary." "Yesterday? So lately? yesterday? and Louise has not been here: where is she? what has become of her?" said the artisan, taking from the workbench a box filled with cotton, in which he placed the stones. "But I will not think of this now—in prison I'll have time enough."

"Come, make up your bundle and dress yourself."

"I have no bundle to make; I have only these diamonds to carry with me, to leave at the office." "Dress yourself, then!" "I have no other clothes than these." "You are going out in these rags!" said Bourdin. "I shall make you ashamed, doubtless!" said the workman, with bitterness. "No, since you go in your carriage," answered Malicorne. "Papa, mamma calls you," said one of the children. "Listen," whispered Morel quickly to one of the bailiffs: "do not be inhuman; grant me a last favour. I have not the courage to say farewell to my wife, to my children; my heart will break. If they see you take me away, they will run after me. I wish to avoid that. I beg you will say to me out loud, that you will return in three or four days, and pretend to go away—you will wait for me at the landing below. I will come out five minutes afterward; that will spare me the parting. I will not resist, I assure you; I shall become crazy—I was almost so just now." "No you don't; you wish to play me a trick!" said Malicorne; "you wish to escape, old fellow." "Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Morel, in mournful indignation. "I don't think that he'll fail," whispered Bourdin to his companion: "let us do as he asks, otherwise we will never get from here; I'll go and watch at the door; there is no other way of getting out; he cannot escape us."

"Very well, but may thunder catch him! what a kennel! what a kennel!" Then, addressing Morel in a low tone, he said, "It is agreed upon; we will wait for you below: play your game, and make haste!" "I thank you," said Morel. "Well, well!" cried Bourdin in a loud tone, "since it is so, and you promise to pay, we will leave you; we will return in five or six days: but you must be punctual then!" "Yes, gentlemen, I hope then to be able to pay," answered Morel.

The bailiffs went out; Tortillard, for fear of being surprised, had disappeared from the staircase at the moment the officers came out of the garret.

"Madame Morel, do you understand?" said Rigolette, addressing the wife of the artisan, to arouse her from her mournful contemplation: "they leave your husband quiet. These two men have gone." "Mamma, do you hear? they do not take papa away," cried the eldest of the boys. "Morel! listen—listen—take one of your large diamonds, they will not know it, and we are saved," murmured Madeleine, quite

delirious: "our little Adèle will be no longer cold, she will be no longer dead."

Profiting by a moment when they were not looking at him, the artisan went out with precipitation. The bailiff awaited him without, on a kind of little platform, at the head of the landing-place. On this platform opened the door of a small closet, where M. Pipelet kept his stock of leather. Besides, as we have said, the worthy porter called this place his "box at the melo-drama," because, by means of a hole he had made in the wainscot, he could witness the sad scenes which took place in the garret.

The bailiff had remarked this door; for an instant he thought that perhaps his prisoner had reckoned on this place to fly to, or conceal himself. "Come, let us be moving!" said he, putting his foot on the first step of the staircase, and making a sign for Morel to follow him. "One minute more, for mercy's sake!" said the artisan. He knelt on the platform; through one of the chinks of the door he cast a last look on his family, joined his hands, and said in a touching tone, weeping bitter tears, "Farewell! my poor children, farewell! my poor wife, farewell!" "Ah, now! will you finish your anthems?" said Bourdin, brutally: "Malicorne was right; what a kennel!"

Morel arose; he was about to follow the bailiff when these words resounded on the staircase, "My father! my father!"

"Louise!" cried the artisan, lifting his hands towards heaven; "I can, then, embrace her before I go!" "Thanks, mon Dieu! I arrive in time," said the voice, drawing nearer and nearer. And one could hear the young girl ascending the staircase. "Be tranquil, my dear," said a third voice, sharp, broken-winded, puffing and blowing, coming from a place lower down. "I'll hide myself, if it is necessary, in the alley: us three, my broom and my old darling, and if they don't walk out of this after you have spoken to them — the beggars!" The reader has, doubtless, recognised Madame Pipelet, who, less active than Louise, followed her slowly.

In a few moments, the daughter of the artisan was in the arms of her father. "It is you, Louise! my dear Louise!" said Morel, weeping: "but how pale you are! Mon Dieu! what is the matter." "Nothing—nothing," answered Louise, confusedly; "I have run so fast! here is the money."

"How!" "You are free!" "You know, then?" "Yes, yes; here, sir, take the money," said the young girl, giving a rouleau of gold to Malicorne. "But this money, Louise! this money!" "You shall know all; be calm; come and pacify my mother." "No, directly!" cried Morel, placing himself before the door. He thought of the death of his little girl, of which Louise was ignorant: "Stop, I must speak to you. But this money?" "'Minute!'" said Malicorne, having counted the pieces of gold which he put in his pocket. "Sixty-four, sixty-five, that makes thirteen hundred francs. Is that all you have, my little woman?" "But you only owe thirteen hundred francs?" said Louise, inquiringly, to her father. "Yes," said Morel. "'Minute'!" answered the bailiff, "the note is for thirteen hundred francs; good; here is the note paid, but the costs, without the arrest, is already eleven hundred and forty francs."

"Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Louise: "I thought it was only thirteen hundred francs. But, sir, a little later we will pay you the rest; here is a large amount on account, is it not, my father?" "Later—very well: bring the money to the office, and we will let your father go. Come, march!"

"You take him away!" "Straight off. It is on account—let him pay the rest, and he shall be free. Go on, Bourdin; push ahead!" "Mercy, mercy!" cried Louise. "Ah! what a row! now the whinings are to begin again; it is enough to make one sweat in mid-winter—my word of honour!" said the bailiff, brutally. Then advancing towards Morel, "If you don't walk right off, I'll take you by the collar, and make you go another fashion; this is too tiresome, and there's an end of it." "Oh! my poor father—I, who thought to save him, at least!" said Louise, quite overcome.

"No! no! God is not just!" cried the artisan, in a despairing tone. "Yes, God is just: he always has pity on honest people who suffer," said a soft and thrilling voice.

At the same moment Rodolphe appeared at the door of the little store-room, where he had witnessed many of the scenes we have just described. He was pale, and highly affected. At this sudden apparition, the bailiffs fell back. Morel and his daughter regarded the prince with astonishment.

Taking from the pocket of his waistcoat a little package of bank bills folded, Rodolphe drew out three, and, presenting them to Malicorne, said, "There are twenty-five hundred francs; return to this young girl the gold she gave you." Still more astonished, the officer took the notes in a hesitating manner, examined them, turned, and returned, and finally pocketed them. Then recovering his impudence and assurance, as his astonishment vanished, he measured Rodolphe with a look, and said, "Are they good, your bills? how came you by such a sum? Does it honestly belong to you?" added he. Rodolphe was very plainly dressed, and covered with dust, owing to his concealment in the store-room of M. Pipelet. "I told you to give back the gold to this young girl," answered he, in a short and rough tone.

"I told you! and how do you dare to speak to me thus?" cried the bailiff, advancing towards Rodolphe, in a threatening manner.

"The gold! the gold!" said the prince, seizing and pressing his arm so tightly, that under his iron grasp, the bailiff cried out, "Oh! you hurt me! let me go!" "Give up the gold, then! you are paid; go away, without uttering a word of insolence, or I'll pitch you head foremost down the stairs!" "Well! here is the gold," said Malicorne, returning the rouleau to the young girl; "but don't be so familiar, nor injure me, because you are the strongest."

"That's true; who are you, that you give yourself such airs?" said Bourdin, standing behind his confederate; "who are you?" "Who is he? impudence! he is my lodger, the prince of lodgers, foulmouth as you are!" cried

Madame Pipelet, who at last appeared, quite out of breath, and as usual "coiffée" with her flaxen periwig "à la Titus." The portière held in her hand an earthen saucepan filled with smoking soup, which she charitably brought to the Morels.

"What does she want, this old weasel?" said Bourdin. "If you make any remarks about my appearance, I'll throw myself on you, and bite," cried Madame Pipelet; "and then my lodger, my prince of lodgers, will pitch you from the top to the bottom of the stairs, as he said he would; and I'll sweep you out with my broom, like dirty rubbish as you are."

"This old woman is capable of raising the house against us. We are paid, we have made our expenses, let us go," said Bourdin to Malicorne. "There are your pieces!" said he, throwing the documents at the feet of Morel. "Pick them up, you are paid to be polite," said Rodolphe, stopping the bailiff with a strong grasp, and pointing to the papers.

Feeling, at this new and formidable grasp, that he could not struggle against such an adversary, the officer stooped down, grumbling, and picked up the papers, which he handed to Morel.

"You, although you have a fist of iron, had better not fall under our hands!" said Malicorne; and after shaking his clinched hand at Rodolphe, with one bound he descended ten steps, followed by his accomplice, who looked behind, rather alarmed. Madame Pipelet prepared herself to avenge the threat of the bailiff towards Rodolphe; looking at her saucepan with an inspired air, she cried, heroically, "The debts of the Morels are paid; they are going to have enough to eat; they have no longer any need of my paste: look out below!" and leaning on the railing, the old woman emptied the contents of her saucepan on the backs of the two bailiffs, who had reached at this moment the first story. "And get out, then!" added the portière. "Ah! they are nicely soused—like a piper—like two pipers—eh! eh! eh! oh!—must say so." "Ten thousand thunders!" cried Malicorne, inundated with the culinary preparation of Madame Pipelet, "will you look out above there, old hellcat!"

"Alfred!" shouted Madame Pipelet, screeching in a sharp, piercing voice, loud enough to make a deaf man hear; "Alfred! fetch them a kick, old darling! They wished to come the Bédouins over your Stasie (Anastasia). They are two blackguards—they have ransacked me—clip 'em behind with the broom—ask the oysterman and 'rogomiste' to help you! Heu! you! you! you! s'cat! s'cat! thieves! murder! Kss! kss! kss! Brrrrrr! How, how! Kick 'em behind! old darling!!! Boum! boum!!" And, by way of a formidable finish to these "onomatopœias," which she had accompanied with most ferocious stampings of the feet, Madame Pipelet, carriedaway by the intoxication of victory, pitched from the top to the bottom of the stairs her earthen saucepan, which, breaking with a terrible noise, at the moment when the bailiffs, alarmed at these frightful cries, descended by four steps at the time the last flight of stairs, augmented considerably their fears. "And, get out then!" cried Anastasia, shouting with laughter, and crossing her arms in a triumphal attitude.

While Madame Pipelet pursued the bailiffs with her shouts and insults, Morel cast himself at the feet of Rodolphe. "Ah! monsieur, you have saved our lives! To whom do we owe this unlooked-for succour?" "To God; you see he has always pity on honest people."

CHAPTER X.

RIGOLETTE.

Louise, the daughter of the artisan, was remarkably handsome, a serious beauty; tall and slender, she resembled the antique Juno, in the regularity of her features, and the huntress Diana in the elegance of her lofty figure. Notwithstanding her sunburnt complexion, the rough redness of her well shaped hand, and her humble dress, this young girl, in her exterior was commanding—as the poor artisan would say in his paternal admiration, she had the air of a princess. We will not endeavour to paint the gratitude the joyous transport of this family, so suddenly relieved from a frightful fate. For a moment, in this joyful reverse, even the death of the little girl was forgotten. Rodolphe alone remarked the extreme pallor of Louise, and the sombre thoughts with which she appeared overwhelmed, notwithstanding the deliverance of her father.

Wishing to tranquillize the Morels completely as to the future, and to explain a liberality which might compromise his incognito, Rodolphe said to the artisan, whom he led to the landing place whilst Rigolette prepared Louise for the death of her little sister—

"The day before yesterday, in the morning, a young lady came to see you?" "Yes, sir; and she appeared much grieved at the state in which she found us." "After God, it is she you must thank, not me." "Can it be true, monsieur? this young lady—" "Is your benefactress." "I have often taken goods to her house; the other day in coming to hire a room on the fourth story, I learned from the porter your cruel situation; counting on the charity of this lady, I went to her house; soon she was here to judge for herself of the extent of your sufferings; she was much affected; but as this might have been the fruits of misconduct, she told me to get every information concerning you, desiring to conform her benefactions according to your probity." "Good and excellent lady! I had much reason to say—" "To say to Madeleine, if the rich only knew! is it not so?" "How, monsieur, you know the name of my wife? Who has told you that."

"Since six o'clock this morning," said Rodolphe, "I have been concealed in the little storeroom near your garret."

"You, monsieur?" "And I have heard all, all, excellent and honest man!" "Mon Dieu! But how came you there?" "For good or bad, I could not be better informed than from your own mouth; I wanted to see and hear everything without your knowing it. The porter had spoken to me of this storeroom, proposing to let me nave it for a storeroom. This morning I asked to visit it, I remained there an nour, and I have convinced myself that there is not a character more upright, more noble, more courageously resigned than yours."

"Mon Dieu! monsieur, there is no great merit in it—I am born so, and I cannot, therefore, do otherwise."

"I know it; and if I do not praise you, still I esteem you." I was coming out of my covert to deliver you from the bailiffs, when I heard the voice of your daughter. I wished to allow her the pleasure of saving you. Unfortunately, the cupidity of these officers prevented this sweet satisfaction from poor Louise; then I appeared. I had recovered yesterday some sums that were due to me, and I have only made an advance to your benefactress in paying this unhappy debt. But your misfortunes have been so great, you have been so honest, so worthy, that the interest that is felt for you will not stop here. I can, in the name of your angel benefactress, promise you a peaceful, happy future, for you and yours." "Can it be possible? But, at least, her name, monsieur, her name? this angel from heaven, this angel benefactress, as you call her?" "Yes, she is an angel; and you have great reason to say that both high and low have their troubles." "Is this lady unhappy?" "Who has not their sorrows? But I have no reason to conceal her name; she is called—"

Thinking that Madame Pipelet was not ignorant that Madame d'Harville had come into the house to ask for the Commandant, Rodolphe, fearing the indiscreet twattle of the portiere, said, after a moment's reflection, "I will tell you the name of this lady, on one condition." "Oh! speak, monsieur!" "It is, that you repeat it to no one: you understand? to no one." "Oh! I swear to you. But may I not at least thank her, this Providence of the unfortunate?"

"I will ask Madame d'Harville; I do not doubt but that she'll consent."

"This lady is called—" "Madame la Marquis d'Harville."

"Oh! I shall never forget that name. She shall be my saint—my adoration. When I think that, thanks to her, my wife, my children are saved—saved! not all—not all—my poor little Adèle, we shall never see her again! Alas! mon Dieu! we must acknowledge that we must soon have lost her, that she was condemned." And the artisan dried his tears. "As to the last duties to render to this little one, if you will believe me, this is what you must do. I do not occupy my room; it is large and airy; there is already one bed there; what is necessary shall be brought there for you and your family; you must move there; the body of your child can remain in the garret, where it will be this night, guarded and watched by a priest. I will go and beg Monsieur Pipelet to attend to these sad details."

"But, monsieur, to deprive you of your room! too much trouble. Now that we are quiet, and I have no longer any fear of a prison, our poor garret will appear like a palace; above all, if my Louise remains with us." "Your Louise shall leave you no more. You said it would be your luxury to have her always with you. This shall be better—it shall be your recompense."

"Mon Dieu! monsieur, is this possible? it seems like a dream. I have never been religious, but such an event—help so providential—it must make one believe!" "Believe always: what is it that you risk?" "It is true," answered Morel, naively; "what do we risk?" "If the grief of a parent can admit of a compensation, I would say to you, that one of your daughters is taken away, but the other is returned to you." "It is true, monsieur; we have our Louise now." "You accept my room, is it not so? otherwise, how arrange for this sad watching of the dead? Think, then, of your wife, whose head is so weak—to leave under her eyes for twenty-four hours so touching a spectacle."

"You think of everything—everything! How kind you are, monsieur!"

"It is your angel benefactress you must thank; her goodness inspires me. I say to you what she would say—she will approve, I am sure. Thus you accept, it is agreed upon. Now tell me—this Jacques Ferrand?" A dark shade passed over the face of Morel.

"This Jacques Ferrand," said Rodolphe, "is the same Jacques Ferrand who lives in the Rue du Sentier?"

"Yes, monsieur; do you know him?" Then, assailed anew by his fears on the subject of Louise, he cried, "Since you heard what I said just now, monsieur, say—say, have I any right to expect anything from this man? and who knows if my child—my Louise—"

He could not finish, and concealed his face in his hands.

Rodolphe understood his fears. "The conduct of this notary," said he, "ought to warn you; he no doubt has caused you to be arrested to revenge himself on your daughter; besides, I have reason to believe him a very dishonest man. If it is so," said he after a moment's pause, "let us count on Providence to punish him."

"He is very rich, and a great hypocrite, monsieur!"

"You were very poor and very desperate! did Providence fail you?" "Oh! no, monsieur—grand Dieu! do not think I say this from ingratitude." "A guardian angel is come to you—an inexorable avenger awaits, perhaps, the notary—if he is culpable." At this moment Rigolette came out of the garret wiping her eyes. Rodolphe said to the young girl, "Is it not so, my neighbour, that M. Morel would do well to occupy my room with his family while he is waiting for his benefactor, of whom I am the agent, to procure suitable lodgings?"

Rigolette looked at Rodolphe with astonishment.

"How, monsieur—you be so generous?"

"Yes, but on one condition—which depends on you, my neighbour.

"Oh! all that depends upon me—" "I have some very pressing accounts to regulate for my employer; they will be sent for shortly. My papers are below. If, as a neighbour, you will allow me to occupy myself with this work in your room, on a corner of your table, while you shall go on with yours, I will not incommode you; and the Morel family can, right away, with the aid of Monsieur and Madame Pipelet, establish themselves in my quarters." "Oh! if that's all, monsieur, most willingly; neighbours should assist each other. You set the example by what you do for this good M. Morel. At your service, monsieur." "Call me neighbour; otherwise I shan't like it; and I dare not accept," said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Never mind that. I certainly can call you neighbour, since you are one." "Papa, mamma asks for you; come, come," said one of the little boys, coming out from the garret.

"Go, my dear Monsieur Morel; when all is ready below, you shall be informed." The ar-

tisan entered precipitately into his garret. "Now neighbour," said Rodolphe to Rigolette, "you must do me another service." "With all my heart, if it is possible, my neighbour." "You are, I am sure, an excellent little housekeeper; I want to buy at once that which is necessary, so that the Morel family shall be suitably clothed, lodged, and settled in my room, where there is only my bachelor's furniture, which was brought in yesterday. How shall we manage to procure at once all that we need for the Morels?" Rigolette reflected for a moment, and answered, "Before two o'clock you shall have this: good clothes ready made, warm and clean; good white linen for all the family; two small beds for the children; one for the grandmother; in fine, everything that is wanted. But, 'par exemple,' that will cost much, much money."

"And how much?" "Oh! at least—at least five or six hundred francs." "For the whole?" "Alas! yes. You see it is a good deal of money," said Rigolette, opening her large eyes, and shaking her head. "And we can have this?" "Before two o'clock!" "But you are a fairy, then, my neighbour?" "Mon Dieu! no; it is very plain. The Temple is only two steps from here, and you will find everything there you need." "The Temple?" "Yes, the Temple." "What is that?" "You don't know the Temple, neighbour?" "No, my neighbour." "Yet it is there that folks like you and me fix themselves off, when they are economical. It is much cheaper than elsewhere, and quite as good." "Really?" "I guess so; look here, I suppose—how much have you paid for your overcoat?" "I can't tell you exactly."

"How! neighbour, you don't know how much your coat cost?" "I acknowledge to you in confidence, my neighbour," said Rodolphe, smiling, "that I owe for it. Then, you can comprehend why I do not know." "Ah! my neighbour, my neighbour, I am afraid you do not keep your affairs in order!"

"Alas! no, my neighbour." "You must correct this, if you wish that we should be friends, and I see already we shall be so; you seem so good! You shall see that you will not be sorry that you have me for a neighbour. You shall help me—I will assist you—we are neighbours; it is on that account. I will take good care of your linen; you will help me to wax the floor of my chamber. I rise early; I will awaken you, so that you shall not be late to your shop; I will knock against the wainscot until you say to me, 'Good-morning, neighbour!'" "It is agreed: you shall awaken me; you shall have charge of my linen; and I will wax your chamber, and you will keep things in order?" "Certainly. And when you want to buy anything, you will go to the Temple; for here is an example: your coat cost you eighty francs, I suppose; well, you could have had it in the Temple for 30 francs." "But this is wonderful! Thus you think that, with five or six hundred francs, there poor Morel—" "Would be furnished with everything, and very well, and for a long time?" "My neighbour, an idea!" "Let us have the idea." "You are a judge of housekeeping articles?" "Why, yes—a little," said Rigolette, with a slight shade of vanity. "Take my arm, and let us go to the Temple, and buy what we want for these poor people. Are you agreed?" "Oh! what happiness! poor people! But the money?" "I have some." "Five hundred francs?"

"The benefactor of the Morels has given me a 'carte blanche;' he will spare nothing, but that they shall be comfortable. If there is even a place where we can get better things than at the Temple—" "You can find nothing better nowhere; besides, there is everything to be had, and ready made; little dresses for the children, and dresses for their mother." "Come, then, to the Temple, my neighbour." "Ah! mon Dieu! but—"

"What then?" "Nothing—it is that—do you see—my time—it is all *I* possess. I am already a little behindhand, in coming now and then to nurse the poor Madame Morel; and, you conceive, one hour here, and one hour there, that makes little by little a day: it is thirty sous; and when one makes nothing for one day, one must live for all that. But, bah! never mind; I'll make up for it at night; and then, do you see, parties of pleasure are very rare, and I'll make one of this! It will appear to me that I am rich, rich, rich, and that it is with my own money that I buy all these good things for the Morels. Well, come; give me time to put on my bonnet and shawl, and I am yours, neighbour." "If you have only these to put on, my neighbour, will you allow me to bring my papers in your room in the mean while?" "Willingly; then you can see my room," said Rigolette, proudly; "for my housekeeping is already done, which proves to you I am an early riser, and that, if you are a sleeper and lazy, so much the worse for you; I shall be a bad neighbour for you." And, light as a bird, Rigolette descended the staircase, followed by Rodolphe, who went into his own room to brush off the dust of the store-room of M. Pipelet. We will say directly why Rodolphe was not yet informed of the fate of poor Fleur de Marie, who had been carried off the previous evening from the Bouqueval Farm. We will also recall to the recollection of the reader, that Mlle. Rigolette alone knowing the new address of François Germain, the son of Madame Georges, Rodolphe had great interest to discover this important secret. The walk to the Temple, which he had proposed to the grisette, would make her acquainted and more confiding, and drive from his mind the gloomy thoughts that the death of the little girl had awakened in him.

The child which Rodolphe regretted so bitterly was about this age. It was, in effect, just at this age that Fleur de Marie had been delivered to La Chouette by the housekeeper of the notary, Jacques Ferrand. We will tell you by-and-by for what purpose, and under what circumstances.

Rodolphe, laden, to keep up appearances, with a formidable roll of papers, entered the chamber of Rigolette.

CHAPTER XI.

RIGOLETTE.

Rigolette was about the same age as the Goualeuse, her ancient friend of the prison. There was between the two young girls the same difference as between a smile and a tear; between joyous thoughtlessness and melancholy musings; between the most careless forethought and a gloomy, incessant apprehension of the future; between a delicate, exquisite, lofty, poetical nature, painfully sensitive, incurably wounded by remorse, and a gay, lively, happy, active, unreflecting nature, although kind and obliging.

For, far from being egotistical, Rigolette had no sorrows but those of others; she sympathized with all her powers—devoted herself, body and soul, to those who suffered—but thought no more about it when her back was turned, as is commonly said. Often she ceased from laughing to weep sincerely, and then she ceased from weeping to laugh again. A true child of Paris—preferred noise to solitude, movement to repose, the harsh and resounding harmony of the orchestra at the balls of the Chartreuse or of the Colysée to the soft murmur of the winds, the waters, and the foliage—the deafening noise of the streets of Paris to the solitude of the country—the glare of fireworks, the glitter of a ball, the noise of rockets, to the serenity of a fine night, with stars, and darkness, and silence. Alas! yes; the good girl frankly preferred the black mud of the streets of the capital to the verdure of the flowery meadows—its dirty or scorching pavements to fresh and velvet moss of the wood-paths perfumed with violets—the suffocating dust of the barriers or the Boulevards to the waving of golden corn, enamelled with the scarlet flowers of the wild poppy and azure of the blue-bells. Rigolette only left her room on Sundays—and each morning, to lay in her provision of chickweed, bread, milk, and hemp-seed, for herself and her two birds, as Madame Pipelet said; but she lived in Paris for Paris. She had been in despair to have lived elsewhere than in the capital.

Another anomaly: notwithstanding this taste for Parisian pleasures; notwithstanding the liberty, or, rather, the state of abandonment in which she found herself, being alone in the world; notwithstanding the rigid economy which she was obliged to use in her smallest expenses in order to live on thirty sous a day; notwithstanding the most "piquante," the most mischievous, the most adorable little face in the world, never did Rigolette choose a sweetheart (we will not say lover; the future will prove whether we must consider the conversation of Madame Pipelet, on the subject of the neighbours of Madame Rigolette, as calumnies or indiscretions). The grisette, let us say, only chose her sweethearts in her own class; that is to say, only chose her neighbours. * * * *

Some words concerning the figure of the grisette, and we will introduce Rodolphe into the chamber of his neighbour.

Rigolette was hardly eighteen, of a middling size, perhaps rather small, but so gracefully shaped, so finely modelled, so voluptuously turned, that her size responded well to her bearing, at once bold and modest; one inch more in height would have caused her to lose much of the gracious "ensemble;" the movement of her small feet, always irreproachably "chaussés" in gaiter boots of black cloth, with rather thick soles, recalled to mind the coquettish light and discreet step of a quail or a "bergeronette." She did not appear to walk, she merely touched the pavement; she slid rapidly on its surface. This walk, peculiar to grisettes, ought to be attributed, without doubt, to three causes: To their desire to be thought handsome; to their fear of an admiration "traduite" by a pantomime too expressive; to the desire that they always have to lose as little time as possible in their peregrinations.

Rodolphe had as yet only seen Rigolette in the sombre light of the garret; he was then dazzled with the extraordinary bloom of the young girl when he entered gently into a chamber lighted by two large windows. He remained for a moment immovable, struck with the beautiful picture which he had before his eyes.

Standing before a glass placed over the chimney-piece, Rigolette was tying under her chin the ribands of a little bonnet of embroidered "tulle," trimmed with a small bunch of cherry-coloured favours; this bonnet, placed very high behind, discovered two large and thick bands of shining hair, black as jet, falling very low on the forehead; her fine eyebrows seemed traced with ink, and overshadowed two large black eyes, sparkling and wicked; her full, plump cheeks were like velvet of the freshest carnation, fresh to the sight, fresh to the touch, like a rosy peach impregnated with the cold dew of the morning.

Her little turned-up nose, saucy and cunning, had made the fortune of a Lisette or a Marton; her mouth, slightly large, with lips of rose well moistened, and little, white, pearly teeth, was smiling and provoking; of three charming dimples, which gave a mutinous grace to her face, two buried themselves in her cheeks, the other in her chin, not far from a beauty spot, a little black patch, most killingly placed near the corner of her mouth. Between an embroidered collar well thrown back, and the bottom of the little bonnet, was seen the commencement of a forest of fine hair, so perfectly tied and drawn up, that each hair was as perfectly displayed as if it had been painted on the ivory of this charming neck. A dress of blue merino, with tight sleeves, made by Rigolette herself, set forth a figure so small and slender, that the young girl never wore a corset, from economy. The belt of a little apron of green levantine clasped her waist, which could have been spanned by the ten fingers. Confiding in the solitude, in which she believed herself to be, for Rodolphe yet remained at the door, motionless and unperceived, Rigolette, after having smoothed the bands of her hair with her little fairy hand, white and perfectly soignée, put her small foot on a chair and bent over to tighten the lacings of her boot. This familiar operation could not be accomplished without exposing to the indiscreet eyes of Rodolphe a cotton stocking white as snow, and the half of a perfectly well-turned leg. After the detailed recital which we have made of her toilet, one can guess that the grisette had chosen her prettiest robe and apron, to do honour to her neighbour in their visit to the Temple.

She found the pretended clerk very much to her liking; his face, at once benevolent, proud, and bold, pleased her much; besides, he showed himself so kind towards the Morels, generously granting them his chamber, that, thanks to this proof of goodness, and perhaps also thanks to his handsome features, Rodolphe had, without suspecting it, made a giant step in the confidence of the seamstress. She, from her practical ideas on the forced intimacy and reciprocral obligations which were imposed on neighbours, very frankly esteemed herself happy that a neighbour such as Rodolphe had succeeded the travelling clerk, Cabrion, and François Germain; for she began to find that the other chamber had remained too long vacant, and, above all, she feared it would not be occupied in a suitable manner. Rodolphe profited by his situation to cast a curious "coup d'œil" around the apartment, which he found even above the praises that Madame Pipelet had granted as to

the excessive neatness of the housekeeping of Rigolette. A gray paper, with bunches of green flowers, covered the walls; the floor, coloured red, shone like a mirror. A white china stove was placed on the hearth, where was arranged a small provision of wood, cut so short, so thin, that, without hyperbole, one could compare each piece to an enormous match. On the stone mantelpiece, painted to imitate marble, could be seen two common flower-pots, coloured a fine emerald green, and in spring always filled with common, but fragrant flowers; a little frame of boxwood, enclosing a silver watch, supplied the place of a clock; on one side shone a copper candlestick, sparkling like gold, containing the end of a wax candle; on the other shone, not less splendidly, one of those lamps formed of a cylinder and a reflector of copper, mounted on a stand of steel and leaden foot. A good-sized square glass, with a frame of black wood, was placed over the chimney-piece. Curtains of gray and green chintz, edged with woollen binding, manufactured entirely by Rigolette, and also placed by her on the black iron rods, were suspended from the windows and bed, which last was covered with a counterpane of the same material; two closets, with glass doors painted white, on each side of the alcove, enclosed without doubt the housekeeping articles, the portable furnace, the brooms, &c., &c., for none of these objects spoiled the coquettish appearance of this chamber.

A "commode" of fine, raised walnut wood, well polished, four chairs of the same material, a large table for ironing and for work, covered with a green woollen cloth, a cane-bottomed arm-chair, with a tabouret to match, the ordinary seat of the grisette, such was this modest "mobilier." Finally, in one of the windows stood a cage with two birds, the faithful messmates of Rigolette.

With one of these fertile ideas which come only to the poor, this cage was placed in the middle of a large wooden box, about one foot in depth, standing on a table; this box, which Rigolette called her birds' garden, was filled with earth, covered with moss during the winter; in the spring was sown with grass and little flowers.

Rodolphe contemplated this apartment with interest and with curiosity; he comprehended perfectly the joyous air of this young girl. He imagined to himself this solitude enlivened by the warbling of the birds and the songs of Rigolette; during the summer, doubtless, she worked near the open window, half veiled by a verdant curtain of sweet pease, orange nasturtiums, blue and white morning-glories; in the winter at the corner of her little stove, at the soft light of her lamp. Then each Sunday she varied this laborious life with a day of innocent pleasures partaken with a neighbour as young, gay, thoughtless as herself. On Monday she resumed her labours, thinking on pleasures past and to come. * * * * * *

Rodolphe was musing on these things when, mechanically regarding the door, he saw an enormous lock; a lock which would have done honour to a prison. This made him reflect. It could have two applications, two distinct uses: to shut the door on her sweethearts; to shut them out! to shut them in. One of these uses would radically ruin the assertions of Madame Pipelet; the other would confirm it.

Rodolphe was thinking about these matters, when Rigolette, turning her head, perceived him, and, without changing her attitude, said to him, "Ah, neighbour, you were there, then?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE TWO NEIGHBOURS.

The boot being laced, the pretty leg disappeared under the ample folds of the blue dress, and Rigolette continued, "Ah! you were there, then, 'Monsieur le Sournois?'" "I was there, admiring in silence." "And what did you admire, my neighbour?" "This pretty little chamber, for you are lodged like a queen, my neighbour." "Marry! do you see, it is my luxury; if I never go out, at least I can please myself at home." "I cannot but admire it. What handsome curtains! and this commode—as handsome as mahogany! You must have spent a great deal of money here?"

"Don't speak of it! I had four hundred and twenty-five francs when I came out of prison—almost all is gone." "Came out of prison!—you!"

"Yes, it is quite a history. You think—is it not so—that I was not in prison for having done wrong?"

"Doubtless; but how was it?" "After the cholera, I found myself alone in the world. I was then about ten years old." "But, until that time, who took charge of you?" "Oh! very good people; but they are dead with the cholera." Here the large black eyes of Rigolette became moist. "The few things they possessed were sold to pay their debts, and I found myself alone, no one being willing to receive me. Not knowing what to do, I went to the guard-house, which was opposite our dwelling, and I said to the sentinel, 'Good soldier, my parents are dead; I do not know where to go. What must I do?' Thereupon the officer came; he sent me to a commissioner, who sent me to prison as a vagrant, and I came out at sixteen."

"But your parents?" "I do not know who my father was: I was six years old when I lost my mother, who had withdrawn me from the foundling-hospital, where she had been forced to send me at first. The good people of whom I have spoken lived in the same house; they had no children: seeing me an orphan, they took me with them." "And what was their trade—their condition?"

"'Papa Crétu,' I called him thus, was a house painter, and his wife embroidered."

"They were, at least, in easy circumstances?"

"Like every household, there were ups and downs: one day abundance, if work was plenty; to-morrow, want, if there was none; but that did not hinder them from being always gay and always content." (At this "souvenir" the face of Rigolette became once more smiling.) "There was not in the quarter such a household: always lively, always singing; with all that, good as they could be: what they had for themselves they had for others. Madame Crétu was a jovial woman of thirty, neat as a penny, lively as an eel, gay as a lark. Her husband was another Roger Bontemps: he had a large nose, a large mouth, always a paper cap on his head, and such a funny face—so funny that you could not

look at him without laughing. When he returned to the house from his work, he did nothing but sing, make faces, and play like a child; he made me dance, jump on his knees: he played with me as if I had been of his age, and his wife spoiled me. Oh! it was a blessing. Both of them required but one thing of me, which was, to be always in good humour; and I was not wanting in that. Dieu merci! Thus they baptized me Rigolette, from 'rigoler,' to make merry, and the name remains to me. As to gayety, they set me the example. Never have I seen them sad. If they made any reproaches, it was the wife who said to the husband, 'Stop, Crétu, it is foolish; you make me laugh too much!' or it was he who said to his wife, 'Stop; hold your tongue, Romanette; hold your tongue, you make me sick; you are too funny!' As for me, I laughed to see them laugh. In this manner was I brought up; and as they formed my character, I hope I have profited by it."

"Wonderfully, my neighbour! Thus they never disputed among themselves?"

"Never, never! Sunday, Monday, sometimes Tuesday, they played, as they said, *a frolic*, and they always took me with them. Papa Crétu was a good workman: when he wished to work, he earned as much as he wanted; his wife also. As soon as they had enough for Sunday and Monday, and to live along so so, they were content."

"After that, if there was no work?"

"They were just as well satisfied. I recollect that, when we had only bread and water, Papa Crétu took from his library—"

"He had a library?"

"He called a little closet so, where he kept a collection of songs. He bought all the new ones, and learned them all. When there was no bread in the house, he took from his library an old cookery-book, and said to us, 'Come, let us see what we shall eat to-day; this?—that?' And he would read out the names of a thousand good things. Each one would choose a dish. Papa Crétu took an empty saucepan, and, with the funniest capers in the world, he would pretend to put into it everything that was necessary to make a good ragoût; and he would make believe to turn it all out into an empty plate, which he placed on the table in such a manner as to make us hold our sides with laughter; then he would take his book again, and, while he read to us the receipt for a good fricassée which we had chosen, and which made the water come in our mouths, we ate our bread, shouting with laughter, like fools."

"And had this joyous household any debts?"

"Never! As long as there was money we feasted; when there was none we dined in *water-colours*, as Papa Crétu said, borrowing the expression from his trade."

"And the future, did they not think of that?"

"Ah! yes. The future for us was the Sundays and Mondays. In summer we passed them at the 'barrières;' in winter, in the suburbs.

* * * * * * * *

"But, now, see," said Rigolette, "how I talk. It is that, when I once get on the subject of these kind people, I don't know when to stop. Here, neighbour, be kind enough to take my shawl from the bed, and fasten it under my collar with this large pin, and we will descend, for we will not be in time to choose at the Temple what you wish to buy for these poor Morels."

Rodolphe hurried to obey the orders of Rigolette. He took from the bed a large plaid shawl, brown and red, and carefully placed it on the charming shoulders of Rigolette.

"Now, neighbour, raise my collar a little; fasten the dress and shawl together; stick the pin in well; but, above all, be careful not to prick me."

To execute these new commands, it was necessary that Rodolphe should almost touch this ivory neck. The day was dark; he drew very near—doubtless too near, for the grisette uttered a little startled cry. We cannot tell the cause of this cry. Was it the point of the pin? Was it the mouth of Rodolphe which had touched this white and polished neck? However this may be, Rigolette turned quickly, and cried in a manner half laughing, half sad, which made Rodolphe almost regret the liberty he had taken.

"My neighbour, I shall never ask you again to fasten my shawl."

"Pardon, my neighbour; I am so unhandy."

"On the contrary, monsieur—and it is this of which I complain. Come—your arm—but be correct, or we will quarrel!"

"True, my neighbour, it was not my fault: your pretty neck was so white, that I had a kind of dizziness. In spite of myself my head fell, and—"

"Well, well, for the future I shall take care to give you no cause for this dizziness," said Rigolette, shaking her finger at him. Then she shut her door. "Here, my neighbour, take my key—it is too large—it will make a hole in my pocket; it is a real little pistol." And then she laughed.

Rodolphe took charge of an enormous key, which would have cut a glorious figure on one of those allegorical plates which the vanquished used humbly to offer to the conquerors of a city. Although Rodolphe believed that time had changed his appearance, yet, when he passed the door of the quack, he raised the collar of his paletot.

"Neighbour, do not forget to inform M. Pipelet that things will be brought here which must be sent to your chamber," said Rigolette.

"You are right, my neighbour; we will stop for a moment in the lodge of the porter."

M. Pipelet, his everlasting "chapeau tromblon" on his head, was, as usual, dressed in his green coat, and gravely seated before a table covered with pieces of leather and the wrecks of all sorts of shoes. He was then busy in new-soleing a boot, in the serious and conscientious manner which he always preserved. Anastasia was absent from the lodge.

"Well, Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette to him, "I hope I have some news. Thanks to my neighbour, the poor Morels are out of trouble. When one thinks that they were going to take the poor man to prison! Oh! the bailiffs are the real *no-hearts!*"

"And *no-manners* also, mademoiselle," added M. Pipelet, in an angry tone, gesticulating with the boot, into which he had introduced his left arm and hand. "No; I do not fear to repeat it, in the face of heaven and man, they are great *no-manners!* They profited by the darkness of the staircase to use their indecent gestures on the figure of my wife. On hearing her cries of offended modesty, in spite of myself I gave up to the vivacity of my character. I do not conceal it: my first movement was to remain immovable, and to become purple with shame, in thinking of the odious attacks of which Anastasia was

the victim, which her wandering reason proved, since, in her delirium, she threw her saucepan from the top to the bottom of the staircase. At this moment the frightful debauchees passed before my lodge." "You pursued them, I hope, Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette, preserving her countenance with great difficulty. "I thought of it," answered M. Pipelet, with a profound sigh. "When I reflected that I must confront their regards—perhaps even their licentious conversation—it revolted me—quite made me beside myself. I am no more cruel than any other; but when these brazen-faces passed before the lodge my blood boiled, and I could not prevent myself placing my hand quickly before my eyes, to hide them from the sight of these luxurious malefactors! But this does not astonish me; something unfortunate must happen to-day: I dreamed of this monster of a Cabrion!" Rigolette smiled, and the noise of the sighs of M. Pipelet was confounded with the blows of the hammer which he applied to the sole of the old boot. From the remarks of Alfred, it was evident that Anastasia had most outrageously bragged, and misrepresented the affair. "My neighbour," whispered Rigolette to Rodolphe, "let this poor M. Pipelet think his wife has been cajoled: secretly it flatters him." "You have wisely taken the wisest part, my dear M. Pipelet," said Rodolphe, "that of contempt. Besides, the virtue of Madame Pipelet is above all attempts."

"Her virtue, monsieur! her virtue!" and Alfred began to gesticulate again with his boot. "I'd place my head on the scaffold! The glory of the great Napoleon, and the virtue of Anastasia, I can answer for as for my own honour, monsieur." "And you are right, Monsieur Pipelet. But forget these wretches, and render me a service, I pray you." "Men are created to assist one another," answered M. Pipelet, in a sententious and melancholy manner; "so much the more reasonable, when so kind a lodger as monsieur is in question." "I wish to have some things I shall send here directly, carried to my room. They are for the Morels."

"I will attend to it, monsieur."

"And then," said Rodolphe, sadly, "I wish to send for a priest, to watch and pray over the little girl they have lost, to go and announce her death, and at the same time prepare for her funeral. Here is the money; arrange everything; the benefactor of the Morels wishes everything done well." "Depend upon me, monsieur; Anastasia is gone to buy our dinner; as soon as she returns, I will make her take charge of the lodge, and I will attend to your commissions." At this moment a man, so completely wrapped up in his cloak that his eyes could scarcely be seen, asked, without coming too near the lodge, if Madame Burette was at home.

"Do you come from Saint Denis?" asked M. Pipelet, with a knowing look. "Yes, in an hour and a quarter." "Just so; then you may go up." The man in the cloak ran rapidly up stairs. "What does this mean?" asked Rodolphe. "Some carryings on at the Mère Burette's, it is going and coming continually. She told me this morning: 'You will ask every one who inquires for me, Do you come from Saint Denis? those who answer, Yes, in an hour and a quarter, you will let them come up; but no others.'"

"It is a real countersign!" said Rodolphe, quite interested.

"Exactly, monsieur; thus I said to myself, there's something going on at Mère Burette's, without reckoning that Tortillard, a little cripple, who lives with M. César Brademanté, came in to-night at two o'clock with an old woman, who is called La Chouette. She remained until four o'clock with the Mère Burette, while a carriage waited at the door. Where did this one-eyed woman come from? What did she here at that hour? Such are the two questions which I asked myself, without being able to reply," added M. Pipelet, gravely. "And this woman, that you called La Chouette, went away at four o'clock in a hack?" asked Rodolphe. "Yes, monsieur; she will no doubt return, for the Mère Burette said the countersign did not regard the Borgnesse." Rodolphe thought, not without reason, that some new scheme of villany was in agitation; but, alas! he was far from thinking how much he was interested in it. "It is then agreed, my dear Monsieur Pipelet; do not forget all I have told you, and also beg your wife to send them a good repast from the nearest restaurateurs'." "Be quite tranquil," said M. Pipelet; "as soon as my wife returns, I will go to the mayor's, to the church, and to the restaurateurs'. To the church for the dead, to the restaurateurs' for the living," added, philosophically and poetically, M. Pipelet. "It is just as good as done, monsieur; as good as done." At the entrance of the allée, Rodolphe and Rigolette met face to face Anastasia, who, returning from market, carried a heavy basket of provision. "Good!" cried the portière, looking at the neighbours with a significant air; "already arm in arm; that's right! chaud! chaud! Ah! now, youth will be youth! pretty girl must have a fine beau; vive l'amour! and go along with you!" and the old woman disappeared, crying, "Alfred! don't groan, old darling, here is your Stasia, who brings you some dainties, old sweet tooth!"

Rodolphe, offering his arm to Rigolette, left with her the house of the Rue du Temple

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BUDGET OF RIGOLETTE.

To the snow of the night had succeeded a very cold wind; the pavement, ordinarily muddy, was almost dry. Rigolette and Rodolphe directed their steps towards the immense and singular bazar called the Temple. The young girl leaned without any ceremony on the arm of her cavalier, as little embarrassed as if they had been for a long time acquainted. "Ain't she droll, this Madame Pipelet, with her remarks?" said the grisette to Rodolphe. "Ma foi, my neighbour, I think she is right." "In what, my neighbour?" "She said, 'Youth must pass, vive l'amour, and go along then!'" "Well!" "It is just my manner of thinking." "How?" "I wish to pass my youth with you; to be able to cry vive l'amour, and go where you would conduct me." "I think so; you are not difficult!" "Where would be the harm? we are neighbours." "If we were not, I should not go out with you in this manner." "You tell me, then, to hope?" "To hope what?" "That you will love me?" "I love you already." "Really?" "It is quite simple; you are good, you are gay; although poor yourself, you do what you can for these poor Morels, in interesting rich people in their misfortunes; you have a

face I like, a fine figure. There, I hope you have reasons enough for me to love you." Then stopping to laugh heartily, Rigolette cried; "Do look at that fat woman, with her old fur shoes; one would say she was dragged along by two cats without tails," and then another laugh. "I prefer to look at you, my neighbour; I am so happy to think that you love me already."

"I say this to you, because it is so. If you did not please me, I would tell you all the same. I have no reproaches to make myself for ever having deceived any one, nor of having been a coquette; when any one pleases me, I tell them so at once." Then again interrupting herself to stop before a shop, the grisette cried, "Oh! do look at the pretty clock and the two fine vases! I had already three francs ten sous in my money-box to buy such! In five or six years' economy I should have had enough." "Economy, my neighbour, and you earn—" "At least thirty sous a day, sometimes forty; but I only reckon on thirty; it is more prudent, and I regulate my expenses accordingly," said Rigolette, with an air as important as if it concerned the financial balance of a formidable budget. "But with thirty sous a day, how can you live?" "The account is not long: shall I make it for you, my neighbour? you have a prodigal manner, it shall serve you for an example." "Let us see, my neighbour."

"My thirty sous a day make forty-five francs a month, ain't it so?" "Yes." "Twelve francs for my rent, and twenty-three for my living." "Twenty-three francs for your living?" "Mon Dieu! yes, quite as much! Confess that, for a lark like me, it is enormous! 'par exemple,' I refuse myself nothing." "Ah! you little glutton." "Yes, but I include the food for my birds." "It is certain that if you all three live on this sum, it is less exorbitant. But let me have the daily expenses—always for my instruction." "Listen—well, one pound of bread is four sous; two sous for milk, that makes six; four sous for vegetables in winter, or fruits and salad in summer; I adore salad, because it is so easily dressed, and does not soil the hands; well, now you have ten sous; three sous for butter, or oil and vinegar for seasoning, thirteen; fine, clear water, oh! that is my luxury that makes my fifteen sous, if you please; add to this each week two or three sous of chickweed and hemp to regale my birds, who ordinarily eat crumbs of bread and some milk, it is twenty-two or twenty-three francs a month, neither more nor less."

"And you never eat meat?" "Ah, yes, meat; that costs from ten to twelve sous a pound; can one even think of it? and, besides, that smells of the kitchen; while milk, and vegetables, and fruit are always ready. Hold! a dish that I adore, which is not embarrassing, and which I make to perfection." "Let us have the dish."

"I put five yellow potatoes in the oven of my stove; when they are baked, I mash them with a little butter and milk—a pinch of salt. It is a feast for the gods! If you are a good boy, I'll make some for you to taste."

"Arranged by your pretty hands, it must be excellent. But come, your account, my neighbour! We have already twenty-three francs for board, twelve francs for lodging; that makes thirty-five per month."

"To reach the forty-five or fifty that I earn, there remains ten to fifteen francs for my wood during winter, my oil, and washing; that is to say, for my soap; for, excepting my sheets, I do my own washing. It is, again, my luxury—a washerwoman would cost the eyes out of my head—while I can iron pretty well, and thus get along. During the five months of winter I burn a load and a half of wood; and I spend four or five sous for oil each day for my lamp; that makes about eighty francs a year for my wood and light."

"So that, at the most, you have about one hundred francs left."

"Yes; and there it is I economize my three francs ten sous."

"But your dresses, your shoes, this pretty bonnet?" "My bonnets I only put on when I go out; and that does not ruin me, for I turn them myself; as to my robes, my boots—isn't the Temple close at hand?"

"Ah! yes—this fortunate temple. Well! you find there—"

"Excellent, and very pretty dresses. You must know that the great ladies are accustomed to give their old dresses to their 'femmes des chambre.' When I say old, that is to say, they have worn them for a month or two in the carriage; and the femmes des chambres go and sell them in the Temple, almost for nothing. Thus, you see, I have a robe of very fine merino, for which I paid fifteen francs; it has cost, no doubt, sixty; it had hardly been worn; I altered it to my figure, and I hope it does me honour!" "It is you who does it honour, my neighbour. But, with the help of the Temple, I begin to see how you manage."

"Is it not so? You can get charming dresses for summer at five or six francs; boots, like these I wear, for two or three. Now, look here! would you not say they were made for me?" said Rigolette, stopping to show the end of her charming foot. "The foot is charming, it is true, but it must be difficult for you to fit it; but I suppose you'll tell me they have children's shoes, also, at the Temple."

"You are a flatterer, my neighbour; but acknowledge that a little girl, all alone, can live on thirty sous a day! I must say, however, that the four hundred and fifty francs that I brought from prison have nicely helped me to establish myself. When I was once seen, all furnished, it inspired confidence, and they gave me work to take home; but I had to wait a long time before I got it; happily, I had reserved enough to live three months without reckoning on work." "With your little thoughtless manner, do you know you have much method and regularity, my neighbour?" "Marry! when one is alone in the world, and wishes to be under obligations to no one, it is quite necessary to build and arrange his own nest, as they say." "And your nest is charming! is it not?" "For I refuse myself nothing; I have even an apartment above my station; I have birds; in summer, always at least two pots of flowers on my chimney, without reckoning the boxes in my window, and those of my cage; and yet, as I tell you, I had already three francs and a half in my money-box; so that, some day, I might be able to buy an ornament for my chimney-piece." "And what has become of these savings?" "Mon Dieu! since I have seen these poor Morels so unfortunate! so unfortunate, I said! There is no good sense in having three foolish pieces of twenty sous in a money-box, when honest folks are dying with hunger alongside of you! so I lent my three francs to the Morels. When I say lent,

it was not to humiliate them, for I would have given it willingly." "You did well, my neighbour, for, now they are once more comfortable, they will reimburse you." "That is true; and I will not refuse it; it will always be the commencement—to buy the ornaments—it is my dream!" "And then you ought to think a little about the future." "The future?" "If you should fall sick, for instance." "I? sick?" and again she burst into a merry laugh; a laugh so loud, that a fat man who walked before her, carrying a dog under his arm, turned round, supposing it was at him. Rigolette, without ceasing to laugh, made him a half courtesy, accompanied by such a droll look, that Rodolphe could not prevent himself from partaking of the hilarity of his companion. The man continued on his way, grumbling. "Are you crazy? come, my neighbour!" said Rodolphe, assuming the serious. "It is your fault!"

"My fault?" "Yes; you say such funny things." "Because I tell you that you may fall sick?" "Sick! I?" and another laugh. "Why not?" "Do I look like it?"

"Never have I seen a more rosy, healthful face."

"Well, then, why do you wish that I should fall sick? How, at eighteen, with the life I lead, can that be possible? I get up at five o'clock, summer as well as winter; I go to bed at ten or eleven; I eat as much as I want, which is not much, it is true; I suffer none from the cold; I work all day; I sing like a lark; I sleep like a marmot; I have a free, joyous, and contented heart; I am sure never to want work, so now how would you have me fall sick? It would be too funny." And again a laugh.

Rodolphe, struck with this blind and happy confidence in the future, reproached himself with having run the risk of shaking it. He thought, with a kind of affright, that one month's sickness might destroy this peaceful and joyous life. This profound faith in her strength and her eighteen years, her only wealth, seemed to Rodolph holy, and to be respected. On the part of the young girl, it was not thoughtlessness, nor improvidence; it was an instinctive belief in Divine justice and commiseration, who could not abandon an industrious and good creature, a poor girl, whose only fault was to count on the youth and health which she had from God. In the springtime, when, with agile wing, the birds of heaven, singing and joyous, skim on the verdant meadows, or cut the air, rising to the blue and smiling skies, have they any care for the coming frosts of winter? "Then," said Rodolphe to the grisette, "you desire nothing?" "Nothing." "Absolutely nothing?" "No, that is to say, understand me, the ornament for my mantelpiece; and I will have it. I don't know when; but I have it in my head, and it shall be. I will sooner encroach on my nights." "And besides this ornament?" "Nothing, only since to-day." "How is that?" "Because, only the day before yesterday I desired a neighbour, who might please me—was to arrange with him as I have always done—good housekeeping—so as to render services to him, which he would render to me in return. That is already agreed upon, my neighbour; you will take care of my linen, and I will wash your floor, without reckoning that you are to awaken me early, by knocking against the wall." "And you think that's all?" "What else is there?" "Ah! well! you are not at the end. Must you not, on Sundays, take me to walk to the 'Barriéres,' or on the Boulevards? I have only this day for recreation." "That's it: in summer we will go to the country." "No, I detest the country; I like Paris alone. Yet, in the times past, I have made some excursions to Saint Germain with one of my prison companions, who was called La Goualeuse, because she was always singing; a very good little girl!" "What has become of her?" "I do not know; she spent her prison money without appearing to amuse herself much; she was always sad, but always amiable and charitable. When we went out together, I had no work; when I got some, I never stirred; I gave her my address; she has not been to see me; doubtless she is as busy as I am. I was to tell you, my neighbour, that I like Paris better than all. Thus, when you can, on Sundays, you will take me to dine 'a traiteurs,' sometimes to the play, otherwise, if you have no money, you will take me to see the shops in the 'passages;' it will amuse me almost as much. But don't you be afraid; in our little excursions I shall do you honour. You will see how genteel I am in my pretty blue Levantine dress, which I only wear on Sundays; it fits me like a glove; I have with this a little bonnet, trimmed with lace and orange ribands, which suits well with my black hair, boots of Turkish satin, which I had made for me, and a silk shawl, imitation Cachmere. Go along, my neighbour, every one will turn to see us pass. The men will say, 'But ain't she genteel, this little girl, upon my word!' and the women, on their side, 'Really he has a very distinguished air, this tall, slender young man; his little brown mustaches become him so well;' and I shall be of the same opinion as the ladies, for I adore mustaches. Unfortunately, M. Germain did not wear them on account of his office. M. Cabrion had them, but they were red, like his beard, and I don't like a red beard; and, besides, he was too much of a boy in the streets, and tormented M. Pipelet so. To be sure, M. Girandeau (my neighbour before M. Cabrion) had a very good appearance, but he squinted; at first this troubled me, for he always appeared to be looking at some one alongside of me, and, without thinking, I turned to look who;" and another laugh.

Rodolphe listened to this prattle with curiosity; he asked himself, for the third time, what he ought to think of the virtue of the grisette. Sometimes her freedom of speech and the recollections of the large lock, made him almost believe that she loved her neighbours as brothers—as companions, and that Madame Pipelet had calumniated her; then he thought it impossible that a young girl so situated could have escaped the blandishments of the three gentlemen who were her neighbours previously. Yet the frankness, the original familiarity of Rigolette caused new doubts. "You charm me, my neighbour, in thus disposing of my Sundays," answered Rodolphe, gayly; "be quite easy; we will have some famous parties."

"One moment, Mr. Spendthrift: I shall carry the purse, I forewarn you. In summer we can dine very well—very well! for three francs, at the Chartreuse or at the Hermitage Monmartre, a half dozen contré-dances or waltzes in the bargain, and a ride on the flying horses—I adore to get on the horses—that will just make your five francs, not a liard more. Do you waltz?" "Very well." "Ah, good! M. Cabrion always trod on my feet, and, besides, for fun, he threw torpedoes on the floor, so they will not have us

any more at the Chartreuse." And another laugh. "Don't be afraid, I will answer for my reserve on the score of torpedoes; but what shall we do in winter?" "In winter, as one has less hunger, we can dine very well for forty sous, and we shall have three francs left for the play, for I will not allow you to go over your five francs. It is quite enough indeed, but you would spend it alone either at a smoking room, or at billiards with worthless fellows who smell of the pipe horribly. Is it not better to spend them gayly with a little friend, a good child, ever laughing, who will find the time to save you some expense in hemming your cravats and taking care of your clothes?" "Why it is clear gain, my neighbour. Only if my friends should meet me with my pretty little friend under my arm?" "Well! they would say, he is not unfortunate, this devil of a Rodolphe!" "You know my name?" "When I heard the chamber was let, I asked to whom." "And my friends would say, he is very fortunate this Rodolphe! and they will envy me."

"So much the better!" "They will think me happy." "So much the better! so much the better!" "And if I am not as happy as they think I am?" "What is that to you? as long as they think so." "But your reputation?" Rigolette burst into a loud laugh. "The reputation of a grisette! does any one believe in such meteors?" answered she. "If I had father or mother, brother or sister, I would on their account take care what people said—I am all alone, it regards me only." "But I should be very unhappy." "For what?" "To pass for being happy, while, on the contrary, I shall love you, just like you dined at Papa Crétu's, in eating your dry bread while he read the cookery book."

"Bah! bah! you shall be so; I shall be to you so gentle, so grateful, so little troublesome that you shall say, 'After all, just as well to pass my Sundays with her as with a comrade. If you are not engaged on week evenings, and it does not tire you, you shall come and pass the evening with me; you shall have the benefit of my fire and my lamp; you shall read romances, which you must hire—just as well do that as lose your money at billiards; if not, if you are busy until late, or would rather go to a café, you shall say good-night to me on coming in, if I am still up. If I am in bed, the next morning I will say good-day to you through the walls to awaken you. M. Germain, my last neighbour, passed all his evenings in this manner with me, and he did not complain! He read to me all Walter Scott's works. That was amusing. Sometimes on Sunday, when the weather was bad, instead of going to the theatre, or going out at all, he went and bought something, we made a real little dinner in my room, and after that we read. That amused me almost as much as the play. It is to say to you that I am not difficult, and I do what one wishes. And, besides, you, who talk of being sick, if you ever should be—it is I who am a real little sister of charity! ask the Morels. Ah! you don't know your happiness, Monsieur Rodolphe—it is a real prize in the lottery to have me for a neighbour." "It is true, I have always had luck; but this M. Germain, where is he now?" "In Paris, I think." "You don't see him any more?" "Since he left the house, he has not returned." "But where does he live? what does he do?"

"Why all these questions, my neighbour?"

"Because I am jealous of him," said Rodolphe, smiling, "and that I wish—"

"Jealous!" and again Rigolette laughed. "There is no cause, go along. Poor fellow!"

When the hilarity of Rigolette was a little appeased, Rodolphe continued: "Seriously, my neighbour, I have the greatest interest in knowing where to meet M. Germain; you know where he lives, and, without boasting, you ought to believe me incapable of abusing the secret I ask you. I swear to you it is for his interest." "Seriously, my neighbour, I believe you could wish to do much good to M. Germain, but he has made me promise that I would not tell his address to any one; and since I don't tell it to you it is because it is impossible; that ought not to make you angry with me. If you had confided a secret to me, you would be pleased, is it not so, to see me act as I do?" "But, look here, my neighbour, once for all, do not speak any more about this; I have made a promise; I will keep it, and, whatever you may say, I shall make you the same answer." Notwithstanding her levity, her heedlessness, the young girl accented these last words so firmly, that Rodolphe comprehended, to his great regret, that he would not obtain from her what he wished to know. It was repugnant to him to employ cunning to surprise the confidence of Rigolette; he waited, and answered gayly,

"Let us speak no more about it, my neighbour Diable! you keep so well the secrets of others, that I am no longer astonished that you keep your own."

"Secrets—mine! I should like to have some; it must be very amusing."

"How! have you not a little secret concerning the heart?"

"A secret—of the heart?" "In fine, have you never loved?" said Rodolphe, regarding her fixedly to divine the truth.

"How! never loved? and M. Girandeau? and M. Cabrion? and M. Germain? and you then?" "Have you not loved them more than me, differently from me?" "Ma foi! no; less, perhaps, for it was necessary to become accustomed to the squint of M. Girandeau, to the red beard and jokes of M. Cabrion, to the sadness of M. Germain, for he was very sad, this poor young man. You, on the contrary, pleased me at once."

"Come, my neighbour, don't be angry; I am going to speak to you in a neighbourly manner."

"Go on, go on my character is well formed; and besides, you are so good, that you would not have the heart, I am sure of it, to say anything to me that would give me pain."

"No doubt." "But come, frankly, have you never had a lover?"

"Lover! ah, yes! do you think I have the time?"

"What has time to do with that?" "What has it to do? why, everything. In the first place, I should be jealous as a tiger; I should always have the heartache; well, do I earn money enough to be able to lose two or three hours a day to weep and moan? And if they deceive me, how many tears, how much sorrow—ah, well, that would be a fine business!"

"But all lovers are not unfaithful, do not make their mistresses weep." "That would be worse still; if he was so kind, could I live a moment away from him? and as he would be absent all day at his office, his shop, or his workroom, I should be like a poor soul in purgatory during his absence! I could imagine a thousand things. * * * It is all that I can do, quiet as I am now,

to get along by working twelve to fifteen hours a day. You see, then, if I lose three or four days in the week in this way, troubling and tormenting myself, how can I ever regain the time? impossible. No, I love my liberty too well."

"Your liberty?" "Yes, I could enter as first workwoman at the shop where I get my work. I should have four hundred francs, lodging and nourishment." "And you do not accept?"

"Certainly not. I should be under wages like the others; instead of that, no matter how poor it is, I am at least at home; I owe nothing. I have courage, health, strength, and gayety; a good neighbour like you; what do I want more?" "And you never think of marrying?"

"I marry! I can only marry one as poor as myself. Look at the poor Morels! see what it leads to; while that, when one has only to answer for one's self, one can always retire." "Then, you never build castles in Spain — dreams?" "Yes, I dream of my chimney ornaments. Except this, what do you wish that I should desire?" "But if a relation had left you a small fortune? twelve hundred francs income, I'll suppose—to you who live on five hundred?"

"Marry! that would be perhaps well, perhaps an evil." "An evil?" "I am happy as I am: I only know the life I lead; I do not know that which I should lead if I were rich. Look ye, my neighbour, when, after a good day's work, I go to rest at night, when my lamp is out, and by the light of the few coals which remain in my stove, I see my chamber so neat, my curtains, my commode, my chairs, my birds, my watch, my table laden with stuffs which have been confided to me, and I say to myself, 'All this is mine, and I owe it but to myself;' true, my neighbour, these ideas lull me to sleep gently—allez! proudly sometimes, but always content. Well! if I owed all this to an old relation, it would not give me so much pleasure, I am sure. But hold, here we are at the Temple; acknowledge now that it is a superb coup d'œil!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TEMPLE.

Although Rodolphe did not partake of the profound admiration of Rigolette at the sight of the Temple, he was, nevertheless, struck with the singular aspect of this enormous bazar, which has its quarters and its passages. Towards the middle of the "Rue du Temple," not far from a fountain which is placed at the angle of a large square, can be seen a large building of timber, roofed with slate, and in form a parallelogram. It is the Temple. Bounded on the left by the Rue du Petit Thouais, on the right by the Rue Percée, it terminates at a vast circular building, a colossal rotunda, surrounded by a gallery with arcades. A long passage, through the centre, divides it into two equal parts; these are in their turn divided, subdivided "ad infinitum," by a multitude of small lateral and transverse passages, which cross it in every direction, and are sheltered from the rain by the roof of the edifice.

In this bazar all new merchandise is generally prohibited; but the most wretched shreds of stuff of whatever description, the smallest scraps of iron, copper, or steel find here both a buyer and seller. There are here merchants of fragments of cloth of all colours, all shades, all qualities, every age, destined to match the pieces to mend old or torn clothes. There are shops where you can find heaps of old shoes run down at the heels, bursted out, cracked, things with a name, without form, without colour, among which appear here and there some *fossil* soles, an inch thick, studded with nails like the doors of a prison, hard as a horseshoe, real skeletons of shoes, all the cohesions of which have been destroyed by time; all this is mouldy, full of holes, corroded, yet it all is bought and sold; there are *merchants* who live by this trade.

There exists retailers of hatbands, fringes, balls, cords, silk, cotton, and thread ravellings, proceeding from the demolition of curtains completely worn out.

Others turn their attention to the trade of women's hats: these hats never reach the shops except in the bags of the "revendeuses," after the strangest perigrinations, the most violent transformations, the most incredible discolorations. In fine, so that the merchandise does not take up too much room in a shop ordinarily about as large as an enormous box, these hats are nicely folded in two, after which they are flattened excessively close; except the pickle, it is absolutely the same proceeding as for the preservation of herrings; thus one can imagine how, thanks to this mode of stowing, such things can be kept in a space of four feet square. A purchaser presents himself, this millinery ware is relieved from this high pressure; the shopkeeper gives, in a careless manner, a little blow with her hand in the crown, to raise it, smooths the forepart on her knee, and you have under your eyes a fantastical bygone object, which recalls confusedly to your mind those fabulous head-dresses, particularly belonging to box-openers at the theatre, to the aunts of figurantes or the duennas of a provincial theatre.

Still farther on, at the sign of the *Fashion of the Day*, under the arcades of the rotunda raised at the end of the large passage which divides the Temple in two parts, are hung up like *ex-voto* offerings myriads of clothes, of colours, forms, and shapes the most extraordinary, still more so than the women's old hats.

Thus one sees frocks of gridelin, most beautifully set off with three rows of brass buttons "à la hussarde," and most *warmly* ornamented with a little fur collar of foxskin.

Frock coats, primitively bottle green, which time had rendered pea-green, bound with black cord, and made almost like *new* by a lining of blue and yellow plaid, of the most ludicrous appearance.

Coats, formerly called swallow-tailed, of a mushroom colour, with rich collars of plush, ornamented with buttons once plated with silver, but now a red copperish tint. There was also to be seen maroon polonaises, with collars of cat's skin, trimmed with frogs and loops of black fretted cotton; close at hand were robes de chambre artistically made of old "*carriks*," lined inside with pieces of calico; the best of them are blue or dingy green, ornamented with variegated cottons, embroidered with "fil passée" and lined with a red stuff figured with orange flowers, facings and collars the same; a "cordelière," made of an old bell cord of twisted wool, serves as a girdle to these elegant dishabilles, in the which Robert Macaire might have flourished with the most lofty good fortune. We will speak only from memory of a mass of costumes of *Frontin*, more or less equivocal.

more or less barbarous, among which one could find now and then some authentic royal or princely liveries, that revolutions of all kinds have dragged from the palace to the gloomy arches of the rotunda of the Temple.

This exhibition of old shoes, old hats, and old clothes, is the comical part of this bazar; it is the district of the things of little value disguised and displayed with much pretension; but we must acknowledge, or rather proclaim, that this vast establishment is of great utility for the poorer classes. There they buy, at two or three hundred per cent. discount, excellent things, almost new, of which the depreciation is almost imaginary. One of the sides of the Temple, destined for bedclothes, was filled with piles of coverings, sheets, mattresses, and pillows. Farther on were carpets, curtains, household utensils of all sorts; besides clothing, shoes, caps, for all conditions, for all ages. These articles, generally of extreme neatness, presented nothing repugnant to the senses. One could not believe, before visiting this bazar, how little time and money were necessary to fill a cart with all that is necessary for the complete establishment of two or three families in want of everything.

Rodolphe was struck with the manner, at once pressing, officious, and cheerful with which the shopkeepers, standing outside their shops, solicited the custom of the passers-by; these manners, stamped with a kind of respectful familiarity, seemed to belong to another age.

Hardly had he appeared in the grand passage, than he was pursued with the most seductive offers.

"Monsieur, come in here and see my mattress — as good as new; I will rip open the corners, you shall see inside; you'll think it is lambs' wool, it's so soft and white!" "My pretty little lady, I have sheets of the finest linen, better than new, for their first roughness is worn off; they are as pliable as a glove, strong as a warp of steel."

"My nice couple, do buy one of these coverings; do you see, it is soft, warm, and light; one would say it was made of down; it is nearly new, for it has not been used twenty times; come, my good lady, make your husband decide—give me your custom, I will fix you off very cheap: you shall be satisfied; you will come back to see 'la Mère Bouvard;' you will find everything in my shop; yesterday, I had a superb chance; you shall see it; 'allons,' come in, then! I ask nothing to show my things."

"Ma foi, my neighbour," said Rodolphe to Rigolette, "this good old soul shall have the preference; she takes us for a young married couple; that flatters me—I decide for her shop."

"Agreed for the good old soul!" said Rigolette. "I fancy her also." The grisette and her companion entered the shop of "la Mère Bouvard."

Through a magnanimity perhaps without example elsewhere than in the Temple, the rivals of "la Mère Bouvard" did not grumble at the preference shown to her; one of her neighbours carried her generosity so far as to say, "As long as it is the 'Mère Bouvard' who has this windfall, good, she has a family, and is 'la doyenne' and honour of the Temple."

"Look here, my pretty little lady," said she to Rigolette, who examined several things with the eye of a "connoisseur," "here is what I spoke of; two sets of bedclothes complete, as good as new. If by chance you should want a little old secretary, not dear, here is one; I got it in the same lot. Although ordinarily I do not buy furniture, I could not refuse to take it; the persons from whom I got all these things seemed so unhappy! Poor lady! It was, above all, the sale of this antiquity which seemed to make her heart bleed. It appears it was an old family relic."

At these words, and while the old woman talked with Rigolette about the prices of different articles, Rodolphe examined more attentively the article which "la Mère Bouvard" had shown him.

It was one of those oldfashioned secretaries of rosewood, of a form almost triangular, closed by a pannel in front, which, when unfolded and sustained by two long supports of copper, served as a writing-table. In the middle of this pannel, ornamented with inlaid work of various coloured wood, Rodolphe remarked a cipher, incrusted with ebony, and composed of an M and an R intertwined, surmounted by a counts' crown. He supposed that the last possessor of this piece of furniture belonged to the upper classes of society. His curiosity was redoubled; he looked at the secretary with a new scrutiny: he mechanically opened the drawers, one after the other, when, finding some difficulty with the last, and, seeking the cause of this obstacle, he discovered and drew out with care a leaf of paper, which had slipped under the drawer.

While Rigolette was finishing her purchases, Rodolphe examined closely his discovery. Among the scratches which covered the paper, Rodolphe read what was evidently part of an unfinished letter.

"Monsieur—Be persuaded that most fearful misfortunes could alone induce me to take this step. It is not pride misplaced which causes my scruples; it is the absolute want of any claim for the oldest shopkeeper, the longest established for the services I dare to ask you. The sight of my daughter, reduced like myself to the most fearful want, overcomes my embarrassment. A few words will suffice to inform you of the cause of the disasters which overwhelm me.

"After the death of my husband, I had for my fortune three hundred thousand francs placed by my brother with M. Jacques Ferrand, a notary. I received at Angers, where I had retired with my daughter, the interest of this sum through the hands of my brother. You know, M., the frightful event which put an end to his days; ruined, as it appears, by secret and unfortunate speculations, he killed himself eight months since. At the time of this fatal event, I received from him some desperate lines. When I should read them, he wrote, that he should exist no longer. He terminated this letter in informing me that he possessed no title relative to the sum placed in my name with M. Jacques Ferrand; that he never gave a receipt, for he was honour, piety itself; it would suffice for me to present myself to him for this affair to be suitably regulated.

"As soon as it was possible for me to think of anything else than the frightful death of my brother, I came to Paris, where I knew no one but you, monsieur, and that indirectly by the relations which you had had with my husband. I have told you, that the sum deposited with M. Jacques Ferrand formed all my fortune; and my brother sent me every six months the interest of this money; more than a year had passed since the last payment. I presented myself to M.

Jacques Ferrand to demand a revenue, of which I had the greatest need.

"Hardly had I named myself, than, without respect for my grief, he accused my brother of having borrowed from him two thousand francs which he lost by his death; adding, that his suicide was not only a crime before God and before man, but it was also an act of spoliation of which he, M. Jacques Ferrand, was a victim.

"This odious language aroused me; the probity of my brother was well known; he had, it is true, unknown to me and his friends, lost his fortune in hazardous speculations; but he was dead with a reputation intact, regretted by all, and leaving no debt save that of the notary.

"I answered M. Ferrand that I authorized him to take at once, from the money of mine which he had in charge, the two thousand francs which my brother owed him. At these words he regarded me with an air of surprise, and asked me what money I was talking about.

"'Of that which my brother placed with you eighteen months since, monsieur, of which until now you have paid me the interest through him,' said I, not understanding his question.

"The notary shrugged his shoulders, smiled with pity, and answered that, far from having placed any money with him, my brother had borrowed from him two thousand francs. It is impossible to express to you my alarm at this answer. 'But what has become of this sum?' cried I. 'My daughter and myself have no other resource; if this is taken from us, there is nothing left us but the most abject poverty. What will become of us?'

'I don't know,' answered the notary, coldly. 'It is probable that your brother, instead of placing this amount with me, has lost it in these speculations, which he carried on unknown to every one.'

"It is false! it is infamous!' I cried. 'My brother was honour itself. Far from robbing me and my daughter, he sacrificed himself for us. He would never marry that he might leave what he possessed to my child.'

"'Do you dare, then, to pretend, madame, that I am capable of denying a deposite which has been confided to me?' asked the notary, with indignation, which appeared so honourable and sincere, that I answered,

"No, surely, not, monsieur; your reputation for probity is known; but I cannot, however, accuse my brother of such a cruel abuse of confidence.'

"'On what titles do you pretend to claim this of me?' asked M. Ferrand. 'On none, monsieur. Eighteen months since, my brother, who managed my affairs, wrote me: "I have an excellent investment at six per cent.; send me your power of attorney to sell your 'rentes;' I shall deposit three hundred thousand francs with M. Jacques Ferrand, notary." I sent my power to my brother; a few days after, he advised me that he had made the deposit with you, that you never gave a receipt, and at the end of six months he sent me the interest due.'

"'And at least you have some letters from him on this subject, madame?'

"'No, monsieur. They treated of business alone; I did not preserve them.'

"'I can, unfortunately, do nothing, madame,' answered the notary. 'If my probity was not above all suspicion, all doubt, I would say to you: The tribunals are open; attack me; the judges will have to choose between the word of an honourable man, who for thirty years enjoys the esteem of worthy people, and the posthumous declaration of a man who, after having ruined himself in the most mad speculations, has only found a refuge in suicide. I would say to you in fine: Attack me, madame, if you dare, and the memory of your brother will be dishonoured. But I believe that you will have the good sense to resign yourself to a misfortune great, without doubt, but to which I am a stranger.'

"But, monsieur, I am a mother! if my fortune is taken from me, my daughter and myself have no other resource except our furniture—that sold, it is poverty, monsieur, frightful poverty!'

"'You have been duped; it is a misfortune; I cannot help it,' answered the notary. 'I left the notary more dead than alive; what remained for me to do in this extremity? With no title to prove the validity of my claim, convinced of the probity of my brother, confounded by the assurance of M. Ferrand, having no one from whom I could ask advice (you were then travelling), knowing that it needed money to procure the opinion of lawyers, I dared not to undertake such a process. Then it was—'"

This piece of a letter stopped there; for scribblings not to be deciphered covered some lines which still remained; finally, at the bottom in a corner, Rodolphe read this kind of memorandum:

"WRITE TO MADAME LA DUCHESSE DE LUCENAY."

Rodolphe remained thoughtful after reading this fragment of a letter. Although the new infamy of which it seemed to accuse Jacques Ferrand was not proved, this man had shown himself so devoid of pity towards the unfortunate Morel, so infamous towards Louise, his daughter, that a denial of a deposite, protected by certain impunity, could hardly be astonishing on his part.

This mother, who reclaimed this fortune so strangely disappeared, was without doubt accustomed to a competency. Ruined by a sudden blow, knowing no one at Paris, what must have become of these two women, stripped of everything, alone in this immense city? Rodolphe had, as we know, promised some *intrigues* to Madame d'Harville, in assigning her by chance, aught to occupy her mind, a part to play in a good work to be forthcoming, certain to find, before his next interview with the marquise, some unfortunate to solace. He thought that perhaps chance might put him in the way of some worthy unfortunate, who could, according to his project, interest the heart and imagination of Madame d'Harville.

The draft of a letter which he held in his hand, a copy of which had doubtless been sent to the person of whom she had implored assistance, announced a proud and resigned character, to whom the offer of alms would doubtless be revolting. How many precautions then, how many twistings, how many delicate "ruses" to conceal the source of a generous assistance, or to make her accept it!

And, besides, how much address to obtain admittance to the dwelling of this person, so as to judge whether she really deserved commiseration or not! Rodolphe foresaw a crowd of new emotions, curious and touching, which

must singularly *amuse* Madame d'Harville, as he had promised her.

"Well! my *husband*," said Rigolette gayly to Rodolphe, "what is that scrap of paper that you are reading there?" "My little *wife*," answered Rodolphe, "you are very curious! I will tell you by-and-by. Have you finished your purchases?" "Certainly, and your 'protégés' will be fixed like kings. Now you have only to pay. Madame Bouvard is easy to deal with—must be just." "My little *wife*, an idea! While I pay, if you would go and choose clothes for Madame Morel and her children?" "I acknowledge my ignorance on the subject of purchases. You will have them sent here: we will make but one journey, and our poor folks will thus have all at once."

"You are always right, my *husband*. Wait for me, I sha'n't be long. I know two shops where I am a regular customer; I will find there all I want." And Rigolette went out. But she returned to say:

"Madame Bouvard, I confide my *husband* to you; don't you look sweet at him, at least!" Another laugh, and she disappeared.

CHAPTER XV.

DISCOVERY.

"Must acknowledge, monsieur," said la Mère Bouvard to Rodolphe, after the departure of Rigolette, "that you have there a famous little manager. Peste! She understands how to buy; and besides, an't she pretty! red and white, with large, fine, black eyes, and hair of the same colour." "Is she not charming, and am I not a fortunate husband, Madame Bouvard?" "As fortunate a husband as she is a wife, I am very sure."

"You are not deceived: but tell me how much I owe you?"

"Your little manager would not give more than three hundred and thirty francs for all. As there is only one 'bon Dieu,' I make but thirteen francs, for I have not bought these things as cheap as usual. I had not the heart to bargain for them; the people who sold them appeared too unhappy!"

"Truly? Are these the same persons from whom you also bought this little secretary?" "Yes, monsieur; ah! stop; that breaks my heart only to think of it! Just imagine that the day before yesterday there came here a lady still young and handsome, but so pale, so thin, that it gave one pain to see her. Although she was, as one would say, very neat in her appearance, her old rusty black shawl, her dress also black and all frayed, her straw hat in the month of January (she was in mourning) announced what we call genteel poverty, for I am sure that she is a lady very 'comme il faut;' well, she asked me, blushing, if I wished to buy two sets of bedclothes, and a little old secretary; I answered that, since I sold, I must buy; that if it suited me, it was a settled affair; but that I should wish to see the things. She begged me to come home with her, not far from here, the other side of the Boulevard, to a house on the quay of the Canal Saint Martin. I left my shop in charge of my niece; I followed the lady; we arrived at a house for 'small folks', as we say, right at the bottom of the court; we went up the fourth story, the lady knocked, a young girl of fourteen came to open the door; she was also in mourning, and also very pale and thin; but in spite of that, beautiful as the morning; so beautiful that I remained speechless." "And this handsome young girl?"

"Was the daughter of the lady in mourning. Notwithstanding the cold, a poor dress of black and white cotton, and a little black shawl, well worn, was all she had on." "And their lodgings were miserable?" "Just figure to yourself, monsieur, two rooms very clean, but very empty, icy enough to freeze one to death; in the first place there was the fireplace, where not a spark was to be seen; there had been no fire there for a long time. As for furniture, two beds, two chairs, a commode, an old trunk, and the little secretary; on the trunk, a bundle in a handkerchief. This little bundle, it was all that remained to the mother and daughter, their furniture once sold. The landlord took the two bedsteads, chairs, trunk, and table, for what was due to him, as the porter told me as he came up with us. Then this lady begged me honestly to value the mattresses, sheets, curtains, and blankets. 'Foi' of an honest woman, monsieur, although my trade is to buy cheap, and sell dear, when I saw this poor young lady with her eyes full of tears, and her mother, who, in spite of her 'sang froid,' looked as if she was weeping within, I valued the things at fifteen francs more than I should have done, and this I swear to you. I even consented to take this little secretary, to oblige them, although it is not in my line." "I will buy it, Madame Bouvard." "Ma foi! so much the better, monsieur; it would have remained a long time on my haads. I told her, then, what I would give for these things. I expected she would have bargained, asked more. Ah, yes! it was thus again I saw she was no common person; genteel poverty, you may be certain, monsieur! I said then, 'It is so much.' She answered, 'It is well; let us return to your shop, you will pay me, for I shall never return to this house.' Then she said to her daughter, who wept, seated on the trunk, 'Claire, take the bundle.' The young lady got up; but on passing near the little secretary, she threw herself on her knees before it, and began to sob. 'Courage, my child, we are observed,' said the mother, in an under tone, which did not prevent me from hearing her. You conceive, monsieur, these are poor people, but as proud as that. When the lady gave me the key of the little secretary, I saw also a tear in her inflamed eye; her heart seemed to bleed at parting with this old piece of furniture, but she tried to be calm and dignified before strangers. In fine, she told the porter that I would come and take all but what the landlord kept, and we returned here, the young lady giving her arm to her mother, and carrying in her hand the little bundle containing all they possessed. I paid them their money, and I have not seen them since." "But their names?"

"I do not know; the lady sold me these things in the presence of the porter; I had no need to ask her name." "But their new address?" "I do not know this either." "I suppose they know it at their old lodgings?" "No, monsieur; when I returned there to get my things, the porter said, in speaking of them, 'they were very quiet people, very respectable, and very unfortunate; I hope no evil will happen to them! They appear to be very calm, but at the bottom, I am sure they are in a state of desperation.' And where are they going to lodge at this hour? I asked him. 'Ma foi! I don't know,' he answered;

'they have gone without telling me; very certain they will never return.'"

The hopes that Rodolphe had for a moment conceived vanished. How to discover these two unfortunate females? having for guide only the name of Claire, and this fragment of a letter, on which was these words: "write to Madame de Lucenay." The sole and feeble chance of finding the traces of these unfortunates rested on Madame de Lucenay, happily of the circle of Madame d'Harville. "Here, madame, pay yourself," said Rodolphe, handing her a bill for five hundred francs. "I will give you the change, monsieur."

"Where shall we find a cart to carry our effects?"

"If it is not too far, a handbarrow will answer; there is one belonging to the père Jerome, close at hand: what is your address, monsieur?"

"Rue du Temple, No. 17." "Rue du Temple, No. 17? oh! well, well, I know where it is!" "You have been in this house?"

"Several times; in the first place, I have bought clothes of a pawnbroker who lives there; it is true, I don't like her trade, but that is none of my business; she sells, I buy; we are quits. Another time, not six weeks since, I went there for the furniture of a young man, who lived on the fourth floor, and who was breaking up." "M. François Germain, perhaps!" cried Rodolphe. "Exactly; you know him?" "Very well; unfortunately, he has not left his new address at the Rue du Temple, and I don't know where to find him." "If that's all, I can tell you." "You know where he lives?" "Not exactly, but I know where you will be sure to find him."

"And where's that?" "At the notary's, where he works." "A notary?" "Yes, who lives in the Rue du Sentier." "M. Jacques Ferrand!" cried Rodolphe. "Himself a very holy man; there is a crucifix and holy-box in his study; it smells just like a sacristy." "But how did you find out that M. Germain wrote at the notary's?" "It is quite a story. This young man came to propose to me to buy his furniture in a lot. This time, again, although it is not my business, I bought all, and afterward sold it here; since it was agreeable to the young man, I did not wish to refuse. I bought all then—good; I paid him—good; he was, no doubt, satisfied, for at the end of fifteen days he returned to buy some bedclothes. A porter, with his cart, came with him; they bundled all together—good; but just as he was going to pay, he perceived he had forgotten his purse. He looked like such an honest young man, that I said to him, 'Take away these things, never mind, I'll call at your lodgings for the money.' 'Very well,' said he, 'but I am never at home; come to-morrow, Rue du Sentier, at M. Jacques Ferrand's, notary, where I am employed, I will pay you.' I went there the next day; he paid me; only, what I thought droll was, that he should sell and buy again, all in fifteen days." Rodolphe imagined the reason of this singularity: Germain wished that all traces of him should be lost to the wretches who pursued him. He was overjoyed thinking of the happiness of Madame Georges, who was about to see again this son, so long and so vainly searched for. Rigolette soon returned, her eyes sparkling, and with a smiling face.

"Well, when I told you so!" cried she, "I was not mistaken. We have spent in all six hundred and forty francs, and the Morels will be established like princes. Look—look—see the shopkeepers coming. Are they not laden? Nothing is wanting, everything is needful, even to a gridiron, two fine saucepans, and a coffee-pot," I said to myself: "Since they wish things done wholesale, let us do them wholesale; but pay quickly, my neighbour, and let us go. It is almost noon; and it must needs that my needle should travel at a famous rate to make up for this morning!" Rodolphe paid, and left the Temple with Rigolette. * * * * * * * * *

CHAPTER XVI.

APPARITION.

At the moment that the grisette and her companion entered in the "allée" of their house, they were almost overturned by Madame Pipelet, who ran against them, troubled, bewildered, lost. "Ah, mon Dieu!" said Rigolette. "What is the matter, then, Madame Pipelet? Where are you running to?" "Is it you! Mademoiselle Rigolette," cried Anastasia: "it is the 'bon Dieu' who sends you. Aid me to save Alfred's life." "What do you say?" "The poor old darling has fainted, have pity on us! run and get two sous worth of absinthe at the rogomistes—the strongest—it is his remedy when he is indisposed. Indigestion, perhaps; it will bring him to; be charitable, do not refuse me; I will return to Alfred. I am struck all of a heap." Rigolette dropped Rodolphe's arm and ran to the rogomistes. "But what has happened, Madame Pipelet?" asked Rodolphe, following the "portière," who returned to the lodge.

"Is it that I know, my worthy monsieur? I had gone to the mayor's, to the church, and to the 'traiteurs,' to save Alfred these trots. I came back; what do I see? the old darling keeled up!! Look, Monsieur Rodolphe," said Anastasia, opening the door of her den; see if it is not enough to break one's heart! Lamentable spectacle! Always 'coiffe'* with his 'chapeau tromblou,' more 'coiffe' even than usual, for the dubious beaver, violently 'enfonce,'† (to judge from a transverse fracture) concealed the eyes of M. Pipelet, who was seated on the ground, with his back against the foot of his bed. The fainting fit had passed away; Alfred began to make some slight signs with his hands, as if he wished to repulse some one or something; then he tried to rid himself of his visor improvisée.

"He kicks! it is a good sign! he comes to!" cried the portèire, and, stooping down, she screamed in his ears, "What is the matter, my Alfred? It is your Stasia who is here. How do you feel? They have gone for some absinthe; that'll bring you on your feet." Then, assuming a soft and most caressing voice, she added, "Have they, then, wounded, assassinated the dear old darling of his mamma, heiu?"

Alfred uttered a profound sigh, and allowed to escape from him in the shape of a groan, this prophetic word: "Cabrion!"

And his trembling hands seemed anew to repulse a frightful vision.

"Cabrion! this beggar of a painter again!" cried Madame Pipelet. "Alfred dreamed so much about him last night, that he almost kicked me to death. This monster is his nightmare! Not only he empoisons his days, but he

* Head dressed. † Pushed over his eyes

empoisons his nights; he pursues him even in his sleep; yes, monsieur, as if Alfred was a criminal; and that this Cabrion, whom the devil confound! was his bitter conscience." Rodolphe smiled discreetly, anticipating some new joke of the former neighbour of Rigolette. "Alfred! answer me; don't be dumb; you frighten me," said Madame Pipelet; "come, be yourself again; why do you think of that bully! you know very well that, when you think of him, it has the same effect that cabbage has upon you—it rests on your stomach, and that suffocates you."

"Cabrion!" repeated M. Pipelet, raising with an effort his hat from off his eyes, which he rolled around him with a bewildered look.

Rigolette came in, bringing a little bottle of absinthe.

"Thank you, mamzelle, you are very kind!" said the old woman; and then she added, "Here, old darling, sip this for me, it will bring you up again." And Anastasia, placing quickly the bottle to the lips of M. Pipelet, undertook to make him swallow the absinthe.

Alfred would have contested vigorously, but his wife, profiting by the weakness of his victim, held his head with a firm hand, and with the other introduced the neck of the bottle between his teeth, and forced him to drink; after which she cried triumphantly, "Come, now! there you are again on your legs, old darling!" In effect, Alfred, after having wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, opened his eyes, arose, and asked, in a frightened tone,

"Have you seen him?" "Who?" "Is he gone?"

"But who? Alfred!" "Cabrion!" "Has he dared!" cried the portière. M. Pipelet, as mute as the statue of the commander in Don Giovanni, nodded, like the spectre, twice in the affirmative.

"M. Cabrion has been here?" asked Rigolette, restraining a violent desire to laugh. "This monster, is he not let loose after Alfred!" cried Madame Pipelet; "oh, if I had been here with my broom, he should have eaten it, handle and all. But speak, then, Alfred; tell your misfortunes!"

Pipelet made a sign with his hand that he was about to speak.

The man with the chapeau tromblon was listened to in a religious silence; he expressed himself as follows, in a voice profoundly affected: "My wife had just left me to go to spare me the fatigue, according to the commands of monsieur (he bowed to Rodolphe), to the mayor's, the church, and the traiteurs." "The old darling has had the nightmare all night." "I preferred to go myself," said Anastasia.

"This nightmare was sent me as a warning from above," answered the porter, religiously. "I had dreamed of Cabrion. I should suffer from Cabrion. The day had commenced by an attack on the body of my wife." "Alfred, Alfred, hush now! this makes me feel ashamed before everybody," said Madame Pipelet, mincing, bridling, and casting down her eyes as if ashamed. "I thought I had paid my debt of misfortune to this day of misfortune, after the departure of the luxurious malefactors," continued M. Pipelet, "when, oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" "Come, Alfred, courage!" "I will have it," answered M. Pipelet, heroically: "It is necessary; I will have it. I was then there seated tranquilly at my table, reflecting on a change which I wished to operate on the upper leather of this boot, confided to my industry, when I heard a noise—a slight rubbing on the window of my lodge." "Was it a presentiment? A notice from above? My heart ceased to beat. I raised my head, and through the glass I saw—I saw—"

"Cabrion!!!" cried Anastasia, clasping her hands.

"Cabrion!" answered M. Pipelet, gloomily. "His hideous face was there, plastered against the window, looking at me with his cat eyes. What did I say? Tigers, just as in my dream. I wished to speak; my tongue clove to my mouth. I tried to get up. I stuck to my seat, my boot fell from my hands; and as in all the critical and important events of my life, I remained completely immovable. Then the key turned in the lock, the door opened—Cabrion entered!" "He entered? What boldness!" cried Madame Pipelet, as much astounded as her husband, at this audacity.

"He entered slowly," continued Alfred, "stopped a moment at the door, as if to fascinate me with his atrocious glance; then he advanced towards me, stopping at each step, piercing me with his eye, without saying a word, straight dumb, menacing as a phantom."

"It makes my hair stand on an end!" said Anastasia.

"I remained more and more immovable and seated on my chair. Cabrion still advanced slowly, keeping his eye on me like a snake on a bird; for he caused me no fear, and yet in spite of myself I looked at him. He came close to me. I could no longer support his revolting aspect—it was too much, I could not stand it. I shut my eyes. Then I felt that he dared to put his hands on my hat; he took it by the crown, took it slowly from my head, and left it bare. I began to be seized with a vertigo—my respiration was suspended—my ears began to sing. I was more and more stuck fast to my seat. I shut my eyes tighter and tighter. Then Cabrion stooped down, took my bald head, that I have the right, or, rather, had the right to call venerable before this outrage—he took, then, my head between his cold hands, cold as the dead—and on my forehead, glazed with sweat, he imprinted a brazen kiss!! the lascivious wretch!"

Anastasia threw her arms towards heaven.

"My most mortal enemy to come and kiss me on the forehead! to force me to submit to his disgusting caresses, after having odiously persecuted me for a lock of my hair! Such a monstrosity made me think deeply, and paralyzed me. Cabrion profited by my stupor to place my hat on my head, then with a blow he pushed it over my eyes, as you have seen. This last outrage upset me: the measure was full; everything went round, and I fainted at the moment when I saw him, from under my hat, go out of the lodge as tranquilly and slowly as he had entered it." Then, as if this recital had exhausted his strength, M. Pipelet fell back on his chair, raising his hands towards heaven in an attitude of mute imprecation.

Rigolette went out hastily; her courage was at an end, her desire to laugh exhausted her; she could restrain herself no longer.

Rodolphe had himself with difficulty retained his composure.

All at once a confused noise, which announced the arrival of a crowd, resounded in the street; a great tumult was heard at the door of the allée, and soon the sound of muskets rang on the pavement of the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARREST.

"Mon Dieu! Monsieur Rodolphe," cried Rigolette running in pale and trembling, "there is a police officer and a guard there!"

"Divine justice watches over me!" said M. Pipelet, in a burst of religious gratitude; "they come to arrest Cabrion; unfortunately, it is too late!" A police officer, recognisable by the scarf which was to be seen under his black coat, entered the lodge. His countenance was grave and severe. "Monsieur, the police officer, it is too late—the malefactor has escaped!" said M. Pipelet, sadly; "but I can give you his description—an atrocious smile—impudent stare—manners." "Of whom do you speak?" asked the officer. "Of Cabrion, monsieur officer. But, by making haste, perhaps you will catch him," answered M. Pipelet. "I do not know who Cabrion is," said the officer, impatiently. "One Jérôme Morel, journeyman jeweller, does he live in this house?"

"Yes, my officer," said Madame Pipelet, making the motion of "carry arms." "Conduct me to his room." "Morel, the workman!" answered the portière, much surprised; "but he is a real lamb of the bon Dieu—he is incapable of—"

"Jérôme Morel! does he live here or not?" "He lives here, with his family, in a garret." "Conduct me to this garret!"

Then, speaking to a man who accompanied him, he said.

"Let the two municipal guards wait here, and send Justin for a hack. Now conduct me to the Morels." "If it is all the same to you, my officer, I will take Alfred's place; he is indisposed from the assaults of Cabrion, who, like cabbage, sits hard on his stomach." "You, or your husband, no matter which. Come!" And, preceded by Madame Pipelet, he began to mount the stairs; but he soon stopped, seeing he was followed by Rodolphe and Rigolette. "Who are you? what do you want?" asked he. "They are the two lodgers of the fourth story!" answered Madame Pipelet. "Pardon, monsieur, I did not know that you belonged to the house," said he to Rodolphe.

He, auguring well from the polite manners of the officer, said to him, "You are going to see a desperate family, monsieur. I do not know what new blow menaces this unhappy artisan, but he has been cruelly tried this night. One of his daughters, already overcome by illness, is dead—under his eyes—dead of cold and misery."

"Can it be possible?" "It is the truth, monsieur," said Madame Pipelet. "Except for the gentleman who now speaks to you, and who is the prince of lodgers, since he has saved by his benefactions the poor Morel from prison, all the family of the artisan would be dead with hunger." The officer regarded Rodolphe with as much interest as surprise. "Nothing is more simple, monsieur," he answered. "A very charitable lady, knowing that Morel, whose honour and probity I'll answer for, was in a condition as deplorable as it was unmerited, has charged me to pay a note for which the bailiffs were about to drag to prison this poor workman, sole support of a numerous family."

In his turn, struck with the noble features of Rodolphe, and with the dignity of his manners, the officer replied, "I do not doubt the honesty of Morel; I regret only that I have to fulfil a painful duty before you, monsieur, who are so much interested in this family."

"What do you mean to say, monsieur?" "I avow to you, monsieur, it is the arrest of Louise Morel that is in question."

The rouleau of gold that she had offered to the bailiffs came to the mind of Rodolphe. "Of what is she accused, mon Dieu?" "She is accused of infanticide." "She! she! Oh, her poor father!" "From what you have told me, monsieur, I conceive that, under the circumstances in which the artisan is placed, this new blow will be terrible for him. Unfortunately, I must obey my orders." "But it is only a simple accusation!" cried Rodolphe. "The proofs are wanting, without doubt?" "I cannot explain myself farther on this subject. Justice has been informed of this crime, or, rather, the presumption, by the declarations of a man in every way respectable—the master of Louise Morel."

"Jacques Ferrand the notary!" said Rodolphe, indignantly.

"Yes, monsieur. But why this vivacity?" "M. Jacques Ferrand is a scoundrel, monsieur!" "I see with pain that you do not know of whom you speak. M. Jacques Ferrand is the most honourable man in the world; of most exemplary piety, and known probity." "I repeat to you, monsieur, that the notary is a scoundrel. He wished to imprison Morel because his daughter repulsed his infamous propositions. If Louise is only accused on the testimony of such a man — acknowledge, monsieur, that it merits but little belief."

"It does not belong to me, monsieur, and it does not suit me to discuss the value of the testimony of M. Ferrand," said the officer, coldly. "Justice has taken cognizance of the affair; the tribunals will decide. As to me, I have orders to arrest Louise Morel, and I shall do it."

"You are right, monsieur. I regret that a movement of indignation, perhaps legitimate, has made me forget that this is neither the time nor place for such a discussion. One word alone: the body of the child he has lost is in the garret. I have offered my room to this family, to spare them the sad sight of the corpse; it is, then, probably in my chamber you will find the artisan and his daughter. I conjure you, monsieur, in the name of humanity, do not arrest Louise suddenly in the midst of these misfortunes. Morel has gone through so many shocks this night that his reason will give way; his wife is also dangerously sick, such a blow will kill her. If you will permit me, I'll ask you a favour. This is what I propose: The young girl who follows us with the portière occupies a room adjoining mine; I do not doubt but that she will place it at your disposal. You can at first send for Louise; then, if it must be, for Morel, that his daughter may bid him farewell. You will at least spare a poor, sick, and infirm mother a heart-rending scene." "If this can be arranged so, monsieur, willingly." This conversation had taken place in an under tone, while Rigolette and Madame Pipelet held themselves discreetly at some distance off. Rodolphe descended, and said to the former, "My poor neighbour, I must ask another favour: you must let me have your room at my disposal for an hour." "As long as you please, M. Rodolphe. You have my key. But, mon Dieu! what is the matter, then?" "I will tell you directly. This is not all: you must be kind

enough to return to the Temple, to tell them to delay sending home our purchases for an hour."

"Willingly, M. Rodolphe; but is there a new misfortune happened to the Morels?"

"Alas! yes; you will only know it too soon."

"Come, my neighbour, I fly to the Temple. Mon Dieu! I, who, thanks to you, thought them out of trouble," said the grisette, and she descended rapidly the stairs.

Rodolphe wished to spare Rigolette the sad spectacle of the arrest of Louise. "My officer," said Madame Pipelet, "since my prince of lodgers accompanies you, I can go and find Alfred? He alarms me: he has hardly recovered from his indisposition of—Cabrion."

"Go—go!" said the magistrate; and he remained alone with Rodolphe. Both arrived on the landing-place of the fourth, opposite the door of the room where the artisan and his family were temporarily placed.

Suddenly this door was opened. Louise, pale and weeping, came out quickly. "Adieu! adieu! my father," cried she; "I will return—I must go now." "Louise! my child, listen to me, then," answered Morel, following his daughter, and trying to detain her. At the sight of Rodolphe and the magistrate, they remained immovable.

"Ah! monsieur, you, our saviour," said the artisan, recognising Rodolphe; "aid me, then, to prevent Louise from going. I do not know what is the matter with her, she makes me afraid; she wishes to go away. Is it not so, monsieur, that she must not return any more to her master? Did you not say, 'Louise shall quit you no more—this shall be your recompense.' Oh! at this delightful promise, I avow it, for a moment I have forgotten the death of my poor little Adèle; but to be separated from you, Louise, never! never!" Rodolphe felt himself overcome; he had not the strength to utter a word. The officer said severely to Louise, "Do you call yourself Louise Morel?" "Yes, monsieur!" answered the young girl, amazed. Rodolphe had opened the chamber of Rigolette. "You are Jérôme Morel, her father?" added the magistrate, addressing the artisan.

"Yes—monsieur! but—" "Enter there with your daughter." And the magistrate pointed to the chamber of Rigolette, where Rodolphe already was. Reassured by his presence, the artisan and Louise, astonished and troubled, obeyed; the officer shut the door, and said to Morel, with emotion, "I know your honesty and misfortunes; it is, then, with regret I inform you that, in the name of the law, I come to arrest your daughter." "All is discovered—I am lost!" cried Louise, throwing herself in the arms of her father.

"What do you say? what do you say?" said Morel, stupified. "Are you mad? why lost? arrest you! why arrest you? who will arrest you?" "I—in the name of the law!" and the officer showed his scarf. "Oh! unfortunate! unfortunate that I am!" cried Louise, falling on her knees.

"How! in the name of the law?" said the artisan, whose mind began to wander; "why arrest my daughter in the name of the law? I answer for Louise, I—she is my daughter, my worthy daughter—is it not true, Louise? How arrest you, when our guardian angel restores you to us, to console us for the death of my little Adèle? Come now! it cannot be! And, besides, monsieur, speaking with respect, only criminals are arrested, do you understand—and Louise, my daughter, is not a criminal. Very sure, do you see, my child, this gentleman is mistaken. My name is Morel; there are more Morels besides me. You are called Louise—there are more of the same name. That's it, do you see, monsieur; there is a mistake!"

"Unfortunately, there is no mistake! Louise Morel, say farewell to your father." "You carry away my daughter, you!" cried the workman, furious from grief, and advancing towards the magistrate with a threatening air. Rodolphe seized him by the arm, and said, "Calm yourself, and hope; your daughter shall be returned to you—her innocence shall be proved; she is doubtless not culpable." "Culpable of what? she can be culpable of nothing—I would place my hand in the fire that—" Then recollecting the gold that Louise had brought to pay the note, Morel cried, "But this money! this money! Louise!" and he cast on his daughter a terrible look. Louise understood it. "I steal!" cried she, and the cheeks coloured with generous indignation, her tone of voice, her gesture, satisfied her father:

"I knew it!" he cried. "Do you see, monsieur—she denies it—and never in her life has she lied. I swear it to you. Ask every one who knows her, and they will say the same. She lie! ah! well! yes—she is too proud for that; besides, the bill was paid by our benefactor. This gold, she don't want it; she was going to return it to the person who lent—is it not so, Louise?"

"Your daughter is not accused of theft," said the magistrate.

"But, mon Dieu! what is she accused of, then? I, her father, I swear that, whatever she is accused of, she is innocent; and in my life, also, I have never lied." "What good will it do to know what she is accused of?" said Rodolphe to him; "her innocence shall be proven—the person who interests herself so much in you will protect your daughter. Come, courage. This time, again, Providence will not fail you. Embrace your daughter—you will soon see her again." "Monsieur 'le commissarie!'" cried Morel, without listening to Rodolphe, "a daughter is not taken away from a father without at least telling him of what she is accused! I wish to know all. Louise, will you speak?" "Your daughter is accused—of infanticide," said the magistrate. "I—I—do not comprehend—I—you—" "Your daughter is accused of having killed her child," said the officer, much overcome at this scene. "But it is not yet proved that she has committed this crime."

"Oh! no, it is not so, monsieur, it is not so," cried Louise with force, and raising herself up. "I swear to you it was dead! It breathed no more; it was frozen; I lost all consciousness: that is my crime. But to kill my child, oh! never!" "Your child, wretch!" cried Morel, raising his hands to Louise, as if he wished to annihilate her with this gesture and terrible imprecation. "Pardon, my father! pardon!" cried she. After a moment of frightful silence, Morel went on with a calmness still more frightful.

"Monsieur, take away this creature; she is not my child."

He wished to go out; Louise threw herself at his knees, which she embraced with both arms, and, with face upward, frantic, and supplicating, she cried, "My father! listen to me only; listen to me!"

"Officer, take her away then: I abandon her

to you," said the artisan, making every effort to disengage himself from the embraces of Louise.

"Listen to her!" said Rodolphe, stopping him; "do not be now without pity. "She! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!—she!" repeated Morel, burying his face in his hands, "she dishonoured! oh! infamous! infamous!" "And if she is dishonoured to save you?" whispered Rodolphe. These words made a startling impression on Morel; he looked at his weeping child, still kneeling at his feet; then interrogating her with a look impossible to describe, he cried in a hollow voice, his teeth grinding with rage, "The notary?"

An answer came to the lips of Louise. She was about to speak, but, on reflection, she stopped, bent her head, and remained silent.

"But no—he wished to imprison me this morning," continued Morel; "it is not he? oh! so much the better! so much the better! she has no excuse for her fault; I can curse her without remorse!" "No! no! do not curse me, my father! to you I will tell all; to you alone; and you will see—you will see if I do not deserve your pardon." "Listen to her for the sake of pity!" said Rodolphe. "What can she tell me? her infamy? it will soon be public; I will wait."

"Monsieur!" cried Louise to the magistrate, "in mercy let me say a few words to my father before leaving him, perhaps forever. And before you also, our saviour, I will speak—but only before you and my father." "I consent!" said the magistrate.

"Will you, then, be insensible? will you refuse this last consolation to your child?" asked Rodolphe. "If you think you owe me some return for the favours I have directed towards you, grant the prayer of your daughter." After a moment of mournful silence, Morel answered, "Let us go!" "But where shall we go?" asked Rodolphe; "your family is in the next room." "Where shall we go?" cried the artisan, with bitter irony; "where shall we go? up there—up there, in the garret, alongside of the body of my child. The place is well chosen for this confession—is it not? Come—we will see if Louise will dare to lie in the sight of the corpse of her sister. Come!" And Morel went out precipitately, with a wild stare, without looking at Louise.

"Monsieur!" whispered the officer to Rodolphe "do not prolong this interview. You said truly, his reason will not sustain it; just now his look was that of a madman." "Alas! monsieur, I fear, like you, a terrible and new misfortune; I will shorten as much as possible the touching 'adieux.'" And Rodolphe rejoined the artisan and his daughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONFESSION.

Dark and gloomy spectacle!

In the middle of the garret, such as we have described it, reposed, on the couch of the idiot, the corpse of the little child. An old piece of sheet covered it. Rodolphe, standing with his back to the wall, was painfully affected. Morel, seated on his work-bench, his head down, hands hanging, his looks fixed, wild, were constantly fixed on the bed where reposed the remains of the little Adèle.

At this sight, the anger, the indignation of the artizan became weaker, and changed into a sadness of inexpressible bitterness; his energy abandoned him; he sunk under this new blow. Louise, of a mortal paleness, felt her strength fail her. The revelation that she was about to make frightened her. Yet she took tremblingly the hand of her father—that poor, thin hand, deformed by excess of labour.

He did not withdraw it. Then his daughter, bursting into tears, covered it with kisses, and soon felt it press lightly against her lips. The anger of Morel had ceased; his tears, for a long time retained, flowed at last. "My father! if you knew—if you knew how much I am to be pitied." "Oh! stop; you see, this will be the grief of all my life, Louise—of all my life," answered the artizan, weeping. "You, Mon Dieu! you in prison—on the criminal bench—you, so proud—when you had the right to be so. No!" continued he, in a new access of desperate grief, "no! I should prefer to see you under the winding-sheet alongside of your poor little sister." "And I also; I wish it were so," answered Louise. "Hush, unfortunate child, you give me pain. I was wrong to say that; I went too far. Come, speak, but, in the name of God, tell the truth. However frightful it may be, tell me all. If I hear it from you it will appear less cruel to me. Speak; alas! our moments are counted; you are waited for. Oh! the sad, sad parting, just heaven!" "My father, I will tell you all," said Louise, resolutely; "but promise me, and you, our benefactor, promise also, not to repeat this to any one. If he knew that I had spoken, do you see—oh! you would be lost—lost like me; for you do not know the power and ferocity of this man." "Of what man." "My master." "The notary?"

"Yes," said Louise, in a low tone, and looking around her, as if she were afraid of being overheard. "Compose yourself," answered Rodolphe. "This man is cruel and powerful; no matter; we will combat him. Besides, if I reveal what you are about to tell us, it will be only in your interest or in that of your father."

"And I also, Louise, if I speak, it will be to try to save you. But what has he done, this wicked man?" "This is not all," said Louise, after a moment's reflection, "in this sad tale it will be questioned if some one who has rendered me a great service—who has been for my father and for our family full of kindness—this person was employed at M. Ferrand's when I went; I have sworn not to mention the name."

Rodolphe, thinking that she meant Germain, said,

"If you mean François Germain, be easy; his secret will be kept by your father and myself."

Louise looked at Rodolphe with surprise. "You know him?" said she. "How! the good and excellent young man who lived here for three months, and was employed at the notary's when you went there?" said Morel. "The first time you saw him here you appeared not to know him." "That was agreed upon between us. He had grave reasons to conceal that he worked for M. Ferrand. It was I who told him

of the chamber on the fourth story, knowing he would be a good neighbour for you." "But," said Rodolphe, "who placed your daughter with the notary?" "When my wife was taken sick, I had said to Madame Burette, the pawnbroker, who lives here, that Louise wished to go to service to aid us. Madame Burette knew the housekeeper of the notary; she gave me a letter to her, in which she strongly recommended Louise. Cursed—cursed be that letter; it has caused all our misfortunes. So, monsieur, this is the way my daughter went there." "Although I am informed of some of the facts which have caused the hatred of M. Ferrand towards your father," said Rodolphe to Louise, "I beg you will relate to me in a few words what passed between you and the notary since you entered his service. This may serve to defend you."

"During the first months of my stay at M. Ferrand's I had no reason to complain of him. I had much work to do; the housekeeper was often very rough towards me; the house was gloomy; but I endured all with patience; servitude is servitude, otherwise I should have had other disagreements. M. Ferrand had a stern look. He went to mass; he often received priests. I did not mistrust him. At first he hardly looked at me. He spoke very cross to me; above all, in the presence of strangers.

"Except the porter who lodged on the street, in the building where the office is, I was the only domestic with Madame Séraphin, the housekeeper. The building we occupied was an old isolated ruin, between the court and garden. My chamber was quite up to the top. Very often I was afraid to remain alone all the evening, either in the kitchen, which was under ground, or in my chamber. In the night, I sometimes thought I heard extraordinary noises in the room under mine, which no one occupied, and where M. Germain alone often came to work during the day. Two of the windows of this story were walled up, and one of the doors, very thick, was strengthened with bars of iron. The housekeeper told me afterward that M. Ferrand kept his strong box there.

"One night I had sat up very late to finish some mending, which was very urgent; I was about to go to bed, when I heard some one walking very softly in the corridor at the end of which was my chamber; they stopped at my door; at first I thought it was the housekeeper, but as she did not come in, it made me afraid; I dared not stir; I listened; no one stirred; I was, however, sure there was some one behind the door; I asked twice who was there—no one answered. More and more alarmed, I pushed my commode against the door, which had neither lock nor bolt. I still listened—nothing stirred; at the end of half an hour, which appeared very long, I threw myself on my bed: the night passed tranquilly. The next morning I asked the housekeeper for permission to put a bolt on my door, as there was no lock, relating to her my fears of the last night; she answered that I had dreamed, that I must speak to M. Ferrand about it; at my demand he shrugged his shoulders, and told me I was a fool: I did not dare to say anything more.

"Some time after this happened the affair of the diamond. My father, almost desperate, knew not what to do. I related his trouble to Madame Séraphin; she answered, 'Monsieur is so charitable, that perhaps he will do something for your father.' The same evening I waited on table; M. Ferrand said to me, bluntly, 'Your father has need of thirteen hundred francs; go this night and tell him come to my office to-morrow; he shall have the money. He is an honest man, and deserves that one should interest himself for him.' At this act of kindness I burst into tears; I did not know how to thank my master; he said to me, in his ordinary rough manner, 'It is well, it is well; what I have done is very simple.' In the evening I came to tell the good news to my father, and the next day—" "I had the money, against a bill at three months date, accepted in blank by me," said Morel. "I did like Louise; I wept with gratitude; I called him my benefactor, my saviour. Oh! he must needs have been very wicked to destroy the gratitude and veneration I vowed to him."

"This precaution to make you sign a bill in blank, at such a date that you could not pay it, did not awaken your suspicions?" asked Rodolphe "No, monsieur; I thought that the notary only took it for security; besides, he told me I need not think of paying it under two years; every three months it should be renewed for the sake of being regular; yet, at the end of the first term, it was presented, and not being paid, he obtained a judgment against me under another name; but he told me not to be troubled, that it was an error of his clerk." "He wished thus to have you in his power," said Rodolphe.

"Alas! yes, monsieur; for it was from the date of this judgment he began to— But continue, Louise, continue. I do not know where I am. My head turns. I shall become mad! it is too much—too much!" Rodolphe soothed him, and Louise continued: "I redoubled my zeal to show my gratitude. The housekeeper then held me in great aversion; she often placed me in the wrong by not repeating the orders that M. Ferrand gave her for me; I suffered from this, and would have preferred another place; but the obligation of my father to my master prevented my leaving. It was now three months since he had lent the money; he continued to scold me before Madame Séraphin, yet he looked at me sometimes, behind her back, in such a manner as to embarrass me, and he smiled in seeing me blush." "You comprehend, monsieur, he was then about to obtain a judgment against me." "One day," continued Louise, "the housekeeper went out after dinner, as was her custom; the clerks had left the office; they lodged elsewhere. M. Ferrand sent the porter on an errand; I remained in the house alone with my master; I was working in the antechamber; he rang for me. I entered his room; he was standing before the fireplace; I drew near; he turned quickly, and took me by the arm. I was alarmed. I ran into the antechamber and shut the door, holding it with all my strength; the key was on his side." "You understand, monsieur. You hear," said Morel to Rodolphe, "the conduct of this worthy benefactor." "At the end of a few moments the door yielded to his efforts," continued Louise. "I blew out the light—he

called me. I made no answer. He then said, in a voice trembling with rage, 'If you conduct thus, I will send your father to prison for the money he owes and cannot pay.' I begged him to have pity on me; promised to do everything I could to serve him, and show my gratitude, but I declared nothing could induce me to degrade myself." "Yes; this is the language of Louise," said Morel, "of my Louise, when she had the right to be proud. But how? Continue—continue." * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

"The next morning after this scene, in spite of the threats of my master, I came here and told my father all. He wished to make me leave the house at once—but there was the prison. The little that I earned was indispensable to the family, since the illness of my mother; and the bad character which M. Ferrand threatened to give me would prevent my seeking or obtaining another place for a long time, perhaps."

"Yes," said Morel, with great bitterness, "we had the cowardice, the selfishness, to let our child return there. Oh! I told you truly, poverty, poverty, how many crimes it causes to be committed!" "Alas! my father; did you not try all means to obtain the money? that being impossible, we had to submit." "Go on, go on, continue. Your parents have been your executioners; we are more culpable than you are," said the artisan, concealing his face in his hands.

"When I saw my master again," said Louise, "he acted towards me as usual, cross and harshly; he said not a word of the past; the housekeeper continued to torment me; she hardly gave me enough to eat, locked up the bread; sometimes, out of wickedness, she would defile the remains of the dinner before my eyes, for she always ate with M. Ferrand. At night I hardly slept; I feared at each moment to see the notary enter my room; he had taken away the commode with which I had barricaded my door; there only remained a chair, a little table, and my trunk; I always retired to bed dressed. For some time he left me tranquil; he did not even look at me. I began to be at ease, thinking that he thought no more of me. One Sunday he allowed me to go out; I came to announce this good news to my parents. We were all very happy! It is up to this moment you have known all, 'mon père.' What remains to tell," and the voice of Louise trembled, "is frightful! I have always concealed it from you."

"Oh! I was very sure of it—very sure that you concealed a secret from me," cried Morel, with a kind of wandering and a singular volubility of expression which astonished Rodolphe. "Your pallor, your expression, should have enlightened me. A hundred times I have spoken to your mother; but, bah! bah! bah! she always repelled me! Look at us well! look at us! To escape a prison, leave our daughter at this monster's? And our child, where does she go to? On the criminal bench! Ah! but also—in fine—who knows? exactly—because one is poor—yes—but the others? bah! bah! the others." Then stopping, as if to collect his thoughts, Morel struck himself on the forehead, and cried, "Stop! I do not know what I say. My head pains dreadfully. It seems to me I am drunk." And he concealed his face in his hands.

Rodolphe, not wishing to let Louise see how much he was alarmed at the incoherent language of her father, said, gravely, "You are not just, Morel; it was not for herself alone, but for her mother, for her children, for yourself, that your poor wife feared the consequences of Louise leaving the notary. Accuse no one. Let all the maledictions, all your hatred, fall on one man—on this monster of hypocrisy, who placed a girl between dishonour and ruin; the death, perhaps, of her father and his family; on this master, who abused in an infamous manner his power as a master. But patience, I have told you Providence often reserves for great crimes a surprising and frightful vengeance."

The words of Rodolphe were stamped with such force and conviction, in speaking of this providential vengeance, that Louise looked at him with surprise, almost with fear.

"Continue, my child," said he; "conceal nothing; this is more important than you think." "I began, then, to feel somewhat of security," said Louise, "when one night M. Ferrand and his housekeeper both went out, each their own way. They did not dine at home; I remained alone. As usual, they left me some bread and water, and wine; my work finished, I dined, and then, fearing to remain alone in the apartments, I went up to my own room, after having lighted M. Ferrand's lamp. When he went out at night no one waited for him. I began to sew, and, as was very unusual, by degrees sleep overpowered me. Ah! my father," cried Louise, "you will not believe me—you will accuse me of falsehood; and yet, on the corpse of my little sister, I swear I tell you the truth." "Explain yourself," said Rodolphe. "Alas! monsieur, for seven months I sought in vain to explain to myself this frightful night. I have almost lost my reason in trying to explore this mystery."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried the artisan, "what is she going to say?" "I was, contrary to my custom, asleep on my chair," continued Louise. "This is the last thing I recollect. Before—before—oh! my father, pardon. I swear to you I am not culpable." "I believe you! I believe you! but speak!" "I do not know how long I slept, but when I awoke I was still in my chamber, but—" * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

"Oh! the wretch! the wretch!" cried Rodolphe. "Do you know, Morel, what he gave her to drink?" The artisan looked at Rodolphe, but made no reply. "The housekeeper, his accomplice, had put in the drink of Louise a soporific, opium, without doubt; the strength, the senses of your child have been paralyzed for some hours; when she awoke from this lethargic sleep the crime was committed."

"Ah! now," cried Louise, "my misfortune is explained; do you see, my father, I am less culpable than I appear to be. My father! father! answer me then!"

The look of the artisan was of a frightful vagueness.

Such horrible perversity could not be understood by this honest and simple-hearted man. He could hardly comprehend the frightful reve-

lation. And, besides, it must be said, that for some moments his reason had deserted him; at each moment his ideas became more obscure; then he fell into that vacuity of thought which is to the mind what night is to the sight: formidable symptoms of mental alienation. Yet Morel answered in a quick, dull, and mournful tone, "Oh! yes, it is very wicked, very wicked, wicked."

And he fell back into his apathy. Rodolphe looked at him with anxiety; he thought that the intensity of indignation began to be exhausted with him; the same as after violent griefs tears are often wanting. Wishing to terminate as soon as possible this sad conversation, Rodolphe said to Louise,

"Courage, my child; finish to unveil this tissue of horrors."

"Alas! monsieur, what you have heard is nothing as yet." * * * * *

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"Ah! all precautions were taken to conceal his enormity!" said Rodolphe.

"Yes, monsieur, and I was ruined. To all that he said to me I could find no answer. Ignorant what drink I had taken, I could not explain my long sleep. Appearances were against me. If I complained, every one would condemn me; it must be so, for to me all was an impenetrable mystery."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CRIME.

Rodolphe remained confounded at the detestable villany of M. Ferrand. "Then," said he to Louise, "you did not dare to complain to your father of the odious conduct of the notary?"

"No, monsieur; I feared he would have thought me the accomplice instead of the victim; and, besides, I feared that, in his anger, my father would forget that his liberty, the existence of his family, depended entirely upon my master." * * * * *

"And was his conduct less brutal towards you afterward?"

"No, monsieur; to drive away suspicion, when by chance he had the Curé of Bonne Nouvelle and his vicar to dinner, my master addressed me before them with severe reproaches; he prayed the curé to admonish me; he said that sooner or later I should be lost; that my manners were too free with his clerks; that I was idle; that he kept me out of charity for my father, an honest man with a family, whom he had served. All this was false. I never saw the clerks; they were in a separate building from us." "And when you found yourself alone with M. Ferrand, how did he explain his conduct towards you before the curé!" "He assured me that he joked. But the curé took these accusations for serious; he told me severely that one must be doubly vicious to act thus in a holy house, where I had religious examples continually under my eyes. To that I did not know what to answer; I held down my head, blushing; my silence, my confusion, turned still more against me; my life was such a burden that several times I was on the point of destroying myself; but I thought of my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, whom I helped to support. I resigned myself; in the midst of my degradation I found a consolation; at least, my father was saved from prison A new misfortune overwhelmed me; I was enciente. I saw myself altogether lost. I do not know why, I had a presentiment that M Ferrand, in learning an event which should have rendered him less cruel towards me, would increase his bad treatment; I was, however, far from supposing what would happen."

Morel recovered from his momentary aberration, looked around him with astonishment, passed his hand over his face, collected his thoughts, and said to his daughter,

"It seems to me I have forgotten myself for a moment—fatigue, sorrow. What did you say?" "When M Ferrand was informed of my situation—" The artisan made a movement of despair; Rodolphe calmed him with a look.

"Go on, I will listen to the end," said Morel. "Go on, go on." Louise resumed. "I asked M Ferrand by what means I should conceal my shame. * * * * Interrupting me with indignation, and a feigned surprise, he pretended not to understand me; he asked me if I were mad; frightened, I cried, 'but, mon Dieu, what do you wish to become of me now! If you have no pity on me, have, at least, some pity on your child!' 'What a horror!' cried he, raising his hands towards heaven. 'How, wretch! you have the audacity to accuse me of being corrupt enough to descend to a girl of your class! you have effrontery enough to accuse me! I, who have a hundred times repeated before the most respectable witnesses that you would be ruined, vile débauchée! Leave my house this moment—I drive you.'"

Rodolphe and Morel remained horror-struck; such infernal hypocrisy overpowered them. 'Oh! I confess," said Rodolphe, "this passes all conception." Morel said nothing; his eyes became enlarged in a fearful manner; a convulsive spasm contracted his features; he descended from the bench where he was seated, opened quickly a drawer, and took out a strong and very sharp file, with a wooden handle, and rushed towards the door.

Rodolphe, divining his thoughts, seized him by the arm and stopped him. "Morel, where are you going to? You will ruin yourself, unfortunate man!" "Take care!" cried the artisan, furiously, struggling. "I shall commit two crimes instead of one!" and the madman threatened Rodolphe.

"My father, it is our saviour!" cried Louise.

"He is mocking us! bah! bah! he wishes to save him, the notary!" answered Morel, completely wild, and contending with Rodolphe. At the end of a second, he succeeded in disarming him, opened the door, and threw the instrument on the staircase. Louise ran to the artisan, held him in her arms, and said, "Father, he is our benefactor! you have raised your hand on him; come to yourself!"

These words recalled Morel to himself; he covered his face with his hands, and, without saying a word, he fell at Rodolphe's feet. "Raise yourself, unfortunate father," said Rodolphe, kindly. "Patience—patience; I understand your fury, I partake of your hatred; but, in the name even of your vengeance, do not compromise it."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried the artisan, raising himself up. "But what can justice—the law—do in such a case? Poor as we are! when we go and accuse the powerful, rich, and respected man, they will laugh in our face, ah, ah, ah!" and he laughed convulsively. "And they will be right. Where are our proofs? yes, our proofs? They will not believe us. Therefore, I tell you," cried he, in another storm of madness, "I tell you I have no confidence but in the impartiality of the knife."

"Silence, Morel; grief makes you wander," said Rodolphe, suddenly. "Let your daughter speak; the moments are precious, the magistrate awaits; I must know all—I tell you, all. Continue, my child." "It is useless, monsieur," said Louise, "to speak to you of my tears, my prayers; I was disregarded. This took place at ten o'clock in the morning, in the cabinet of M. Ferrand; the curé was to breakfast with him that morning; he entered at the moment my master was loading me with reproaches and outrages: he appeared much vexed at the sight of the priest." "And what did he say then?" "He soon made up his mind what course to pursue; he cried, pointing to me, 'Well! Monsieur l'Abbé, I said truly that this creature would be ruined. She is lost—lost forever; she has just acknowledged to me her fault and her shame, begging me to save her. And to think that I, through pity, have received such a wretch into my house!' 'How,' said the abbé to me, with indignation; 'in spite of the salutary councils which your master has given you so often before me, you have thus degraded yourself! Oh! this is unpardonable.' 'My friend, after the kindness you have shown her and her family, pity would be a weakness.' 'Be inexorable,' said the abbé, a dupe, like everybody else, of the hypocrisy of M. Ferrand."

"And you did not at once unmask the scoundrel?" said Rodolphe. "Mon Dieu! monsieur, I was terrified, my head turned; I dared not, I could not pronounce a word; yet I wished to speak, to defend myself. But, monsieur, I cried— 'Not a word more, unworthy creature,' said M. Ferrand, interrupting me; 'you have heard M. l'Abbé. Pity would be weakness: in an hour you leave my house.' Then, without giving me time to answer, he led the abbé into another room.

"After the departure of M. Ferrand," continued Louise, "I was for a moment, as it were, delirious. I saw myself driven from his house, not able to get another place, on account of my situation and the bad character my master would give me. I did not doubt but that in his anger he would imprison my father. I did not know what would become of me; I went, for refuge and to weep, to my chamber. At the end of two hours M. Ferrand appeared. 'Is your trunk ready?' said he. 'Mercy!' I cried, falling at his feet, 'do not send me away in the state in which I am; what will become of me? I can find no other place!' 'So much the better; God will thus punish your conduct and your lies.' 'You dare to say I lie!' cried I, indignantly; 'you dare to say you are not the cause of my ruin!' 'Leave my house at once, you infamous creature, since you persist in your calumnies,' cried he, in a terrible voice. 'And to punish you, to-morrow I will imprison your father!' 'Well! no, no!' said I, aghast 'I will accuse you no longer, monsieur—I promise it; but do not drive me away—have pity on my father; the little that I earn here supports my family. Keep me here—I will say nothing—I will conceal everything as long as I can, and then—you can send me away.'

"After renewed supplications, M. Ferrand consented to my prayers; I regarded it as a great favour, so frightful was my condition. Yet, for the five months which followed this cruel scene, I was very unhappy, very cruelly treated; sometimes only M. Germain, whom I saw but seldom, interrogated me with kindness on the subject of my sorrows; but shame forbade my confession."

"Is it not about this time that he came to live here?"

"Yes, monsieur, he wished for a room near the temple or the arsenal; there was one to be let here; it suited him." "And you never thought of confiding your sorrows to M. Germain?" asked Rodolphe. "No, monsieur, he was also a dupe of M. Ferrand's; he said he was hard and exacting, but he thought him the most honest man in the world. I passed these five months in tears, in continual agony; with care, I had concealed my situation from all eyes, but I could hope to do so no longer. The future was for me most dreadful; M. Ferrand had declared he would not keep me any longer with him. I was thus about to be deprived of the small resource that aided our family to live. Cursed, driven away by my father; for, after the falsehoods that I had told him to dissipate his suspicions, he would not believe me to be the victim of M. Ferrand. What was to become of me? where was I to fly? where to find a refuge? I had, then, a very wicked idea. I confess this, monsieur, because I wish to conceal nothing, even that which may cast suspicion on me, and also to show you to what an extremity I was reduced by the cruelty of M. Ferrand. If I had yielded to a fatal thought, would he not have been an accomplice of my crime?"

After a moment's silence, Louise resumed with an effort, and in a trembling voice, "I had heard from the 'portière' that a quack lived in the house—and—" She could not finish.

Rodolphe remembered that at his first interview with Madame Pipelet he had received from the postman, in the absence of the "portière," a letter written on coarse paper, in a disguised hand, and on which he had remarked the traces of tears. "And you did write him, unhappy child—three days since? On this letter you have wept; your writing was disguised." Louise looked at Rodolphe with affright. "How do you know, monsieur?"

"Calm yourself. I was alone in the lodge of Madame Pipelet when this letter was handed in, and it was my chance to receive it." "Well! yes, monsieur; in this letter, without signature, I wrote to M. Bradamanté, that, not daring to come to him, I begged he would meet me that evening near the Chateau d'Eau. I was half crazy. I wished to ask his fearful advice. I left my master's house to meet him, but my reason returned; I regained the house, I did not see him. Thus a scene took place, from the consequences of which I am now suf-

fering—M. Ferrand believing me gone out for two hours, while after a very short time I returned.

"In pacing before the little door of the garden, to my great astonishment I saw it open; I entered that way, and I carried the key to the cabinet of M. Ferrand, where it was ordinarily kept. This was next to his bedchamber, the most retired place in the house; it was there he gave his secret audiences. You will see, monsieur, why I give you these details: knowing all the ways of the house very well, after having crossed the dining-room, which was lighted, I entered into the saloon in the dark, then to the cabinet, as I said before. The door of his chamber opened at the moment I placed the key on the table. Hardly had my master perceived me by the light which was burning in his chamber than he closed the door quickly on a person whom I could not see; then he threw himself on me, seized me by the throat as if he wished to strangle me, and said to me in a low tone, at once furious and alarmed, 'You were spying; you listened at the door! what did you hear? Answer, answer! or I'll strangle you.' But, changing his mind without giving me time to say a word, he pushed me backward into the dining-room: the office was open; he threw me into it brutally, and locked the door."

"And you heard nothing of his conversation?"

"Nothing, monsieur; if I had known he had anybody in his room, I should have taken care not to have entered the cabinet; he forbade even Madame Seraphin to do so." "And when you came out of the office, what did he say to you?" "It was the housekeeper who came to conduct me, and I did not see him again that night. The alarm I had experienced had made me very ill. The next morning, as I came down stairs, I met M. Ferrand. I shuddered in thinking of his threats of the evening previous: what was my surprise when he said to me, almostly calmly, 'You know I forbid any one to come into my cabinet when I have some one in my chamber; but for the short time that you have to remain here it is useless to scold any more;' and he passed into his office. This moderation surprised me, after the violence of the previous evening. I went on with my usual duties; I went to put in order his sleeping apartment. In arranging some clothes in a dark closet near the alcove, I was suddenly taken very ill; I felt that I was about to faint. In falling, I grasped at a cloak which was hanging against the wall. I dragged it along with me; it covered me completely as I lay upon the floor. When I came to myself, the glass door of this closet was shut. I heard the voice of M. Ferrand. He spoke very loud. Recollecting the scene of the previous evening, I thought myself killed if I stirred; I supposed that, concealed under the mantle which had fallen on me, my master, in shutting the door, had not perceived me. If he discovered me, how could I make him believe that my presence was accidental? I held my breath, and, in spite of myself, I heard the end of this conversation, which doubtless had been commenced for some time.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONVERSATION.

"And who was the person who was talking with him?" asked Rodolphe.

"I am ignorant, monsieur; I did not know the voice."

"And what did they say?"

"The conversation had lasted for some time, doubtless, for this is all I heard. 'Nothing can be plainer,' said this unknown voice; 'a queer fish, called Bras-Rouge, a determined smuggler, has brought me, for the affair I have just spoken about, in connexion with a family of fresh-water pirates, who are established at the point of a little island near Asnières; they are the greatest bandits in the land: the father and grandfather have both been guillotined, two of the sons are to the galleys for life; but the mother, three sons, and two daughters are left, all as great villains one as the other. It is said that at night, to rob on both sides of the Seine, they come down in their boats sometimes as far as Bercy. They are folks who will kill the first come for a crown; but we have no need of them; it suffices if they will give hospitality to your country lady. The Martials (this is the name of my pirates) will pass in her eyes for an honest family of fishermen; I will go on your account, and make two or three visits to your young lady; I will order her certain potions, and at the end of eight days she will make acquaintance with the cemetery of Asnières. In the villages, a death passes like a letter through the postoffice, while at Paris they scrutinize too closely. But when will you send your country girl to the island, so that I can advise the Martials what part they have to play?'

"'She will arrive to-morrow, and the day after she will be there,' answered M. Ferrand; 'and I will inform her that the Doctor Vincent will take care of her on my account.' 'Agreed for the name of Vincent,' said the voice; 'I like that as well as any other.'"

"What is this new mystery of crime and infamy?" said Rodolphe, more and more surprised.

"New? no, monsieur; you will see that it has reference to a crime that you do know," answered Louise, and she continued: "I heard the movement of chairs; the conversation was at an end, 'I do not ask you to be secret,' said M. Ferrand; 'you hold me as I hold you.' 'That proves that we can serve, but never injure one another,' answered the voice; 'see my zeal! I received your letter last night at ten o'clock, this morning I am here; farewell, accomplice; do not forget the island of Asnières, the fisher Martial, and the Doctor Vincent. Thanks to these three magical words, your country girl has only eight days left.' 'Stop,' said M. Ferrand, 'while I go and unbolt the door of my cabinet, and see if there is any one in the antechamber, that you may go out by the garden as you came in.' M. Ferrand went out a moment, and then returned, and finally I heard him go off with the unknown person. You may imagine my alarm, monsieur, during this conversation, and my horror at knowing such a secret. Two hours after this conversation, Madame Seraphin came to seek me in my cham-

ber, where I had gone more trembling and sick than I had yet been. 'Monsieur wants you,' said she; 'you have more good luck than you deserve; come, descend. You are very pale; what you are going to learn will give you more colour.'

"I followed Madame Seraphin; M. Ferrand was in his cabinet. At seeing him I shuddered in spite of myself, yet he had a less wicked look than usual; he looked at me fixedly for a long time, as if he wished to read my thoughts. I cast down my eyes. 'You appear very ill,' said he. 'Yes, monsieur,' I answered, astonished that he did not address me familiarly as usual. 'It is very plain,' added he, 'it is in consequence of your situation; but notwithstanding your lies, your bad conduct, and your indiscretion of yesterday,' added he, in a softened tone, 'I have pity on you. Although I have treated you as you deserved before the curé of the parish, such an affair as this will be a scandal to my house; and, moreover, your family will be in despair. I consent, under these circumstances, to come to your assistance.' 'Ah! monsieur,' I cried, 'these words of kindness on your part make me forget all!' 'Forget what?' asked he, sharply. 'Nothing, nothing; pardon, monsieur,' answered I, fearing to irritate him, and believing in his professions of pity. 'Listen to me,' said he; 'you will go to see your father to-day; you will announce to him that I am going to send you for two or three months in the country to take charge of a house I have just bought; during your absence I will send him your wages. To-morrow you will leave Paris; I will give you a letter of recommendation for Madame Martial, the mother of a family of honest fishermen who live near Asnières. You will require to say you came from the country, nothing more. Later you will know the object of this letter, all for your interest. Madame Martial will treat you as her child; a physician, a friend of mine, Doctor Vincent, will take you under his charge. You see how good I am for you!'"

"What a horrible plot!" cried Rodolphe; "now I comprehend all. Believing that the evening previous you had become possessed of a secret of great importance to him, he wished to get rid of you. He had probably some interest in deceiving his accomplice, in representing you as a girl from the country. What must have been your affright at this proposition?" "It was a great blow! I was completely bewildered; I knew not what to answer; I looked at M. Ferrand with affright; my mind wandered. I was about, perhaps, to risk my life in telling him that I had overheard his projects in the morning, when, happily, I recollected the new dangers to which this would expose me. 'You do not comprehend me, then?' asked he, with impatience. 'Yes, monsieur; but,' said I, trembling, 'I prefer not to go to the country.' 'Why not? You will be perfectly well taken care of, where I shall send you.' 'No, no, I will not go; I prefer to remain in Paris, near my family; I had rather confess all, die with shame, if it is necessary.' 'You refuse me!' said M. Ferrand, restraining his anger, and looking at me with attention. 'Why have you changed your mind so quickly? Just now you accepted.' I saw that if he suspected me, I was lost; I answered that I did not think that he meant me to leave Paris and my family.' 'But you will dishonour your family, wretch,' cried he; and not being able any longer to contain himself, he seized me by the arm, and pushed me so violently that I fell. 'I give you until after to-morrow,' cried he; 'to-morrow you shall leave this to go to the Martials, or to tell your father I have sent you away, and that he goes the same day to prison.' I remained alone stretched on the earth; I had not the strength to get up. Madame Seraphin came, and with her assistance I regained my chamber. I threw myself on my bed; I remained there until night.

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"Amid the horrors of this frightful, solitary night, I had a moment of bitter joy: it was when I pressed my child in my arms." And the voice of Louise was suffocated with her tears. Morel had listened to the story of his daughter with an apathy, a silent indifference which alarmed Rodolphe.

Yet, seeing her in tears, he looked at her fixedly, and said,

"She weeps—she weeps: why, then, does she weep? Oh yes; I know, I know—the notary. Continue, my poor Louise; you are my child. I love you still—just now I did not know you; my tears obscured my sight. Oh! mon Dieu! my head—my head—it gives me great pain." "You see I am not culpable; is it not so, father?" "Yes, yes." "It is a great sorrow—but I feared the notary so much!" "The notary? oh! I believe you—he is so bad—so wicked!" "You pardon me now?" "Yes." "Truly?" "Yes, truly. Oh, I love you still—go—although—I cannot—say—do you see—because—oh! my head! my head!" Louise looked at Rodolphe with alarm.

"He suffers; let him compose himself. Continue."

"I pressed my child to my heart. I was astonished not to hear it breathe, but I said to myself, the respiration of so small a child can hardly be heard; and yet it seemed to me that it was very cold. I had no light. I waited until dawn, trying to warm it as well as I could. At daylight I found it was stiff—icy. I placed my hand on its heart: it did not beat—it was dead."

And Louise burst into bitter sobs.

"Oh! at this moment," continued she, "thoughts passed impossible to describe. I remember it confusedly as a dream; it was at once despair, terror, anger, and, above all, I was seized with another alarm; I no longer dreaded that M. Ferrand would strangle me, but I feared that if my child was found dead at my side, I should be accused of having killed it; then I had but one thought, that of concealing it from all eyes; in that way, my dishonour would not be known; I would no longer have to dread the anger of my father; I should escape the vengeance of M. Ferrand; then I could leave his house, procure another place, and continue to earn something towards the support of my family. Alas! monsieur, such are the reasons which induced me to acknowledge nothing, to conceal the body of my child from all eyes. It was wrong, certainly; but the position I was in, overwhelmed on all sides,

crushed by long sufferings, almost delirious, I did not reflect to what I exposed myself, if I was discovered."

"What tortures! what tortures!" said Rodolphe, overcome.

"Daylight increased," continued Louise: "in a short time every one would be awake in the house. I hesitated no longer. I wrapped up my child as well as I could; I descended very softly; I went to the end of the garden to make a hole in the ground to bury it; but it had frozen all night—the earth was too hard. Then I hid the body at the bottom of a kind of cellar where no one entered in winter. I covered it with an empty flower-box, and I returned to my room without seeing any one. Of all I tell you, monsieur, I have but a confused idea. Feeble as I was, I can as yet hardly comprehend how I had the face to do all this. At nine o'clock, Madame Séraphin came to know why I was not yet up. I said that I was so ill, that I begged her to let me remain in bed all day; the next day I would quit the house, since M. Ferrand sent me away. At the end of one hour he came himself. 'You are worse; this is the consequence of your self-will,' said he: 'if you had profited by my offers, to-day you would have been established with kind people, who would have taken every care of you; however, I will not be so inhuman as to let you suffer; to-night, Doctor Vincent will come to see you.' At this threat I shuddered with fear. I answered that I was wrong the night before to refuse his offers; that I accepted them; but that, as yet being too ill to leave, I would go the next day but one to the Martials', and that it was useless to send for Doctor Vincent. I only wished to gain time; I was decided to leave the house, and to go to my father. I hoped in this manner he would be ignorant of all. But, deceived by my promise, M. Ferrand was almost affectionate towards me, and recommended me, for the first time in his life, to the care of Madame Séraphin.

"I passed the day in mental agony, trembling at each moment that chance would cause a discovery of the body of my child. I only desired one thing—that the cold might cease, so that I might be able to dig a grave. It snowed—that gave me hopes. I remained all day in bed. The night being come, I waited until every one was asleep. I had strength to get up, to go to the woodpile to look for a hatchet to cut some wood, to make a hole in the frozen ground. After infinite trouble, I at last succeeded: then I took the body, I wept again over it, and I buried it as I could, in the little flower-box. I did not know the prayer for the dead; I said a pater and an ave, praying the bon Dieu to receive it into his paradise. I thought my courage would have failed me when I covered it with the earth. A mother! interring her child! At length I succeeded. Oh! what it cost me, mon Dieu! I placed the snow over the grave, so that nothing should be seen. The moon gave me light. When all was finished I could not make up my mind to come away. Poor little thing! in the frozen ground—under the snow. Although it was dead, it seemed to me that it must feel the cold. At length I returned to my chamber. I went to my bed with a violent fever. In the morning M. Ferrand sent to know how I was. I answered that I felt rather better, and that I should certainly be ready to leave for the country the next day. I remained all this day still in bed, in order to gain strength. In the evening I arose. I went to the kitchen to warm myself. I remained late, all alone. I went to the garden to say a last prayer. At the moment I ascended towards my chamber, I met M. Germain on the landing-place of the cabinet, where he sometimes worked; he was very pale. He said to me, quickly, placing a rouleau in my hand, 'Your father will be arrested early to-morrow morning; here is the money: as soon as it is day, run to his house It is only to-day I have found out M. Ferrand; he is a bad man; I will unmask him. Do not, above all, say that you have this money from me;' and M. Germain, not giving me time to thank him, descended the stairs quickly."

CHAPTER XX.

MADNESS.

"This morning," continued Louise, "before any one was up, I came here with the money, but it was not sufficient; and, without your generosity, he would not have escaped the bailiffs. Probably, after my departure, some one has gone to my room and discovered some traces which has led to this discovery. A last service I ask of you, monsieur," said Louise, drawing out the rouleau of gold from her pocket: "will you hand this money to M. Germain? I promised him not to tell any one that he was employed at M. Ferrand's, but, since you know it, I have not been indiscreet. Now, monsieur, I repeat, before God, who hears me, and before you, I have not said a word that is not true. I have not sought to—" But, interrupting herself suddenly, Louise, much alarmed, cried, "Monsieur! look at my father! look at him! what is the matter with him?" Morel had listened to the last part of this narrative with sombre indifference, which Rodolphe had explained to himself, by attributing it to the overwhelming grief of this unhappy man; after so many violent shocks, so oft repeated, his tears were dried up, his sensibility blunted—he has not even strength enough left to vent his indignation, thought Rodolphe. He was mistaken. Like the flickering light of a lamp about to expire, the reason of Morel, already strongly shaken, vacillated for some time, showed forth now and then some last rays of intelligence, and then suddenly became obscured.

Absolutely a stranger to what was said, to what passed around him, for some moments the artisan had become mad!

Although his wheel was placed the other side of his work-table, and he had in his hands neither diamonds nor tools, the artisan, attentively occupied, imitated his ordinary occupations. He accompanied this pantomime with a kind of rolling noise with his tongue, making a noise like the wheel when in operation. "But, monsieur," said Louise, with increased alarm, "look at my father!" Then approaching him, she said, "Father! father!"

Morel looked at his daughter with that vacant stare so peculiar to lunatics. Without

ceasing for a moment his imaginary occupation, he answered, in a soft and mournful voice, "I owe thirteen hundred francs to the notary, the price of Louise's blood. I must work, work, work! Oh, I will pay, pay—will pay!" "Mon Dieu, monsieur, but this is not possible! this cannot last! he is not altogether mad, is he?" cried Louise, in a heart-rending tone. "He will come to himself—it is only a momentary—"

"Morel! my friend!" said Rodolphe, "we are here. Your daughter is alongside of you; she is innocent."

"Thirteen hundred francs," said the artisan, without looking at Rodolphe, and continuing his imaginary occupation. "Father!" cried Louise, throwing herself at his feet, and taking hold of his hands, "it is I, Louise!" "Thirteen hundred francs," repeated he, endeavouring to disengage himself from Louise; "thirteen hundred francs; or else," added he, in a low and confidential tone, "or else, Louise is guillotined;" and he began to turn his wheel. Louise uttered a piercing cry. "He is mad!" cried she; "he is mad! and it is I, it is I, who am the cause! Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Yet it is not my fault; I did not wish to do wrong: it is this monster!"

"Come, poor child, courage!" said Rodolphe, "let us hope. This madness will be but momentary. Your father has suffered too much; his reason has become weakened: he will get better."

"But my mother—my grandmother—my brothers and sister! what will become of them?" cried Louise. "See, they are deprived of both my father and myself. They will die with hunger, with poverty and despair!" "Am I not here? Be calm, they shall want for nothing. Courage! I pray you; your revelation will cause the punishment of a great criminal. You have convinced me of your innocence; it shall certainly be known and acknowledged." "Ah! monsieur, you see dishonour—madness—death: these are the evils he has caused—this man! nothing can be done to him—nothing! Ah! this thought completes all my troubles!" "Far from that; let a contrary thought aid you in supporting them." "What do you say, monsieur?" "Carry with you the certainty that you shall be avenged." "Avenged?"

"Yes! and I swear to you," answered Rodolphe, with solemnity, "I swear to you that, his crimes proved, this man shall severely expiate the dishonour, madness, and death he has caused. If the laws are powerless, if his cunning and address equal his misdeeds, to his cunning shall be opposed cunning; to his misdeeds, misdeeds; but which shall be to them what the just and avenging punishment, inflicted on the culpable by an inexorable hand, is to the cowardly and concealed murder." "Ah! monsieur, may God hear you! It is not myself I wish to revenge, it is my crazy father; it is—" then, turning to her father, she cried, "Father, farewell! They take me to prison—I shall never see you more! it is your Louise who bids you farewell—father! father! father!"

At this touching appeal, nothing responded; nothing responded in this poor annihilated mind—nothing. The paternal cords, always the last broken, vibrated no more. * * *

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The door of the garret opened, and the officer entered.

"My moments are counted, monsieur," said he to Rodolphe: "I declare to you, with regret, that it is impossible for me to wait any longer." "The conversation is terminated, monsieur," answered Rodolphe, bitterly, pointing to the artisan. "Louise has nothing more to say to her father—he has nothing more to hear from his daughter—he is mad." "Grand Dieu! just what I feared! Ah! it is frightful!" cried the magistrate. And, approaching quickly to the artisan, after a moment's examination, he was convinced of the sad reality. "Ah! monsieur," said he, sadly, to Rodolphe: "I have already made sincere wishes that the innocence of this young girl may be proved. But, now, I will not confine myself to wishes; no, no: I will tell of this last dreadful blow, and, do not doubt it, the judges will have a motive the more to find her innocent." "Well, well, monsieur," said Rodolphe, "in acting thus, it is not only your duty you fulfil, but you are performing a worthy part." "Believe me, monsieur, some of our missions are so painful, that it is with happiness, with gratitude, that we interest ourselves in what is good and virtuous." "One word more, monsieur: the revelations of Louise Morel have evidently proved to me her innocence. Can you inform me how her pretended crime has been discovered, or, rather, denounced?" "This morning," said the magistrate, "a woman in the employ of M. Ferrand, notary, came, and declared to me that, after the precipitate flight of Louise Morel, who she knew was 'enceinte,' she had gone up into the chamber of this young girl, and that she had there found traces of an 'accouchement clandestin;' after some investigations, some footsteps in the snow had led to the discovery of a new-born child interred in the garden.

"On the relation of this woman, I went to the Rue de Sentier. I found M. Jacques Ferrand very indignant that such a thing should have occurred in his house. M. Le Curé, of the Church of Bonne-Nouvelle, whom he had sent for, also declared to me that the girl, Morel, had acknowledged her fault before him, one day, that she had implored the pity and indulgence of her master, and that, still more, he had often heard M. Ferrand give Louise Morel the most severe reprimands, predicting that, sooner or later, she would be ruined. 'A prediction which had just been realized so unfortunately,' added the abbé. The indignation of M. Ferrand," continued the magistrate, "appeared to me so real, that I partook of it. He told me that, without doubt, Louise Morel had taken refuge at her father's. I came here at once; the crime being flagrant, I had the right to proceed to an immediate arrest."

Rodolphe restrained himself in hearing the indignation of M. Ferrand spoken of: he said to the magistrate,

"I thank you a thousand times, monsieur, for your kindness, and for the assistance you tender Louise; I shall conduct this unfortunate man to a lunatic hospital, as well as the mother of his wife." Then, addressing Louise, who, yet kneeled before her father, trying, in vain,

to restore him to reason: "Be resigned, my child, to go without embracing your mother: spare her this touching farewell. Be assured as to her welfare—nothing shall henceforth be wanting—I will find a woman who will take care of your mother, and your brothers and sister under the superintendence of your good neighbour, Mademoiselle Rigolette. As to your father, nothing shall be spared, that his cure shall be rapid and complete. Courage, then: believe me, virtuous people are often harshly tried by misfortunes, but they always come out of these struggles purer, stronger, and more respected." * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Two hours after the arrest of Louise, the artisan and the old idiot were, by the orders of Rodolphe, conducted by David to Charenton; they were to have chamber treatment, and receive particular care and attention. Morel left the house without resistance; indifferent, he went where they took him; his madness was inoffensive and sad. The grandmother had hunger; they showed her food, she followed this food.

The diamonds and rubies confided to the wife of the artisan were the same day given to Madame Mathieu, the broker, who came to get them. Unfortunately, this woman was watched and followed by Tortillard, who knew the value of the pretended false jewels, from the conversation he had overheard when Morel was arrested by the bailiffs. The son of Bras-Rouge ascertained that she lived on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11.

Rigolette informed Madame Morel, with much tact, of the lunacy of her husband, and the imprisonment of Louise. At first she wept much, uttering sorrowful cries; then, the first feelings of grief over, the poor creature, weak and unsettled, consoled herself, by degrees, in seeing herself and children surrounded by comforts which they owed to the generosity of their benefactor.

As to Rodolphe, his thoughts were bitter in thinking of the revelations of Louise. * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

CHAPTER XXI.

JACQUES FERRAND.

At the time when the events passed which we relate, at one of the extremities of the Rue du Sentier could have been seen a long wall, much cracked, and covered with a coating of plaster, the top protected with pieces of broken glass; this wall, forming the boundary on this side of the garden of Jacques Ferrand, the notary, extended to a building situated on the street, of only one story and a garret. Two large escutcheons of gilded copper, a sign of a notary's office, flanked the worm-eaten "porte cochère," the primitive appearance of which was no longer to be distinguished under the mud which covered it. This door led to a covered passage; on the right was the lodge of an old porter, half deaf, who was to the fraternity of tailors what M. Pipelet was to the bootmakers; on the left a stable, which served the purposes of a cellar, wash-house, woodhouse, and of a growing colony of rabbits, lodged in a manger by the porter, who consoled himself from the pangs of a recent bereavement, in the death of his wife, by raising these domestic animals.

Alongside the lodge was the crooked, narrow, and obscure staircase, leading to the office, as the clients were informed by a hand painted black, the fore-finger pointing to these words on the wall: *The office is on the first floor.* On one side of a large paved court, overgrown with grass, were to be seen the unoccupied carriage-houses; on the other, a rusty iron railing, which enclosed the garden; at the bottom the pavilion, where the notary alone dwelt.

A flight of eight or ten steps of tottering, disjointed stones, covered with moss and worn by time, led to this square pavilion, composed of a kitchen and other offices under ground, "à rez-de-chaussée,"* a first floor and an attic, where Louise had slept.

This pavilion appeared also in a great state of decay; immense cracks were to be seen in the walls; the windows and blinds, once painted gray, had become, with age, almost black; the six windows of the first story, looking upon the court, had no curtains; the glasses were almost incrusted with dirt; on the ground floor they were rather cleaner, and were hung with curtains of a faded yellow, with red flowers. On the side towards the garden the pavilion had but four windows; two were walled up.

This garden, overgrown with wild briers, seemed abandoned; not a single border, not a shrub; a cluster of elms, five or six large trees, some acacias and elders, a yellow grass-plot, walks encumbered with brambles, and bounded by a high wall; such was the sad "ensemble" of the garden and habitation of the notary.

To this appearance, or, rather, to this reality M. Ferrand attached great importance. In the eyes of the vulgar, a carelessness of comfort and prosperity passes almost always for disinterestedness; uncleanliness for austerity.

Comparing the grand financial luxury of some notaries, or the reported toilettes of their wives, to the gloomy mansion of M. Ferrand, so contemptuous of elegance and splendour, the clients felt a kind of respect, or, rather, of blind confidence for this man, who, from the number of his employers, and the fortune he was supposed to possess, could have said, like many of his brethren, My equipage, my country house, my box at the opera, &c., and who, far from that, lived with great economy; thus, deposites, placing money at interest, legacies on trust, all those affairs, in fine, which depend upon the most tried integrity, or the most perfect good faith, flowed into the hands of M. Ferrand. In living as he did, the notary consulted his taste. He detested society, pomp, pleasures dearly bought; had it been otherwise, he would have, without hesitation, sacrificed his most lively wishes to the appearances which it was important to give himself

Some words on the character of this man.

He was a son of the grand family of misers.

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Avarice is, above all, a negative, passive passion.

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For Jacques Ferrand risked, and risked much.

* Ground floor.

He counted on his cunning—it was extreme; on his hypocrisy—it was profound; on his understanding—it was fertile and pliable; on his audacity—it was infernal—to assure impunity to his crimes, and they were already numerous.

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One single passion, or rather appetite, but most disgraceful, ignoble, shameful, but almost ferocious, raised him often to phrensy.

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Save this weakness, Jacques Ferrand loved but gold.

He loved gold for the sake of gold;

Not for the enjoyments it procured: he was stoical.

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Notwithstanding his great cunning, this man had committed two or three errors which the most crafty criminals hardly ever escape from.

Forced by circumstances, it is true, he had two accomplices; this great fault, as he said himself, had been repaired in part; neither of his accomplices could betray him without betraying themselves; nor could any advantage be derived from their denouncing the notary and themselves to public vindictiveness. He was therefore on this head quite at rest

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Some words now on the personal appearance of M. Ferrand, and we will introduce the reader into the study of the notary, where he will find the principal personages of this story. M. Ferrand had passed his fiftieth year. He did not appear more than forty; he was of a medium size, round-shouldered, square built, strong, thick set, red-haired, shaggy as a bear. His hair laid smooth on his temples, the top of his head was bald, his eyebrows hardly to be perceived; his bilious-looking skin was covered with large freckles; but when any lively emotion agitated it, this yellow, clayey visage filled with blood, and became a livid red.

His face was as flat as a death's head, as the vulgar say. His nose crushed down, and "punais;" his lips were so thin, so imperceptible, that his mouth seemed cut in his face; when he smiled in a wicked and sinister manner, the ends of his teeth could be seen, almost all black and decayed. Closely shaved to his temples, this man's countenance had an expression at once austere and sanctified, impassible and rigid, cold and reflecting; his little black eyes—quick, piercing, restless—were hidden by large green spectacles.

Jacques Ferrand had excellent sight, but under the shelter of his spectacles he had great advantage! to observe without being observed; he knew how much a glance of the eye is often and involuntarily significant. In spite of his imperturbable audacity, he had encountered, two or three times in his life, certain powerful looks, before which he had been forced to quail. Now, in some circumstances, it is fatal to cast down your eye before the man who interrogates, accuses, or judges you. The large spectacles of M. Ferrand were then a kind of covered breastwork, from whence he could attentively examine the manœuvres of the enemy; for many such he had to encounter, because many found themselves more or less his dupe.

He affected in his dress a negligence which reached to uncleanliness; or, rather, it was naturally rusty and mean; his face shaved every two or three days, his dirty bald head, his black nails, his old, snuff-coloured coats, his greasy hats, his threadbare cravats, his black woollen hose, his coarse shoes, recommended him singularly to his clients, in giving him an air of detachment from the world, and a perfume of practical philosophy which charmed them. "To what pleasures—what passions—could the notary," said they, "sacrifice the confidence which was shown him? He gained, perhaps, sixty thousand francs a year, and his household was composed of a servant and an old housekeeper; his sole pleasure was to go every Sunday to mass and vespers; he knew no opera comparable to the solemn sounds of the organ, no company which could equal an evening passed at his fireside with the curé of his parish, after a frugal dinner. Finally, he placed his delight in his probity, his pride in his honour, his happiness in his religion."

Such was the opinion of many concerning M. Jacques Ferrand, this good and excellent man!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OFFICE.

The office of M. Ferrand resembled all offices, his clerks all other clerks. It was reached by an antechamber furnished with four old chairs. In the office, properly so called, surrounded by shelves furnished with paper boxes, containing documents belonging to the clients of the notary, five young men, bending over desks of black wood, laughed, talked, or scribbled incessantly. An adjoining room, in which usually remained the first clerk, then an empty room, which, for the sake of secresy, separated the cabinet of the notary from the other offices, such was the "ensemble" of this laboratory of all kinds and sorts. Two o'clock had just struck by an old cuckoo clock, placed between the two windows of the office; a certain agitation seemed to reign among the clerks: some fragments of their conversation will explain the cause of this commotion.

"Certainly, if any one had told me that François Germain was a robber," said one of the young men, "I should have answered, 'You are a liar!'" "And I also!" "And I also!" "I! it produced such an effect on me to see him arrested and taken away by the guard, that I could not eat my breakfast. I was recompensed, however, for it spared me from eating the daily mess of Mother Séraphin."

"Seventeen thousand francs—it is a sum!"

"A famous sum!" "And to say that for seventeen months since he has been cashier, he never has been wanting a centime in his cash account!"

"As for me, I think the 'patron' was wrong to arrest Germain, since the poor fellow swore that he had only taken thirteen hundred francs in gold." "Yes. And so much the more, that he brought back the amount this morning at the moment the patron had sent for the guard."

"That is the consequence of being of such a rigid probity as the patron. Such people are always without pity."

"Never mind; one ought always to think twice before ruining a poor young man who always conducted himself well until now."

"M. Ferrand would reply to that, 'it was for the sake of example.'"

"The example of what? It is of no use to those who are honest; and those who are not know well enough that they are likely to be discovered if they steal."

"The house is, however, a good customer for the officer."

"How?" "'Dame;' this morning the poor Louise; just now Germain." "As for me, the affair of Germain don't appear too clear." "Since he has acknowledged it?" "He confessed that he had taken thirteen hundred francs—yes; but he maintained that he had not taken the remaining fifteen thousand francs in bank bills, and the remaining seven hundred francs that were missing."

"Exactly; since he acknowledged one thing, why not the other?" "It is true, one is as much punished for five hundred as for fifteen thousand francs." "Yes; but one keeps the fifteen thousand francs, and on coming out of prison that makes a nice little establishment, a rogue would say."

"Not so bad!" "One may well say there is something in that." "And Germain, who always defended the patron when we called him a Jesuit!"

"It is, nevertheless, true; why hasn't the patron a right to go to mass? he would say; you have the right to stay away."

"Stop, here is Chalomel; how he will be astonished!"

"About what! what! My good fellows, is there anything new concerning poor Louise?"

"You would have known, 'flâneur,' if you hadn't been absent so long." "Hold; you think it is only a 'pas de clerc'* from here to the Rue de Chaillot." "Oh! bad! bad!"

"Well! this famous Vicomte de Saint Rémy?"

"Has he not come yet?" "No."

"His vehicle was all ready, and his valet de chambre told me that he would come at once; but he did not appear pleased, the domestic said. Ah! gentlemen, here is a fine hotel; one might say it had belonged to the lords of the olden time, as is spoken of in Faublas. Oh! Faublas! there is my hero! my model!" said Chalomel, putting away his umbrella and taking off his overshoes.

"I believe that he is in debt, and there are writs out against him, this viscount." "A writ for thirty-four thousand francs, which has been sent here, since it is here he must come to pay it; the creditor prefers it, why, I know not." "He must be able to pay it now, because he returned last night from the country, where he has been concealed for three days to escape the bailiffs."

"But why did they not levy on his furniture?"

"He is not such an ass! The house is not his; the furniture is in the name of his valet de chambre, who is looked upon as hiring him furnished lodgings, in the same way that his horses and carriages are in the name of his coachman, who says he lets them out to the viscount at so much per month. Oh! he is cunning, this M. de Saint Rémy. But what is that you were talking about? has anything new happened here?"

"Just imagine—about two hours since, the patron came in here like a madman: 'Germain is not here?' cried he. 'No, monsieur.' 'Well! the scoundrel has robbed me, last night, of seventeen thousand francs!' continued the patron."

"Germain steal! Come, come, now."

"You shall see. 'How, sir! are you sure? but it is not possible!' we all cried.

"'I tell you, gentlemen, that I put yesterday, in the bureau where he works, fifteen notes of a thousand francs, besides two thousand francs in gold in a small box: all has disappeared.' At this moment the Père Marriton, the porter, came in and said, 'Monsier, the guard is coming.'"

"And Germain?" "Stop a moment. The patron said to the porter, 'As soon as Germain comes send him here without telling him anything. I wish to confound him before you, gentlemen,' continued the patron. At the end of fifteen minutes poor Germain arrived, as if nothing was the matter; the Mère Séraphin came to bring us our breakfast: she saluted the patron, and said good-day to us very tranquilly. 'Germain, do you not breakfast?' said M. Ferrand. 'No, monsieur, I am not hungry, I thank you.' 'You come very late?' 'Yes, monsieur. I have been to Belleville this morning.' 'To conceal, doubtless, the money you have stolen from me,' cried M. Ferrand with a terrible voice." "And Germain?" "Ah! the poor boy became pale as death, stammering, 'Monsieur, I beg you, I supplicate you, do not ruin me.'" "He had stolen?" "Now do wait, Chalomel. 'Do not ruin me!' said he to the patron.

"'You acknowledge then, wretch?' 'Yes, monsieur; but here is the money that is wanting. I thought I should be able to return it this morning before you were up; unfortunately, a friend, who had a small sum of mine, and whom I thought to find at home last night, had been at Belleville for two days; I was obliged to go there this morning, which has caused my delay. Pardon me, monsieur, do not ruin me! In taking this money, I knew I could return it this morning. Here are the thirteen hundred francs in gold!' 'You have robbed me of fifteen notes, of one thousand francs each, that were in a green portfolio, and two thusand francs in gold!' 'I! never!' cried poor Germain. 'I took the thirteen hundred francs, but not one sous more. I have seen no portfolio in the drawer; there was only two thousand francs in gold in a box.' 'Oh! the infamous liar!' cried the patron. 'You have stolen thirteen hundred francs, you could well steal more; justice will decide. Oh! I shall be without pity for such a frightful breach of confidence. It will be an example.' Finally, my poor Chalomel, the guard arrived, with an officer to make out a commitment; they carried him off, and that's all!"

"Can it be possible? Germain, the cream of honest people!"

"It has appeared to us quite as singular."

"After all, it must be confessed, Germain was reserved; he never would tell where he lived."

* This word has a double meaning: *pas de clerc*, a blunder; *pas de clerc*, step of a clerk.

"That is true." "He always had a mysterious air." "That's no reason why he should steal the money." "Doubtless. It is a remark I make."

"Ah! well, this is news! it is as if some one had given me a blow on the head—Germain—Germain—who looked so honest; whom one would have given to the 'bon Dieu' without confession!" "One would have said that he had a presentiment of his misfortune."

"Why?" "For some time past he looked as if something troubled him." "It was, perhaps, concerning Louise."

"Louise?" "Oh! I only repeat what Madame Séraphin said this morning."

"What then? what then?"

"That he was the lover of Louise, and the—"

"Ah! the cunning fellow."

"Stop, stop, stop!" "Ah, bah!"

"It is not true!" "How do you know that, Chalomel?" "It is not two weeks since, that Germain told me, in confidence, that he was dead in love with a little 'ouvriére,' who he had known in the house where he lived; he had tears in his eyes when he spoke to me about her."

"Oh! Chalomel! Chalomel!"

"He says that Faublas is his hero, and yet he is simple enough, stupid enough, not to comprehend that one can be in love with one and the lover of another."

"I tell you that Germain spoke seriously—"

At this moment the chief clerk entered the office.

"Well," said he, "Chalomel, have you finished all your errands?" "Yes, M. Dubois, I have been to M. de Saint Rémy; he will be here shortly to pay."

"And to Madame la Comtesse M'Gregor?"

"Likewise; here is the answer."

"And to the Countess de Orbigny?"

"She is much obliged to the patron; she arrived yesterday from Normandy, she did not expect an answer so soon; here is her letter. I have also been to the intendant of the Marquis d'Harville, as he required, for the charges on the contract I signed the other day at the hotel."

"You told him that it was not pressing?"

"Yes, but he would pay it. There is the money. Ah! I forgot that this card was here, below, at the porter's; a word in pencil written underneath by the porter; this gentleman asked for the patron; he has left this:"

"'Walter Murphy,' read the chief clerk; and then in pencil, '*Will return at three o'clock, on important business.*' I do not know this name."

"Ah! I forgot," continued Chalomel: "M. Badinot said it was good; that M. Ferrand should do as he pleased; that would be always right."

"He did not give a written answer?"

"No, monsieur, he said he hadn't time."

"Very well." "M. Charles Robert will also come in the course of the day to speak to the patron; it appears he fought a duel yesterday with the Duke of Lucenay." "Is he wounded?" "I believe not, or they would have told me of it at his house." "Look! here is a carriage stopping." "Oh! the fine horses, are they not mettlesome!" "And this fat English coachman, with his white wig, and his brown livery, with silver lace, and his epaulettes like a colonel!" "It is an ambassador, surely." "And the chasseur, has not he enough of this silver lace!" "And grand mustaches!" "Hold!" said Chalomel, "it is the carriage of the Viscount de Saint Rémy." "Ain't it stylish? I thank you!" Soon afterward M. de Saint Rémy entered the office.

CHAPTER XXIII.

M. DE SAINT REMY.

We have described the charming face, the exquisite elegance, the ravishing "tournure" of M. de Saint Rémy, arrived the previous evening from the farm of Arnouville, belonging to Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay, where he had found a refuge from the bailiffs, Malicorne and Bourdère.

M. de Saint Rémy entered into the office hastily, his hat on his head, his manner haughty and proud, eyes half closed, asking, in a very impertinent way, without looking at any one, "The notary? where is he?"

"Monsieur Ferrand is busy in his office," answered the head clerk; "if you will wait a moment, monsieur, he will receive you." "How! wait?" "But, monsieur—" "There are no but monsieurs; go and tell him that M. de Saint Rémy is here. I find it very singular that this notary makes me wait in his antechamber; it smells of the store."

"Please to pass into the next room monsieur," said the clerk; "I will go at once and inform M. Ferrand."

M. de Saint Rémy shrugged his shoulders, and followed the head clerk. At the end of a quarter of an hour, which seemed to him very long, and which changed his contempt into rage, M. de Saint Rémy was introduced into the cabinet of the notary. Nothing could be more curious than the contrast of these two men, both profound physiognomists, and generally accustomed to judge at a first glance with whom they had to deal.

M. de Saint Rémy saw Jacques Ferrand for the first time. He was struck with the character of this wan, rigid, impassible face; the expression concealed by the large green spectacles, the head half buried in an old black silk cap.

The notary was seated before his desk in a leathern arm-chair, alongside of a broken-down fireplace, filled with ashes, and in which were smoking two black stumps. Curtains of green muslin, almost in tatters, suspended from iron rods, concealed the lower part of the windows, and cast into this cabinet, already dark enough, a dull and disagreeable light. Shelves of black wood, filled with labelled boxes; some chairs of cherry wood, covered with yellow Utrecht velvet; a mahogany clock; a yellow, moist, and slippery floor; a ceiling filled with cracks and ornamented with garlands of spider-webs; such was the sanctum sanctorum of M. Jacques Ferrand.

The viscount had not advanced two steps, had not said a single word, before the notary, who knew him by reputation, hated him already. In the first place, he saw in him, thus to speak,

a rival in knavery; and then, although M. Ferrand was of a mean and ignoble appearance himself, he did not the less detest in others elegance, grace, and youth; above all, when an air supremely insolent accompanied these advantages.

The notary ordinarily affected a sort of rudeness, almost gross, towards his clients, who only felt more esteem for him for these manners of a peasant of the Danube. He promised himself to redouble this brutality towards the viscount.

He, knowing M. Ferrand only by reputation, expected to find in him a kind of scrivener, good-natured or ridiculous, the viscount figuring to himself always that men of proverbial probity must be kind of simpletons. Far from this, the physiognomy of the scrivener imposed on the viscount an undefinable feeling, half fear, half hatred, although he had no serious reason to fear or hate him. Thus, in consequence of his resolute character, M. de Saint Rémy increased his insolence and habitual foppery of manner. The notary kept his cap upon his head; the viscount retained his hat, and cried from the door in a loud and sharp voice,

"It is, pardieu! very strange, monsieur, that you give me the trouble to come here, instead of sending to me for the money for the bills I have endorsed to this Badinot, and for which this fellow has sued me. You should not expose me to wait a quarter of an hour in your antechamber; that is not so polite as it might be, monsieur."

M. Ferrand, without paying the least attention, finished a calculation he was making, wiped his pen methodically on the sponge which lay near his inkstand, and raised towards the viscount his cold, earthly, and flattened face, encumbered with the green spectacles.

It looked like a death's head, whose eyes had been replaced by great, fixed, glassy sockets.

After having looked at him for a moment in silence, he said to the viscount in a rough, short tone, "Where is the money?"

This coolness exasperated M. de St. Rémy. He—he! the idol of the women, the envy of men, the paragon of the best company in Paris, the renowned duellist, not to produce more effect on a miserable notary! It was odious; although he was tête-à-tête with Jacques Ferrand, his self-pride revolted.

"Where are the draughts?"

With the end of one of his fingers, hard as iron, and covered with red hair, the notary, without answering, struck on a large portfolio of leather placed near him.

Decided to be equally laconic, although bursting with rage, the viscount took from the pocket of his coat a small book of Russian leather, clasped with golden hasps, drew out forty bills of one thousand francs each, and showed them to the notary.

"How much?" asked he. "Forty thousand francs!" "Give them to me." "Here, and let us finish quickly, monsieur: do your business, pay yourself, hand me back the draughts," said the viscount, throwing the packet impatiently on the table.

The notary took them, arose and examined them near the window, turning them over one by one with an attention so scrupulous and so insulting to M. de Saint Rémy, that he grew pale with rage.

The notary, as if he had suspected the thoughts which agitated the viscount, shook his head, half turned towards him, and said in an undefinable tone, "Such things are—"

For a moment astonished, M. de Saint Rémy replied, dryly, "What?"

"Counterfeit bills," answered the notary, continuing to examine those he held closely.

"For what purpose do you make this remark to me, monsieur?"

Jacques Ferrand stopped a moment, looked steadily at the viscount through his glasses; then, shrugging his shoulders, he turned again to counting and examining the bills.

"Mort Dieu! Monsieur Notary, you must know, when I ask a question, I am always answered!" cried M. de Saint Rémy, irritated beyond measure at the calmness of Jacques Ferrand.

"*Those* are good," said the notary, turning towards his bureau, from whence he took a bundle of stamped papers, to which were annexed two bills of exchange; he afterward placed one of the notes for a thousand francs and three rouleaux of one hundred francs on the back of the papers; then he said to M. de Saint Rémy, pointing with his finger to the money and bills, "There is what is to come to you from the forty thousand francs; my client has ordered me to collect the bill of costs."

The viscount had with great difficulty contained himself while Jacques Ferrand arranged his accounts. Instead of answering him and taking the money, he cried, in a voice trembling with anger, "I ask you, monsieur, why you said to me, respecting the bank bills that I have just given you, *that there was such things as false bills!*"

"Why?" "Yes."

"Because I have sent for you here concerning a forgery." And the notary planted his green glasses full on the viscount. "And how does this forgery affect me?"

After a moment's pause, Mr. Ferrand said, with a sad and severe manner,

"Are you acquainted, monsieur, with the duties of a notary?" "The duties are perfectly clear to me, monsieur. I had just now forty thousand francs; I have now remaining but thirteen hundred." "You are very jocose, monsieur. I will tell you, that a notary is to temporal affairs what a confessor is to spiritual ones; from his profession he often knows ignoble secrets."

"What next, monsieur?"

"He is often obliged to be in relations with rogues."

"What after this, monsieur?"

"He ought, as much as is in his power, to prevent an honourable name from being dragged in the mire."

"What have I in common with all this?"

"Your father has left you a respected name, which you dishonour, monsieur!"

"What do you dare to say?"

"Save the interest that this name inspires to all honest people, instead of being cited here before me, you would have been at this moment before the police."

"I do not comprehend you."

"About two months since, you had discounted, through the agency of a broker, a bill for fifty eight thousand francs, drawn by the house of Meulaert and Co., of Hamburg, in favour of William Smith, and payable in three months, at M. Grimaldi, banker in Paris."

"Well!" "This bill is a forgery."

"That is not true."

"This bill is a forgery! the house of Meulaert has never contracted any engagement with William Smith; they do not know him."

"Can it be true!" cried M. de Saint Rémy, with as much surprise as indignation; "but then I have been horribly deceived, monsieur, for I received this bill as ready money." "From whom?" "From William Smith himself; the house of Meulaert is so well known, I knew so well myself the probity of William Smith, that I accepted this bill in payment of a debt he owed me."

"William Smith has never existed; it is an imaginary person." "Monsieur, you insult me!" "His signature is as false as the others." "I tell you, monsieur, that William Smith does exist; but I have, without doubt, been the dupe of a horrible breach of confidence."

"Poor young man!"

"Explain yourself!" cried M. de Saint Rémy, whose anxiety and humiliation were increased by the ironical pity of the notary. "In four words, the actual holder of the bill is convinced that you have committed the forgery." "Monsieur!" "He pretends to have the proof; two days ago he came to me to beg me to send for you here, and to propose to return you this forged draught, under an arrangement. So far, all was fair; this is not; and I only tell you for information. He asks one hundred thousand francs. To-day even, or to-morrow at noon, the forgery will be made known to the 'procureur du roi.'"

"This is an indignity!" "And what is more, an absurdity. You are ruined. You were prosecuted for a sum that you have just paid me, from some resource I do not know of: this is what I told to this third party. He answered, 'that a certain great lady, who is very rich, would not leave you in this embarrassment.'" "Enough, monsieur! enough!" "Another indignity! another absurdity! we agree." "In fine, monsieur, what do they want?" "Unworthily to take advantage of an unworthy action. I have consented to make this proposition known to you, in branding it as an honest man ought to brand it. Now it is your affair. If you are guilty, choose between the court of assize or the terms proposed. My part is altogether officious. I will have nothing more to do with so dirty a business. The third party's name is M. Petit Jean, oil-merchant; he lives on the banks of the Seine, 'quai de Billy, No. 10.' Settle with him. You are worthy of each other, if you are a forger, as he affirms."

M. de Saint Rémy had entered the notary's with an insolent voice and lofty head. Although he had committed in his life some disgraceful actions, there remained in him still a certain pride of lineage—a natural courage which had never failed him; at the commencement of this conversation, regarding the notary as an adversary quite unworthy of him, he treated him with contempt.

When Jacques Ferrand spoke of forgery, the viscount felt himself crushed. He found the notary had the advantage in his turn. Except for his great self-command, he could not have concealed the great impression made upon him by this unexpected accusation; for the consequences might be most fatal to him, of which even the notary had no idea.

After a moment's reflection and silence, he determined—he, so proud, so irritable, so vain of his bravery—to throw himself on the mercy of this vulgar man, who had so rudely spoken the austere language of probity. "Monsieur, you give me a proof of interest for which I thank you; I regret the harshness of my first words," said M. de Saint Rémy, in a cordial manner. "I do not interest myself in you at all," answered the notary, brutally. "Your father was honour itself; I did not wish to see his name in the court of assizes, that's all."

"I repeat to you, monsieur, that I am incapable of the infamy of which I am accused." "You can tell that to M. Petit Jean." "But I avow that the absence of M. Smith, who has so unworthily taken advantage of my good faith—"

"Infamous Smith!" "The absence of M. Smith places me in a cruel position; I am innocent; let them accuse me, I will prove it; but such an accusation always injures a gallant man." "What next?" "Be generous enough to use the sum I have just paid you to quiet, in part, this third person."

"This money belongs to my client—it is sacred."

"But in two or three days I will repay you." "You cannot do it." "I have resources." "None available, at least. Your furniture, your horses no longer belong to you, as you may say; which to me has the appearance of fraud." "You are very hard, monsieur. But admitting this, will I not turn everything into money, in a situation so desperate? Only as it is impossible for me to procure between this and to-morrow one hundred thousand francs, I conjure you, employ this money to withdraw this unhappy draught. Or you, who are so rich, make me an advance; do not leave me in such a position." "I make myself responsible for a hundred thousand francs for you? Ah, now! are you, then, a fool?" "Monsieur, I supplicate you, in the name of my father, of whom you have spoken, be so kind as to—" "I am kind for those who deserve it," said the notary, rudely; "an honest man; I hate rogues; and I should not be sorry to see one of you fine gentlemen, who are without law or Gospel, impious and debauched, some nice time, standing in the pillory as an example for others. But I hear your horses are very restless, Monsieur le Viscount," said the notary, smiling, and showing his black teeth.

At this moment some one knocked at the door. "Who is it?" asked Jacques Ferrand. "Madame Comtesse d'Orbigny," said the clerk. "Beg her to wait a moment." "It is the stepmother of the Marquise d'Harville," cried M. de Saint Rémy.

"Yes, monsieur. She has an appointment with me; so good-morning." "Not a word of this, monsieur!" said M. de Saint Rémy, in a threatening tone. "I have told you, monsieur, that a notary was as discreet as a confessor."

Jacques Ferrand rang the bell, and the clerk appeared.

"Show in Madame d'Orbigny." Then, addressing the viscount, "Take these thirteen hundred francs, monsieur; it will be so much on account with M. Petit Jean."

Madame d'Orbigny (formerly Madame Roland) entered at the moment the viscount went out, his features contracted with rage for having uselessly humiliated himself before the notary.

"Ah! good-morning, Monsieur de Saint Rémy," said Madame d'Orbigny; "it is a long time since I have seen you."

"Yes, madame; since the marriage of D'Harville, of which I was a witness, I have not had the honour to meet you," said M. de Saint Rémy, bowing, and suddenly assuming a most smiling and affable expression. "Since then you have always remained in Normandy?" "Mon Dieu! yes. M. d'Orbigny cannot live now but in the country; and where he lives, I live. Thus you see in me a true 'provinciale.' I have not been to Paris since the marriage of my dear stepdaughter with the excellent M. d'Harville. Do you see him often?" "D'Harville has become very savage and very morose. I meet him very seldom in society," said M. de Saint Rémy, with a shade of impatience; for this conversation was insupportable, both from its inopportuneness, and because the notary seemed to be much amused. But the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, enchanted at this "rencontre" with an "élégant," was not the woman to let her prey escape so easily. "And my dear stepdaughter," continued she, "is not, I hope, as savage as her husband?" "Madame d'Harville is very fashionable, and always much sought after, as a pretty woman should be; but I fear, madame, I trespass on your time, and—" "Not at all, I assure you. I am quite fortunate to meet the 'élégant' of 'élégants,' the king of fashion; in ten minutes I shall know all about Paris, as if I had never left it. And your dear friend, M. de Lucenay, who was, with you, a witness of the marriage of M. d'Harville?" "More of an original than ever; he set out for the East, and he returned just in time to receive yesterday morning a thrust from a sword; of no great harm, however." "The poor duke! and his wife, always beautiful and ravishing?" "You know, madame, that I have the honour to be one of her best friends; my testimony on this subject would be suspected. Will you, madame, on your return to Aubiers, do me the honour to remember me to M. d'Orbigny?"

"He will be very sensible of your kind recollections, I assure you, for he often asks after you and your success. He says you remind him of the Duke de Lauzun." "This comparison alone is quite a eulogium; but, unfortunately for me, it is much more kind than true. Adieu, madame; for I dare not hope that you will do me the honour to receive me before your departure." "I should be 'désolée' that you should take the trouble to call upon me. I am for a few days at a 'hôtel garni;' but if, this summer or fall, you pass our way to some of the fashionable chateaus, grant us a few days only by way of contrast, and to rest yourself with some poor country-folks from the giddy round of the chateau-life, so elegant and so extravagant; for it is always 'fête' where you go."

"Madame—" "I need not tell you how happy M. d'Orbigny and myself would be to receive you; but adieu, monsieur: I fear that the benevolent humorist," pointing to the notary, "will become tired of our talk." "Just the contrary, madame, just the contrary," said Ferrand, in an accent which redoubled the restrained rage of the viscount. "Acknowledge that M. Ferrand is a terrible man," continued Madame d'Orbigny; "but take care, since he is, fortunately for you, charged with your affairs, he will scold you furiously; he is without pity. But what do I say? A man like you to have M. Ferrand for notary—it is a sign of amendment; for every one knows he never lets his client commit any follies without informing them of it. Oh! he does not wish to be the notary of every one." Then, addressing Jacques Ferrand, she said, "Do you know, Mr. Puritan, that this is a superb conversion you have made here—to render wise and prudent the 'élégant,' the king of fashion!" "It is exactly a conversion, madame; M. le Vicomte leaves my cabinet altogether different from what he entered it." "When I say you perform miracles, it is not astonishing you are a saint." "Ah, madame, you flatter me," said Jacques Ferrand.

M. de Saint Rémy profoundly saluted Madame d'Orbigny; then, at the moment of leaving the notary, wishing to try a last effort to soften him, he said in a careless manner, which nevertheless disclosed profound anxiety,

"Decidedly, my dear M. Ferrand, you will not grant me what I ask?" "Some folly, without doubt! be inexorable, my dear Puritan," cried Madame d'Orbigny, laughing. "You hear, monsieur; I cannot act contrary to the advice of so handsome a lady." "My dear M. Ferrand, let us speak seriously of serious things, and you know that this is so. You refuse decidedly?" asked the viscount, with anguish he could not conceal. The notary was cruel enough to appear to hesitate; M. de Saint Rémy had a moment of hope. "How, man of iron, you recede?" said the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, laughing: "you submit also to the charms of the irresistible?" "Ma foi, madame, I was on the point of yielding, as you say, but you make me blush for my weakness," said M. Ferrand; then turning to the viscount with an expression of which he comprehended all the signification, he continued: "There, seriously, it is impossible; I will not suffer that, through caprice, you should not commit such an absurdity. Monsieur le Vicomte, I regard myself as the mentor of my clients; I have no other family, and I should regard myself as an accomplice of any errors I should allow them to commit." "Oh! the Puritan, the Puritan!" cried Madame d'Orbigny. "Yet, see M. Velit Jean; he will think, I am sure, as I do; and, like me, he will refuse." M. de Saint Rémy left in a state of desperation. After a moment's thought, he said, "It must be!" Then addressing his chasseur, who held open the door of the carriage, "To the Hotel de Lucenay." While M. de Saint Rémy is on his way to the duchesse, we will be present with the reader at the interview between M. Ferrand and the stepmother of Madame d'Harville.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WILL.

The reader has perhaps forgotten the portrait of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, drawn by the latter.

We repeat that Madame d'Orbigny was a little slender blonde, with eyebrows almost white, and pale blue eyes almost round; her speech is honeyed, her look hypocritical, her manners insinuating and insidious. "What a charming young man is the Viscount de Saint Rémy!" said she to Jacques Ferrand, when the viscount had gone.

"Charming—but, madame, let us talk of business: you wrote me from Normandy that you wished to consult me on some grave affairs." "Have you not always been my adviser, since the good Doctor Polidori referred me to you? Apropos, have you heard from him?" asked Madame d'Orbigny in a careless manner.

"Since his departure from Paris, he has not written me once," answered the notary no less indifferently. We must inform the reader that these two personages lied most boldly to each other. The notary had seen Polidori recently (one of his two accomplices), and had proposed to him to go to Asnières, to the Martials', the fresh-water pirates, of whom we shall speak presently, under the name of Dr. Vincent, to poison Louise Morel. The stepmother of Madame d'Harville came to Paris expressly to have a conference with this scoundrel, who now went by the name of César Brademanté.

"But it is not concerning the good doctor," said Madame d'Orbigny; "you seem much troubled; my husband is sick; he grows worse daily. Without causing me serious fears, his condition troubles me, or, rather, troubles him," continued she, wiping her tearless eyes. "What is the matter?" "He continually speaks of his final arrangements—of his will." Here Madame d'Orbigny hid her face in her handkerchief for some moments. "That is sad, doubtless," said the notary; "but this precaution is not alarming: what are his intentions, madame?" "Mon Dieu! what do I know? You know well, when he touches on this subject, I change it." "But, in fine, on this subject has he said nothing positive?" "I believe," said Madame d'Orbigny, in a most disinterested manner, "I believe he wishes, not only to give me all the law allows—but—oh! hold, I beg you, let us not speak of this!" "What shall we speak of?"

"Alas! you are right, relentless man! we must return to the sad subject which brought me here. Well, M. d'Orbigny carries his kindness so far as to wish to convert a part of his fortune and give me a considerable sum." "But his daughter—his daughter?" cried M. Ferrand, with severity; "I ought to tell you that, for a year past, M. d'Harville has given me charge of his affairs. I have lately bought for him a magnificent property. You know my roughness in business: it imports little to me that M. d'Harville is my client; that which I plead is the cause of justice; if your husband takes towards his daughter, Madame d'Harville, a determination which seems to me not proper, I tell you plainly, he must not count on me. Straight forward! such has always been my line of conduct." "And mine also! Thus I repeat to my husband always, just as you have said: 'Your daughter has treated you badly; so be it; but that is no reason to disinherit her.'" "Very well—all right; and what did he answer?"

"He answered, 'I shall leave my daughter twenty-five thousand francs, de rentes. She had more than a million from her mother; her husband has an enormous income; can I not leave the rest to you, my tender friend, the sole support, the sole consolation of my old age, my guardian angel?' I repeat these too flattering words," said Madame d'Orbigny, with a modest sigh, "to show you his goodness towards me; yet I have always refused his offers; seeing which, he decided to beg me to come and find you." "But I do not know M. d'Orbigny." "But he, like every one else, knows your probity." "But how did he address you to me?" "To silence my scruples, he said, 'I do not propose you to consult my notary; you will think him too much under my orders; but I will leave it to the decision of a man whose honesty is proverbial, M. Ferrand. If he finds your delicacy compromised by your acceptance of my offer, we will talk no more about it; if not, you acquiesce.' I consent, said I, and in this way you have become our arbitrator. 'If he approves,' added my husband, 'I will send him a full power to realize, in my name, my property in "rentes" and "portefeuille;" he will keep this sum on deposite, and, after my death, my kind friend, you will at least have an income worthy of you.'"

Never, perhaps, had M. Ferrand felt more the value of his spectacles than at this moment. Without them, Madame d'Orbigny would have seen how his eyes sparkled at the word deposite. He answered, however, in a cross tone: "This is troublesome; this is for the tenth or twelfth time that I have been chosen an arbiter, always under pretext of my probity; that is the only word in their mouths—my probity! my probity! great advantage—it only gives me trouble and—" "My good M. Ferrand, come, don't scold; you will, then, write to M. d'Orbigny; he awaits your letter, to send you his full power to realize the sum." "How much is it?" "He said, I believe, that it was about four or five hundred thousand francs." "The amount is not so large as I thought; after all, you have devoted yourself to M. d'Orbigny. His daughter is very rich—you have nothing—I can approve of this; it appears to me, you might accept."

"Really, you think so?" said Madame d'Orbigny, dupe, like every one else, of the proverbial honesty of the notary, and who had not been undeceived in this respect by Polidori. "You may accept," said he. "I will accept, then," said Madame d'Orbigny, with a sigh.

The clerk knocked at the door. "Who is it?" demanded M. Ferrand. "Madame la Comtesse M'Gregor." "Let her wait a moment." "I leave you, then, my dear M. Ferrand," said Madame d'Orbigny; "you will write to my husband, since he desires it, and he will send you full powers to-morrow." "I will write." "Adieu, my worthy and good counsellor."

"Ah! you do not know, you people of the world, how disagreeable it is to take charge of such deposites—the responsibility which bears on us. I tell you, there is nothing more detestable than this fine reputation for probity, which brings

you nothing but drudgery!" "And the admiration of good people!"

"Dieu merci! I place otherwise than here below the recompense I seek for," said M. Ferrand, in a sanctified tone. To Madame d'Orbigny succeeded Sarah M'Gregor.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COUNTESS M'GREGOR.

Sarah entered the cabinet of the notary with her habitual coolness and assurance; Jacques Ferrand did not know her; he was ignorant of the object of her visit; he observed her very closely, in the hope to make a new dupe, and, notwithstanding the impassibility of the marble face, he remarked a slight tremour, which appeared to him to betray a concealed embarrassment.

The notary arose from his chair and handed a seat to the countess, saying, "You asked for a meeting, madame, yesterday; I was so much occupied that I could not send you an answer until this morning; I make you a thousand excuses." "I desired to see you, monsieur, for an affair of the greatest importance. Your reputation has made me hope my business with you will be successful."

The notary bowed in his chair. "I know, monsieur, that your discretion is well tried." "It is my duty, madame." "You are, monsieur, a rigid and incorruptible man." "Yes, madame." "Yet, if one should say to you, monsieur, it depends on you to restore life—more than life—reason to an unhappy mother, would you have the courage to refuse?" "State facts, madame, I will answer." "About fourteen years since, at the end of December, 1824, a man, still young, and dressed in mourning, came to propose to you to take for an annuity the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand francs for a child of three years, whose parents desired to remain unknown." "Continue, madame!" said the notary, avoiding a direct answer. "You consented to receive this amount and to assure the child an income of eight thousand francs; the one half of this amount was to be added to the capital until its majority; the other half was to be paid by you to the person who should take charge of this little girl." "Continue, madame." "At the end of two years," said Sarah, without being able to conquer a slight emotion, "the 28th November, 1827, this child died." "Before continuing this conversation, madame, I shall ask you what interest you have in this affair?" "The mother of this little girl is my sister, monsieur; I have here, for proof of what I advance, the publication of the death of this poor little thing, the letters from the person who had care of her, the obligation of one of your clients, with whom you placed the fifty thousand crowns." "Let me see these papers, madame." Quite astonished not to be believed at her word, Sarah drew from a portfolio several papers, which the notary closely examined. "Ah, well! Madame, what do you want? The notice of the death is all in rule, the fifty thousand crowns became the property of M. Petit Jean, my client, by the death of the child; as to the interests, they were always punctually paid by me until its decease." "Nothing can be more correct than your conduct in this affair; monsieur, I am pleased to acknowledge it. The woman to whom the child was confided has also a right to our gratitude; she has taken the greatest care of my poor little niece." "That is true, madame; I was so much pleased with her conduct, that, after the death of the child, I took her in my service; she is still there." "Madame Séraphin is in your service, monsieur?" "For fourteen years, as housekeepper." "Since it is thus, monsieur, she can be of great assistance, if you will grant a demand which will appear strange, perhaps, even culpable at first; but, when you shall know with what intention—"

"A culpable demand, madame! I do not think you are any more capable of making than I am of hearing it."

"I know, monsieur, that you are the last person to whom one should address such a request; but I place all my hopes—my sole hope—in your pity. In every case I rely on your discretion." "Yes, madame." "I continue, then. The death of this poor little girl has cast her mother into such a state of desolation, her grief is as lively at the present day as it was fourteen years since; and, after having feared for her life, to-day we fear for her reason."

"Poor mother!" said M. Ferrand, with a sigh.

"Oh! yes, very unfortunate mother, monsieur; for she could only blush at the birth of her daughter, at the time she lost her; while now circumstances are such, that my sister, if her child still lived, could own her, be proud of her, never leave her. Thus, this incessant regret, joined to other griefs, makes us fear for her reason." "Unfortunately, nothing can be done for her." "Yes, monsieur." "How, madame?" "Suppose some one should come and say to the poor mother, 'Your child was supposed to be dead; she is not; the woman who had care of her infancy can affirm it.'"

"Such a falsehoood would be cruel, madame. Why cause vain hopes to this poor mother?"

"But if it was not a falsehood, monsieur; or, rather, if this supposition could be realized?"

"By a miracle? If it only needed to obtain it, my prayers joined to yours, I would pray from the bottom of my heart. Alas! there can be no doubt of her death!"

"Mon Dieu! I know it, monsieur, the child is dead; and yet, if you wish it, the evil is not irreparable." "It is an enigma, madame." "I will speak, then, more plainly. Let my sister find to-morrow her child, not only will she be restored to health, but, what is more, she is sure to marry the father of this child, now as free as she is. My niece died at six years. Separated from her parents at this tender age, they have no recollection of her. Suppose that a young girl of seventeen could be found; that my sister should be told, 'Here is your child; you have been deceived; certain interests required that she should be thought dead. The woman who had charge of her, a respectable notary will affirm, will prove to you that it is she—'"

Jacques Ferrand, after having allowed the countess to speak without interrupting her, rose suddenly, and cried, in an indignant manner, "Enough, enough, madame! Oh, this is infa-

mous!" "Monsieur!" "To dare to propose to me—to me—to palm off a child—a criminal action! It is the first time in my life that I have received such an outrage, and I have not deserved it—mon Dieu! you know it!" "But, monsieur, who is wronged by it? My sister and the person she desires to marry are single; both regret bitterly the child they have lost; to deceive them! it is to restore to them happiness—life; it is to assure to some forsaken young girl a most happy lot: thus it is a noble, generous action, and not a crime!" "Truly!" cried the notary, with increasing indignation, "I see how the most execrable projects can be coloured with—" "But, monsieur, reflect." "I repeat to you, madame, that it is infamous. It is a shame to see a woman of your rank contriving such abominations, to which your sister, I hope, is a stranger." "Monsieur!" "Enough, madame, enough! I am not gallant, not I. I tell you the naked truth." Sarah cast on the notary one of her dark looks, and said, coldly, "You refuse?" "No new insult, madame!" "Take care!" "Threats?" "Threats! and to prove to you that they will not be in vain, learn, in the first place, that I have no sister." "How, madame!" "I am the mother of this child." "You?"

"I invented this fable to interest you. You are without pity; I raise the mask. You want war! well, war!" "War? because I refuse to lend myself to a criminal act! what audacity!" "Listen to me, monsieur; your reputation as an honest man is great—known far and near." "Because it is merited. Thus, you must have lost your reason before you would have dared to make such a proposition!"

"Better than any one, I know, monsieur, how much one ought to suspect these reputations of such strict virtue, which often conceal the gallantries of women and the scoundrelism of men." "You dare to say this, madame?" "Since the commencement of our conversation, I do not know wherefore, I doubt that you deserve the consideration and esteem which you enjoy." "Truly, madame, this doubt does honour to your perspicacity." "Is it not so? for this doubt is founded on nothing—on instinct—on inexplicable presentiments; but rarely has this boding deceived me."

"Let us finish this conversation, madame."

"Before we do so, know my determination. I begin by telling you, from me to you, that I am convinced of the death of my poor child; but, no matter, I will pretend she is not dead; the most unlikely actions are often brought. You are at this moment in such a position that you must have many envious rivals; they will regard it as a piece of good fortune to attack you. I will furnish them." "You!" "I, in attacking you under an absurd pretext, on an irregularity in the 'acte de décès,' I suppose—no matter, I will maintain my child is not dead. As I have the greatest interest in having it believed that she still lives, although lost, this process will serve me in giving much notoriety to this affair; a mother who reclaims her child is always interesting; I shall have on my side those who are envious of you, your enemies, and all those who are feeling and romantic." "This is as foolish as wicked! Why should I? for what interest should I say your child is dead, if she were not?" "That is true, the motive is sufficiently embarrassing to find. Happily, the lawyers are there! But a thought! ah! an excellent one; wishing to divide with your client the sum paid for the annuity, you have caused the child to be carried off."

The notary, without moving a muscle of his face, shrugged his shoulders. "If I had been criminal enough to do that, instead of sending her off, I would have killed her!" Sarah shuddered with surprise, remained silent for a moment, then resumed with bitterness: "For a holy man, that is a thought of crime profoundly deep!" "Have I then touched to the quick in shooting at random?" "This makes me think, and I will think—one last word: you see what kind of a woman I am—I crush without pity all those who cross my path. Reflect well; to-morrow you must decide; you can do with impunity what you are asked. In his joy, the father of my child would not discuss the probability of such a resurrection, if our falsehoods, which will render him so happy, are adroitly combined. He has, besides, no other proofs of the death of our child, than what I wrote him fourteen years since; it will be easy for me to persuade him that I deceive him on this subject; for then I had just cause of complaint against him. I will tell him that in my anger I wished to break, in his eyes, the last link which still held us together. You cannot then in any way be compromised: affirm only, irreproachable man, affirm that all has been concerted between you and me and Madame Seraphin, and you will be believed. As to the money placed with you, that concerns me alone: it shall remain with your client, who must be ignorant of all this; finally, you shall fix yourself your own recompense."

Jacques Ferrand preserved all his "sang froid," notwithstanding his position, so strange and dangerous for him. The countess, believing really in the death of her child, came to propose to him to represent as living this child, whom he had himself passed for dead fourteen years before. He was too cunning, he knew too well the perils of his situation, not to comprehend the bearing of Sarah's threats. Although admirably constructed, the edifice of the notary's reputation was built on sand. The public as easily detach as they attach themselves, and are pleased with the right to trample under foot those whom they once had exalted to the skies. How foresee the consequences of the first attack on the reputation of Jacques Ferrand? However ridiculous this attack might be, its boldness alone might awaken suspicion.

The pertinacity of Sarah, her obduracy, alarmed the notary. This mother had not shown for a moment any feeling in speaking of her child; she had only seemed to consider her death as the loss of a means of action. Such dispositions are implacable in their objects, and in their vengeance. Wishing to give himself time to seek some means to avoid the dangerous blow, Ferrand said coldly to Sarah, "You have asked until noon to-morrow. It is I, madame, who give you until the next day to renounce a project, of which you know not the gravity. If, from this time to that, I have not received a letter from you, in which you announce that you have abandoned this foolish

and criminal undertaking, you will learn to your cost that justice knows how to protect honest people who refuse to lend themselves to culpable acts."

"That is to say, monsieur, that you demand one day more to reflect on my propositions? That is a good sign; I grant it you. After to-morrow, at this hour, I will return here, and it shall be between us peace or war; I repeat it to you, a war to the knife, without mercy or pity;" and Sarah disappeared. "All goes well," said she to herself. "This miserable young girl, for whom Rodolphe was so much interested—thanks to the Borgnesse, who has delivered me from her, she is no longer to be feared.

"The address of Rodolphe has saved Madame d'Harville from the snare I placed for her; but it is impossible she can escape from the new plot I have contrived; she will then be forever lost to him. Then, sad, discouraged, isolated from all ties, will he not be in such a disposition of mind, that he will not desire anything better than to be the dupe of a falsehood, to which, with the aid of the notary, I can give every appearance of truth? And the notary will assist me, for I have alarmed him. I can easily find a young orphan girl, interesting and poor, who, instructed by me, will fill the part of our child, so bitterly regretted by Rodolphe. I know the grandeur, the generosity of his heart. Yes, to give a name, a rank to her whom he believes to be his daughter, until then unhappy and abandoned, he will renew those ties which I had thought indissoluble. The predictions of my nurse will at length be realized, and I shall have this time surely attained the constant aim of my life—a crown!" Hardly had Sarah left the mansion of the notary, than M. Charles Robert entered it, descending from an elegant cabriolet; he turned towards the private cabinet, as one having the entrée.

CHAPTER XXV.

M. CHARLES ROBERT.

The commandant, as Madame Pipelet called him, entered without any ceremony the notary's office, whom he found in a very thoughtful and splenetic mood, and who said to him very roughly, "I reserve the afternoon for my clients; when you wish to speak to me, come in the morning." "My dear scrivener (this was one of the pleasantries of M. Robert), it is concerning an important affair, in the first place, and then I wish to assure you myself concerning the fears that you might have." "What fears?" "Do you not know, then?" "What?" "My duel." "Your duel?" "With the Duke de Lucenay. How, are you ignorant of it?" "Yes." "Ah, bah!" "And why this duel?" "Something very serious, which required blood. Just imagine that, in the face of the whole embassy, M. de Lucenay allowed himself to say to me, to my face, that I had the pituite!" "What did you have?" "The pituite, my dear scrivener; a complaint that must be very ridiculous!" "You fought for this?" "And what the devil would you have one to fight for? Do you think, then, that one could, in cold blood, hear one's self accused of having the pituite? and before a charming woman, too; what is more, before a little marquise, who, in fine—enough: it could not be overlooked." "Certainly."

"We soldiers, you understand, we are always on the look-out. My seconds, the day before yesterday, had an interview with those of the duke. I had the question placed very plainly: a duel or a retraction." "A retraction of what?" "Of the pituite, pardieu! which he allowed himself to attribute to me." The notary shrugged his shoulders. "On their side, the seconds of the duke said, 'We render justice to the honourable character of M. Charles Robert; but M. de Lucenay cannot, ought not, wishes not to retract.' 'Then, gentlemen,' responded my seconds, 'M. de Lucenay still continues to insist that M. Charles Robert has the pituite?' 'Yes, gentlemen; but he does not intend it as an attack upon the consideration of M. Robert.' 'Then let him retract.' 'No, gentlemen; M. de Lucenay recognises M. Robert for a gallant man, but he insists that he has the pituite.' You see there was no way of arranging so serious an affair." "None. You were insulted in that which a man holds to be most respectable." "Is it not so? Thus they agreed on the day and hour of meeting, and yesterday morning, at Vincennes, all passed in the most honourable manner. I touched the duke slightly in the arm with my sword; the seconds declared my honour satisfied. Then the duke said, in a loud voice, 'I never retract before an affair; afterward, it is different: it is, then, my duty to proclaim that I falsely accused M. Charles Robert of having the pituite. Gentlemen, I confess, not only that my loyal adversary has not the pituite, but I affirm that he is incapable of ever having it.' Then the duke extended his hand to me cordially, saying, 'Are you content? Henceforth we are friends in life until death!' I answered, that I owed him as much. The duke has done everything that was right. He might have said nothing at all, or contented himself with saying that I had not the pituite; but to affirm that I never could have it, it was a very delicate proceeding on his part."

"This is what I call courage well employed. But what do you want?" "My dear *guard-notes* (another pleasantry of M. Robert), it concerns something of great importance to me. You know that, in our agreement, when I advanced you 350,000 francs, in order that you might finish the purchase of your notariat, it was stipulated that, by giving you three months' notice, I could withdraw from you this amount, for which you now pay interest."

"What next?" "Well!" said M. Robert, with hesitation, "I—no—but—it is that—" "What?" "You perceive, it is pure caprice; an idea to become a landed proprietor, dear scrivener."

"Explain yourself, then; you annoy me!" "In a word, I have been offered a territorial acquisition, and if it is not disagreeable to you, I should wish, that is to say, I should desire to withdraw my funds from you; and I come to give you notice, according to our agreement." "Ah! ah!" "It does not make you angry, I hope?" "Why should it?" "Because you may think—" "I may think?" "That I am the echo of rumours." "What rumours?" "No, nothing; absurdities." "But tell me, then?" "It is no reason because there are reports in cir-

culation about you—" "About me?" "There is not a word of truth in it—that you have been doing some bad business; pure scandal, no doubt. It is like when we speculated on the 'Change together. This report soon fell to the ground; for I wish that you and I might become—" "Then you think your money is no longer safe with me?" "Yes, yes; but I prefer to have it in my hands." "Wait for me, then."

M. Ferrand shut the drawer of his bureau, and arose. "Where are you going to, my dear '*guardnotes?*'" "To look for something to convince you of the truth of the rumours concerning me," said the notary, ironically. And opening a little private staircase which led to the pavilion, without going through the office, he disappeared.

Hardly had he gone when the clerk knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Charles Robert. "Is not M. Ferrand here?"

"No, my worthy 'basochien.'"* (Another pleasantry.)

"It is a lady, veiled, who wishes to speak to the patron instantly, for a very pressing business." "Worthy bosochien, the patron will return directly; I will tell him this. Is she pretty?"

"One must be a wizard to find this out; she wears a black veil, so thick that her face cannot be seen." "Good, good! I'll take a look at her when I go out." The clerk left the room.

"Where the devil is he gone to?" said M. Charles to himself. "If these reports are absurd, so much the better! Never mind, I prefer to have my money. I will buy the chateau they have spoken to me of. There are Gothic towers of the time of Louis XIV.; this will give me the appearance of a seigneur. It will not be like my affair with this prude of a Madame d'Harville—fine game! Oh, no! I have not made my expenses, as the old stupid 'portière' of the Rue du Temple said, with her fantastic periwig. This pleasantry has cost me at least a thousand crowns. It is true, the furniture remains; and I can compromise the marquise. But here is the scrivener."

M. Ferrand returned, holding in his hand some papers, which he gave to M. Robert. "Here," said he to him, "are three hundred and fifty thousand franks in Treasury notes. In a few days we will regulate the interest. Write me a receipt."

"How!" cried M. Charles, stupified. "Ah! now don't think, at least, that I—" "I think nothing." "But—" "This receipt!" "Dear 'guard-notes?'" "Write then; and tell the people who speak to you of my embarrassments, how I answer these suspicions." "The fact is, as soon as this is known, your credit will only be the more solid. But, really, take the money; I cannot use it now; I said in three months."

"M. Charles Robert, no one shall suspect me twice."

"You are angry?" "The receipt!" "'Barre de fer!'" said M. Charles Robert; then he added, in writing the receipt, "There is a lady closely veiled, who wishes to speak to you on some very pressing business. I shall take a good look at her when I pass. Here is your receipt; is it right?" "Very well! now go away by the little staircase." "But the lady?" "It is just to prevent your seeing her." And the notary rung for the clerk, saying to him, "Show the lady in. Adieu, Monsieur Robert."

"Well! I must renounce seeing her. No bad feeling, eh! scrivener?" "Believe that." "Well, well! adieu." And the notary shut the door on M. Charles Robert.

After a few moments the clerk introduced Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay, very modestly dressed, wrapped in a large shawl, and the face completely concealed by a thick veil of black lace, which covered her moire hat of the same colour.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MADAME DE LUCENAY.

Madame de Lucenay approached slowly towards the desk of the notary in an agitated manner: he advanced to meet her.

"Who are you, madame, and what do you want with me?" said the notary, roughly, whose temper, already fretted by the threat of Sarah, was exasperated at the suspicions of M. Charles Robert. Besides, the duchess was so modestly dressed, that the notary saw no reason why he should be civil to her. As she hesitated to speak, he said, harshly, "Will you explain yourself, madame?" "Monsieur," said she, in a trembling voice, trying to conceal her face under the folds of her veil. "Monsieur, can one confide a secret to you of the highest importance?"

"Anything can be confided to me, madame; but I must see and know to whom I speak." "Monsieur, that, perhaps, is not necessary. I know that you are honour and loyalty itself." "Just so, madame, just so; there is some one there—some one waiting. Who are you?" "My name is of no importance, monsieur. One of my friends—of my relations—has just left you." "His name?" "M. Floreston de Saint Rémy." "Ah!" said the notary; and he cast on the duchess an inquisitive and searching glance; then resumed: "Well, madame?" "M. de Saint Rémy has told me everything, monsieur." "What did he tell you?" "All!" "But what did he say?" "Mon Dieu! monsieur, you know it well." "I know many things about M. de Saint Rémy." "Alas! monsieur, a terrible thing!" "I know a great many terrible things about M. de Saint Rémy." "Ah! monsieur, he told me truly. You are without pity." "For cheats and forgers like him, yes, I am without pity. This Saint Rémy, is he your relation? Instead of confessing it, you ought to blush. Do you come here to weep, to soften me? It is useless; without saying that you are performing a wretched part for an honest woman, if you are one." This brutal insolence was revolting to the pride and patrician blood of the duchess. She drew herself up, threw her veil back, and with a proud look, and a firm, imperious voice, she said, "I am the Duchess of Lucenay, monsieur."

This woman assumed then so great an air, her appearance became so imposing, that the notary, overcome, charmed, fell back astonished, took off mechanically his black silk cap, and saluted her profoundly.

* Basoche. The fraternity of the law in Paris.

Nothing could be, in effect, more graceful, more majestic, than the face and "tournure" of Madame de Lucenay; yet she was then over thirty years of age, with a pale face, and appeared slightly fatigued; but then she had large sparkling brown eyes, splendid black hair, a fine arched nose, a proud and ruby lip, dazzling complexion, very white teeth, tall and slender figure, a form like a *goddess on the clouds*, as the immortal Saint Simon says.

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She had entered the notary's as a timid woman; all at once she showed herself a grand, proud, and irritated lady. Never had Jacques Ferrand in his life met with a woman of so much insolent beauty, of a beauty at once so bold and so noble. Although old, ugly, mean, and sordid, Jacques Ferrand was as capable as any one else of appreciating the style of beauty of Madame de Lucenay. His hatred and his rage against M. de Saint Rémy augmented with his admiration of the charming duchess; he thought to himself that this gentleman forger, who had almost kneeled before him, inspired such love in this grand lady, that she risked a step which might ruin her. At these thoughts the notary felt his audacity, which for a moment was paralyzed, restored. Hatred, envy, a kind of burning, savage resentment kindled in his looks, on his forehead, on his cheeks—the most shameful, the most wicked passions. Seeing Madame de Lucenay on the point of commencing a conversation so delicate, he expected on her part some turnings, expedients. What was his surprise! She spoke to him with as much assurance and pride as if it was concerning the most natural thing in the world, and as if before a man of his species she had no thought of the reserve and fitness which she had certainly shown to her equals. In effect, the gross insolence of the notary, in wounding her to the quick, had forced Madame de Lucenay to quit the humble and imploring part that she had at first assumed with much trouble; returned to her own dignity, she believed it to be beneath her to descend to the least concealment with this scribbler of deeds.

"Monsieur Notary," said the duchess, resolutely, to Jacques Ferrand, "M. de Saint Rémy is one of my friends; he has confided to me the embarrassing situation in which he finds himself, from the inconvenience of a double piece of villany, of which he is the victim. Everything can be managed with money: how much is necessary to terminate these miserable, shuffling tricks?"

Jacques Ferrand was completely astounded with this cavalier and deliberate manner of opening the business.

"They ask a hundred thousand francs," answered he, as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment. "You shall have your hundred thousand francs; and you will send at once the bad papers to M. de Saint Rémy." "Where are the hundred thousand francs, Madame la Duchesse?" "Did I not tell you that you should have them, monsieur?" "They must be had to-morrow, before noon, madame; otherwise a complaint of forgery will be made." "Well! give this amount; I will be accountable for it; as to you, I will pay you well." "But, madame, it is impossible." "You will not tell me, I hope, that a notary like you cannot procure a hundred thousand francs from one day to the next."

"And on what security, madame?" "What does that mean? explain yourself." "Who will be answerable for this amount?" "I." "But, madame—" "Is it necessary for me to tell you that I have a property yielding eighty thousand livres rent, at four leagues from Paris? That will suffice, I believe, for that which you call guarantee?" "Yes, madame, by means of a mortgage." "What does that mean again? Some formality doubtless. Make it, monsieur, make it." "Such a deed cannot be drawn up under two weeks, and it needs the consent of your husband, madame." "But this is my property, mine, mine alone," said the duchess, impatiently. "No matter, madame; you are in the power of your husband, and a deed of mortgage is very long and very minute." "But once more, monsieur, you cannot make me believe that it is so difficult to procure 100,000 francs in two hours."

"Then, madame, apply to your own notary, to your intendant; as to me, it is impossible." "I have reasons, monsieur, to keep this a secret," said Madame de Lucenay, heartily. "You know the rogues who wish to rob M. de Saint Rémy; it is on this account I address myself to you." "Your confidence infinitely honours me, madame; but I cannot do what you ask." "You have not this amount?" "I have much more than this sum in bank bills, or in gold—here—in my 'caisse.'" "Oh! how many words! is it my signature you wish? I give it you; let us finish." "In admitting, madame, that you are the Duchess of Lucenay." "Come in an hour's time to the Hôtel de Lucenay, monsieur; I will sign at home what is necessary to be signed." "M le Duc, will he sign also?" "I do not comprehend, monsieur." "Your signature alone is of no value to me, madame." Jacques Ferrand enjoyed with cruel delight the impatience of the duchess, who, under this appearance of sang froid and disdain, concealed the most painful anguish. She was for a moment at the end of her resources. The evening previous, her jeweller had advanced her a considerable sum on her diamonds, some of which were confided to Morel, the artisan. This sum had served to pay the bills of M. de Saint Rémy, to disarm other creditors; M. Dubreuil, the farmer at Arnouville, was more than a year in advance, and, besides, time was wanting, unfortunately for Madame de Lucenay, two of her friends, to whom she could have had recourse in an extreme situation, were then absent from Paris. In her eyes, the viscount was innocent; he had told her, and she believed it, that he was the dupe of two rogues; but her situation was none the less terrible. He accused, he dragged to prison! Then, even if he should take to flight, would his name be any less dishonoured by such a suspicion?

* * * *

"Since you possess the sum I ask for, monsieur, and that, after all, my guarantee is sufficient, why do you refuse me?"

"Because men have their caprices as well as women, madame." "But what is this caprice, which makes you act thus against your interest? for, I repeat to you, make your conditions; whatever they may be, I accept them!"

"You will accept all the conditions, madame?" said the notary, with a singular expression. "All! two, three, four thousand francs—more, if you will! for, look, I tell you," added the duchess, frankly, in a tone almost affectionate, "I have no resource but in you, monsieur, in you alone. It will be impossible for me to find elsewhere that which I ask you for to-morrow; and it must be—you understand—it must be absolutely: thus, I repeat to you, whatever condition you impose on me for this service, I accept: nothing shall cost—nothing."

* * * * * * *

In his blindness, he had interpreted in an unworthy manner the last words of the duchess. * * * It was a thought as stupid as it was infamous; but we have already said that sometimes Jacques Ferrand became a tiger or a wolf; then the beast overpowered the man. He arose quickly and advanced towards the duchess; she, thunderstruck, rose at the same moment, and regarded him with astonishment. "You will not regard the cost?" cried he in a broken voice, approaching still nearer to the duchess. "Well! this sum I will lend to you on one condition, one single condition—and I swear that—" He could not finish his declaration.

By one of those strange contradictions of human nature, at the sight of the hideous face of M. Ferrand, at the mere thought of what his conditions might be, Madame de Lucenay, notwithstanding her inquietudes, her troubles, burst out in a laugh so frank, so loud, so merry, that the notary recoiled confounded.

Then, without giving him time to utter a word, the duchess, abandoning herself more and more to her hilarity, pulled down her veil, and, between two renewed bursts of laughter, said to the notary, who was almost blind with rage, hatred, and fury, "I prefer, upon the whole, to ask this favour frankly of M. de Lucenay." She then went out, continuing to laugh so loudly that, though the door of the cabinet was closed, the notary could still hear her.

Jacques Ferrand returned to his senses only to curse his imprudence bitterly. Yes, by degrees he reassured himself in thinking that the duchess could not speak of this interview without gravely compromising herself.

Nevertheless, it was a bad day for him. He was buried in the blackest thoughts, when the private door of his cabinet was opened, and Madame Seraphin entered wildly:

"Ah! Ferrand!" cried she, clasping her hands, "you were right enough in saying that we should some day, perhaps, regret having spared her life!" "Whose?" "This cursed little girl's." "How?" "A one-eyed woman, whom I did not know, and to whom Tournemine had delivered the little girl to rid us of her, fourteen years ago, when we said she was dead—ah! mon Dieu! who would have thought it!" "Speak, then! speak, then!" "This woman has just been here; she was below just now. She told me she knew it was I who gave up the child." "Malediction! who could have told her? Tournemine is at the galleys."

"I denied everything, treating her as a liar. But, bah! she maintains that she has found this child again, who is now grown up; that she knows where she is, and that it only depends upon herself to discover everything."

"But is hell unchained against me to-day?" cried the notary, in a fit of rage that rendered him hideous."

"Mon Dieu! what shall be said to the woman? what must we promise her to keep her silent?" "Does she look as if she were poor?" "As I treated her like a beggar, she shook her 'cabas'—there was money in it." "And she knows where this young girl is now?" "She declares she knows."

"And she is the daughter of the Countess M'Gregor?" said the notary to himself; "and just now she offered me so much to say that her child was not dead! And the child lives. I can restore her to her! Yes; but this false 'acte de décès!' if any inquiry is made, I am lost! This crime may put them on the scent of others." After a moment's thought, he said to Madame Seraphin, "This one-eyed woman knows where this young girl is?" "Yes." "And this woman will return to-morrow?" "To-morrow." "Write to Polidori to be here to-night at nine o'clock."

"Is it that you mean to get rid of the young girl and the old woman? It will be too much for one time, Ferrand!"

"I tell you to write to Polidori to be here to-night by nine o'clock!"

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At the close of this day, Rodolphe said to Murphy, who had not been able to see the notary,

"Let M. de Graün send a courier off at once. Cecily must be in Paris in six days."

"Once more this infernal she-devil! the execrable wife of poor David, as handsome as she is infamous!—for what good, monseigneur?"

"For what good, Sir Walter Murphy? In a month's time you shall ask this question of the notary, Jacques Ferrand."

PART V.

CHAPTER I.

DENUNCIATION.

Towards ten o'clock in the evening of the day on which Fleur de Marie had been carried off by La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole, a man on horseback arrived at the farm, coming, as he said, on the part of M. Rodolphe, to reassure Madame Georges as to the disappearance of her young protégée, who would return to her in a few days. For several very important reasons, added this man, M. Rodolphe begged Madame Georges, in the event of her having anything to send him, not to write him at Paris, but to hand the letter to the courier, who would take charge of it.

This courier was an emissary of Sarah's.

By this "ruse," she tranquillized Madame Georges, and retarded thus for some days the moment when Rodolphe must hear of the abduction of the Goualeuse. In this interval, Sarah hoped to force the notary to favour the unworthy scheme of which we have spoken. This was not all. Sarah wished also to get rid of Madame d'Harville, who inspired her with serious fears, and who would have been lost, save the presence of mind of Rodolphe.

The day after the marquis had followed his

wife to the house in the Rue du Temple, Tom went there, easily set Madame Pipelet jabbering, and learned that a young lady, on the point of being surprised by her husband, had been saved, thanks to the address of a lodger in the house named Rodolphe. Informed of this circumstance, Sarah, possessing no material proof of the "rendezvous" that Clémence had given to M. Charles Robert, conceived another odious plan. It was concocted to send another anonymous letter to the marquis, in order to effect a complete rupture between him and Rodolphe, or, at least, to make the marquis so suspicious as to forbid any farther intercourse between the prince and his wife.

This letter was thus couched: "You have been deceived most shamefully. The other day, your wife, advised that you were following her, pretended an imaginary visit of charity; she went to a rendezvous at a very *august personage's* who has hired, in the Rue du Temple, a room in the fourth story, under the name of Rodolphe. If you doubt these facts, strange as they may appear, go to the Rue du Temple, No. 17, and inform yourself: paint to yourself the features of the *august person* spoken of, and you will easily acknowledge that you are the most credulous, good-natured husband who has ever been so *sovereignly* deceived. Do not neglect this advice; otherwise it will be supposed that you also are too much

"*The Friend of the Prince.*"

This note was put in the post at five o'clock by Sarah, on the day of her interview with the notary. The same evening, Rodolphe went to pay a visit to Madame l'ambassadrice de * * *; after which it was his intention to go to Madame d'Harville's to announce to her that he had found a *charitable intrigue* worthy of her. We will conduct the reader to Madame d'Harville's. It will be seen, from the following conversation, that this young woman, in showing herself generous and compassionate towards her husband, whom she had until then treated with extreme coldness, followed already the noble counsels of Rodolphe.

The marquis and his wife had just left the table; the scene passed in the little saloon of which we have spoken; the expression of Clémence was affectionate and kind; M. d'Harville seemed less sad than usual. He had not yet received the new and infamous letter from Sarah. "What are you going to do to-night?" said he mechanically to his wife. "I shall not go out; and yourself, what are your plans?" "I do not know," answered he with a sigh; "society is insupportable to me. I will pass this evening, like so many other evenings, alone." "Why alone, since I am not going out?" M. d'Harville looked at his wife with surprise. "Doubtless, but—" "Well?" "I know that you often prefer solitude, when you do not go out."

"Yes; but as I am very capricious," said Clémence, smiling, "at present I prefer to partake my solitude with you, if it is agreeable to you." "Really," cried M. d'Harville, with emotion, "how kind you are to anticipate what I dared not express!" "Do you know, my friend, that your astonishment has almost an air of reproach?" "A reproach? oh, no, no! not after my unjust and cruel suspicions the other day; to find you so forgiving, it is, I confess, a surprise for me; but a surprise the most delightful."

"Let us forget the past," said she to her husband, with an angelic smile. "Clémence, can you forget?" answered he, sadly. "Have I not dared to suspect you? to tell you to what extremity a blind jealousy has impelled me? But what is all this compared to other wrongs, still greater, more irreparable?"

"Let us forget the past, I say," repeated Clémence, restraining her emotion.

"What do I hear? the past also—can you forget it?"

"I hope to do so." "Can it be true, Clémence? you can be so generous! but no, no, I cannot believe in so much happiness; I had renounced it forever." "You were wrong, you see."

"What a change! Mon Dieu! Is it a dream? Oh tell me I am not mistaken." "No, no, you are not mistaken."

"And, truly, your look is less cold; your voice almost falters. Oh, say, is it, then, true? Am I not under an illusion?"

"No, for I also have need of pardon." "You?"

"Have I not been cruel towards you? Ought I not to have thought that you must have needed a rare courage, a virtue more than human, to act differently from what you did? Isolated, unhappy, how resist the desire of seeking some consolations in a marriage which pleased you? Alas! when one suffers, one is so disposed to believe on the generosity of others! your error has been, until now, to count on mine. Well! henceforth I will try to give you reason."

"Oh! speak, speak once more," said M. d'Harville, his hands clasped in a kind of ecstasy. "Our existence is forever united. I will do all in my power to render your life less bitter." "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Is it you I hear?" "I beg you, do not be so much astonished; it gives me pain; it is a bitter censure on my past conduct. Who, then, should pity you? Who, then, should lend you a friendly and helping hand, if it is not I? A happy inspiration I have received. I have reflected, well reflected, on the past, on the future. I have seen my errors, and I have found, I believe, the means to repair them."

"Your errors, poor wife?" "Yes; I should have, the next day after our marriage, appealed to your honour, and frankly demanded a separation." "Ah! Clémence! pity! pity!" "Otherwise, since I accepted my position, I should have augmented it by submission, instead of causing you constant self-reproach by my haughty and taciturn coldness. I should have endeavoured to console you for a fearful malady, by only remembering your misfortune. By degrees I should have become attached to my work of commiseration, by reason even of the cares, perhaps the sacrifices which they would have cost me: your gratitude had rewarded me, and then—but, mon Dieu! what is the matter? you weep!" "Yes, I weep, weep with joy. You do not know how many new emotions your words cause me. Oh! Clémence! let me weep!" "Never more than at this moment have I comprehended how culpable I have been in chaining you to my sad destiny!"

"And never have I felt more decided to forget. These gentle tears that you shed make me acquainted with a happiness of which I was ignorant. Courage then, my friend! courage! in default of a fortunate and smiling destiny, let us seek our satisfaction in the accomplishment of the serious duties that fate imposes. Let us be indulgent one to the other; if we falter, let us regard the cradle of our child, let us concentrate on her all our affections, and we shall yet have some joys, melancholy and holy."

"An angel, she is an angel!" cried M. d'Harville, joining his hands and looking at his wife with affectionate admiration. "Oh! you do not know the pain and pleasure you cause me, Clémence! you do not know that your harshest words formerly, your most severe reproaches, alas! the most merited, have never so much overwhelmed me as this adorable mansuetude, this generous resignation, and yet, in spite of myself, you make hope spring up again. You do not know the future that I dare imagine." "And you can blind and entice faith in what I tell you, Albert. This resolution is taken firmly; it shall never fail, I swear it to you. Before long I may give you new guarantees of my word." "Guarantees!" cried M. d'Harville, more and more excited by happiness so unlooked for, "guarantees! have I need of them? Your look, your voice, this beaming expression of goodness which still graces you, the throbbings of my heart, all, all prove to me, that what you say is true? But you know, Clémence, man is insatiable in his hopes," added the marquis. "Your noble and touching words give me courage to hope, yes, to hope that at yesterday I regarded as an insensate dream!"

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"Albert, I swear to you I shall always be the most devoted of friends, the most tender of sisters; but nothing more. Pardon, pardon, if, unknowingly, my words have ever given you hopes which can never be realized!" "Never?" cried M. d'Harville, fixing on her a desperate and supplicating look. "Never!" answered Clemence. This single word, the tone of voice, revealed an irrevocable resolution. Clemence, brought back to noble resolutions by the influence of Rodolphe, was firmly resolved to surround her husband with the most touching attentions; but she felt that she was incapable of ever loving him. An impression still stronger than fright, than contempt, than hatred, separated Clemence from her husband forever. It was a repugnance, invincible. After a moment of mournful silence, M. d'Harville passed his hand over his eyes, and said to his wife, bitterly,

"Pardon me for deceiving myself; pardon me for having abandoned myself to a hope mad as it was foolish. Ah! I am very unfortunate!" "My friend," said Clemence to him, gently, "I do not wish to reproach you; yet do you reckon as nothing my promise to be for you the most tender of sisters? You will owe to the most devoted friendship attentions that love could not give you. Hope for better days. Until now you have found me almost indifferent to your sorrows; you shall see how I shall compassionate you, and what consolations you will find in my affection." A valet-de-chambre entered, and said to Clemence, "His royal highness, Monseigneur the Grand-duke of Gerolstein, asks if Madame la Marquise will receive him?" Clemence looked at her husband, who, recovering his "sang froid," said to her, "Why, doubtless." The valet-de-chambre retired. "Pardon me, my friend," said Clemence; "I did not say that I would not receive. Besides, it is a long time since you have seen the prince; he will be happy to find you here. I shall, also, be much pleased to see him; yet I avow, that just now I am so agitated that I should have preferred to receive his visit some other day" "I can comprehend it; but what could we do? Here he is." At the same moment Rodolphe was announced.

"I am a thousand times happy, madame, to have the honour to meet you," said Rodolphe; "and I doubly appreciate my good fortune, since it also procures me the pleasure of seeing you, my dear Albert," added he, turning towards the marquis, whom he cordially shook by the hand. "It is a long time, monseigneur, since I have had the honour to pay you my respects." "And whose fault is it, Monsieur Invisible?" The last time I came to pay my respects to Madame d'Harville, I asked for you; you were absent. It is now three weeks that you have forgotten me; it is very wrong." "Be merciless, monseigneur," said Clemence, smiling; "M. d'Harville is so much the more culpable since he has for your highness the most profound respect, and he might make this to be doubted by his negligence." "Well! see my vanity, madame; whatever D'Harville might do, it would always be impossible for me to doubt his affection; but I ought not to say this. I am encouraging him in such conduct." "Believe me, monseigneur, that some unforeseen circumstances alone have prevented me from profiting oftener by your kindness towards me." "Between ourselves, my dear Albert, I believe you a little too platonic in friendship; very sure that you are loved, you are not pliant enough to give or receive proofs of attachment." Through a breach of etiquette, which rather annoyed Madame d'Harville, a valet-de-chambre entered, bringing a letter to the marquis. It was the anonymous denunciation of Sarah, which accused the prince of being the lover of Madame d'Harville.

The marquis, out of deference to the prince, pushed back with his hand the little silver plateau which the servant handed him, and said, in an under tone, "Not now, not now." "My dear Albert," said the prince, in the most affectionate tone, "do you stand on ceremony with me?" "Monseigneur—"

"With the permission of Madame d'Harville, I beg you to read this letter"

"I assure you, monseigneur, that there is nothing pressing." "Once more, Albert, read this letter!" "But, monseigneur—" "I entreat you—I wish it." "Since your royal highness requires it," said the marquis, taking the letter from the plateau.

"Certainly. I require that you treat me as a friend."

Then turning towards the marquise, while M. d'Harville broke the seal of this fatal letter, the contents of which Rodolphe could not have imagined, he added, smiling, "What a triumph

for you, madame, to cause this will, so stern, always to cede!" M. d'Harville drew near to one of the candelabras on the chimneypiece, and opened the letter of Sarah.

CHAPTER II.

COUNCIL.

Rodolphe and Clémence conversed together, while M. d'Harville twice read the letter. His countenance remained composed; a nervous trembling, almost imperceptible, agitated his hands alone; then, after a moment's hesitation, he put the note into the pocket of his waistcoat. "At the risk of passing for a savage," said he to Rodolphe, smiling, "I shall ask permission, monseigneur, to go and answer this letter—more important than I thought at first." "Shall I not see you again to-night?" "I do not think that I can have that honour, monseigneur; I hope your royal highness will excuse me." "What a man!" said Rodolphe, gayly. "Will you not try to retain him, madame?" "I dare not attempt what your highness has attempted in vain." "Seriously, my dear Albert, try to return to us as soon as your letter is written; if not, promise to grant me an interview some morning—I have a thousand things to say to you." "Your royal highness overwhelms me," said the marquis, bowing profoundly as he retired.

"Your husband is preoccupied," said Rodolphe to the marquise; "his smile appeared constrained."

"When your royal highness arrived, M. d'Harville was profoundly affected; he had great trouble to conceal it."

"I have arrived, perhaps, at an inopportune moment?" "No, monseigneur. You have even spared me the conclusion of a painful conversation." "How is that?" "I have told M. d'Harville the new line of conduct that I was resolved to follow, promising him support and consolation." "How happy he should be!"

"At first he was as much so as myself; for his tears, his joy, produced an emotion to which I had, as yet, been a stranger. Formerly I thought I revenged myself by addressing him a reproach, a sarcasm. Sad revenge! my sorrow afterward has only been more bitter. While just now—what a difference! I asked my husband if he were going out: he answered me sadly, that he should pass the evening alone, as was usually the case. When I offered to remain with him—if you could have seen his astonishment, monseigneur! how his expression, always sad, became at once radiant. Oh! you were right—nothing more pleasing than to contrive these surprises of happiness!"

"But how did these proofs of goodness on your part lead to this painful conversation of which you have spoken?"

"Alas! monsieur," said Clémence, blushing, "to these hopes succeeded hopes more tender, which I was very guarded not to excite, because it will always be impossible for me to realize them."

"I comprehend: he loves you tenderly."

"As much as I was at first touched with his gratitude, so much was I alarmed at his protestations of love. I could not conceal my alarm. I caused him a sad blow in manifesting thus my invincible repugnance to his love. I regret it. But, at least, M. d'Harville is now forever convinced that he has only to expect from me the most devoted friendship."

"I pity him, without being able to blame you; there are susceptibilities, thus to speak, which are sacred. Poor Albert, so good, so kind! If you knew how much I have been afflicted, for a long time past, with his sadness and dejection, although ignorant of the cause. Let us leave all to time, to reason. By degrees he will recognise the value of the affection you offer him, and he will be resigned to it, as he was resigned before having the touching consolations which you offer him." "And which shall never be wanting, I swear to you, monsieur." "Now let us think of the other unfortunates. I have promised you a good work, having all the charm of a romance in action. I come to fulfil my engagement."

"Already, monseigneur! what happiness?" "Ah! it was a kind of happy inspiration that induced me to take that poor room in the house of the Rue du Temple of which I have spoken to you. You cannot imagine all that I find curious and interesting! In the first place, your protégés of the garret envy the comforts your presence had promised them; they have, however, yet to undergo some sad trials; but I do not wish to make you sad. Some day you shall know how many horrible calamities may overwhelm one single family." "What must be their gratitude towards you!" "It is your name they bless." "You have succoured them in my name, monseigneur!" "To render the charity sweeter to them. Besides, I have only realized your promises." "Oh! I will go and undeceive them: tell them it is to you they owe—"

"Do not do that! you know I have a room in this house: be guarded against any new cowardly acts of your enemies, or of mine; and since the Morels are now out of the reach of want, think of others. Let us think of our *intrigue*. It concerns a poor mother and her daughter, who, formerly in affluence, are at this time, in consequence of an infamous spoliation, reduced to the most frightful misery." "Unfortunate women! and where do they live, monseigneur?" "I do not know." "But how did you find out their situation?"

"Yesterday I went to the Temple. You do not know what the Temple is, Madame la Marquise?" "No, monseigneur." "It is a bazar very amusing to see. I went there to make some purchases with my neighbour of the fourth." "Your neighbour?" "Have I not my room in the Rue du Temple?"

"I forget it, monseigneur." "This neighbour is a charming little grisette; she calls herself Rigolette; she is always laughing, and never had a lover." "What virtue for a grisette!" "It is not exactly from virtue that she is virtuous, but because, she says, she has no time to be in love; for she must work from twelve to fifteen hours a day to gain twenty-five sous, on which she lives." "She can live on so small an amount?" "How now! she has even articles of luxury: two birds, who eat more than she does; her little room is as neat as possible, and her dress really quite coquettish." "Live on twenty-five sous a day! she is a prodigy." "A real prodigy of order, labour, economy, and practical philosophy, I assure you; thus I recommend her to you. She is, she says, a very skilful sempstress. At all events, you will not be obliged to wear the clothes she makes for you." "To-morrow I will send her some work.

Poor girl! to live on so small a sum, and, thus to speak, so unknown to us, who are rich, whose smallest caprices cost a hundred times that amount!" "You will interest yourself—interest yourself, then, in my little protégée, it is agreed; let us return to our other adventure." Here Rodolphe related to the marquise what occurred in the Temple, the finding of the letter in the old secretary, and the story told concerning it by the old marchande. "And you do not know their abode, monseigneur?"

"Unfortunately, no. But I have given orders to M. de Graün to endeavour to discover it, even if he is obliged to apply to the prefecture of the police. It is probable that, stripped of everything, the mother and daughter have sought refuge in some miserably furnished lodgings. If it should be so, we have some hope, for the landlords report every evening the strangers who arrive in the course of the day." "What a singular concurrence of circumstances!" said Madame d'Harville, with astonishment. "This is not all. In a corner of this letter, found in the old secretary, were these words, '*Write to Madame de Lucenay.*'" "What good fortune! perhaps we can find out something from the duchess," cried Madame d'Harville, with vivacity; then she continued, with a sigh, "But I am ignorant of the name of this woman—how designate her to Madame de Lucenay?" "You must ask her if she does not know a widow, still young, of a distinguished appearance, and whose daughter, aged sixteen or seventeen years, is named Claire." "I remember the name. The name of my daughter! it seems to me a motive the more to interest me in their misfortunes."

"I forgot to tell you that the brother of this widow committed suicide some months ago." "If Madame de Lucenay knows this family," said Madame d'Harville, "such information will suffice to bring them to her mind. Mon Dieu! how desirous I am of going to see her. I will write her a note to-night, so that I shall be sure to find her to-morrow morning. Who can these women be? From what you know of them, monseigneur, they appear to belong to the upper classes of society. And to find themselves reduced to such distress! ah! for them poverty must be doubly frightful."

"And that by the robbery of a notary, a miserable scoundrel, of whom I already know many other misdeeds—a certain Jacques Ferrand." "My husband's notary!" cried Clémence; "the notary of my stepmother! But you are deceived, monseigneur; he is looked upon as one of the most honourable men in the world."

"I have proofs to the contrary. But do not, I pray you, say a word on this subject to any one; he is as crafty as he is criminal, and to unmask him, I have need that he shall not suspect, or, rather, that he shall go on with impunity a short time longer. Yes; it is he who has despoiled these unfortunates, by denying a deposite which, from all appearances, had been placed in his hands by the brother of this widow." "And this sum?" "Was their sole resource! Oh! what a crime—what a crime!" cried Rodolphe; "a crime that nothing can excuse—neither want nor passion. Often does hunger cause robbery, vengeance, murder. But this notary was already rich; and, clothed by society with a character almost holy, with a character which imposes, forces confidence, this man is induced to crime by a cold and implacable cupidity. The assassin only kills you once, and quickly with his knife: he kills you slowly, by all the horrors of despair and misery into which he plunges you. For a man like this Ferrand, the patrimony of the orphan, the savings of the poor—nothing is sacred! You confide to him gold; this gold tempts him; he makes you a beggar, and wretched! By the force of privations and toil, you have assured to yourself bread, and an asylum for your old age; *the will* of this man tears from your old age this bread and shelter. This is not all. See the effects, the fearful effects of these infamous spoliations: this widow of whom we speak may die of sorrow and distress; her daughter, young and handsome, without support, without resources, accustomed to a competency, unfit, from her education, to gain a living, soon finds herself between starvation and dishonour! she is lost! By this robbery, Jacques Ferrand is the cause of the death of the mother, the ruin of the child! he has killed the body of one, he has killed the soul of the other; and this, once more I say it, not at once, like other homicides, but with cruelty, and slowly."

Clémence had never yet heard Rodolphe speak with so much bitterness and indignation; she listened in silence, struck with these words of eloquence, doubtless very sad, but which discovered a vigorous hatred of evil. "Pardon me, madame," said Rodolphe, after a moment's pause; "I cannot restrain my indignation in thinking of the cruel fate which your future protégées may have realized. Ah! believe me, the consequences of ruin and poverty are very seldom exaggerated."

"Oh! on the contrary, I thank you, monseigneur, for having, by these terrible words, still more augmented, if that is possible, the sincere commiseration I feel for these unfortunates. Alas! it is above all for her daughter she must suffer; oh! it is frightful. But we will save them—we will assure them as to the future; is it not so, monseigneur? 'Dieu merci,' I am rich, but not as much so as I could wish; now I foresee a new use for money; but, if it is necessary, I will speak to M. d'Harville; I will make him so happy that he cannot refuse any of my new caprices. Our protégées are proud, you say, monseigneur: I like them better for it; pride in misfortune always proves an elevated mind. I will find the means to save them, without their knowing that they owe the succour they receive to a benefactor. It will be difficult; so much the better! Oh! I have already a project; you shall see, monseigneur, you shall see that I am not wanting in address and cunning."

"I already foresee the most Machiavelian combinations," said Rodolphe, smiling. "But we must first discover them: how I wish it was to-morrow. On leaving Madame de Lucenay I will go to their old lodgings; I will question their neighbours; I will see for myself; I will ask information from everybody. I will compromise myself if it is necessary! I shall be so proud to obtain by myself, and by myself alone, the result I desire: oh! I will succeed; this adventure is so touching. Poor women! it seems to me I feel more interest in them when I think of my child."

Rodolphe, touched with this charitable eagerness, smiled sadly in seeing this young woman of twenty, so handsome, so lovely, trying to forget in noble occupations the domestic troubles which afflicted her; the eyes of Clémence sparkled with vivacity, her cheeks were slightly suffu-

sed; the animation of her gesture, of her speech, gave new attraction to her ravishing physiognomy.

CHAPTER III.

THE SNARE.

Madame d'Harville perceived that Rodolphe was contemplating her in silence. She blushed, cast down her eyes; then raising them in charming confusion, she said, "You laugh at my enthusiasm, monseigneur? It is because I am impatient to taste those holy joys which are about to reanimate my existence, until now sad and useless. Such, without doubt, was not the life I dreamed of; there is a sentiment, a happiness, more lively still that I can never know; although still very young, I must renounce it!" added Clémence, suppressing a sigh. "But thanks to you, my saviour, always thanks to you, I have created for myself other interests; charity shall replace love. I am already indebted to your advice for such touching emotions! Your words, monseigneur, have so much influence! The more I meditate, the more I reflect on your ideas, the more I find them just, great, and fruitful. Oh! monseigneur, how much goodness your mind discloses! From what source have you, then, drawn these feelings of tender commiseration?" "I have suffered much, I still suffer; this is the reason I know the cause of many sorrows."

"You, monseigneur, you unhappy!" "Yes; for one would say that, to prepare me to solace all kind of sorrows, fate has willed I should undergo them all. A lover, it has struck me through the first woman that I loved with all the blind confidence of youth; a husband, through my wife; a son, it has struck me through my father; a father, through my child."

"I thought, monseigneur, that the grand-duchess did not leave you any child?" "She did not; but before my marriage with her I had a daughter, who died very young. Well! strange as it may appear to you, the loss of this child, whom I had hardly seen, is the sorrow of my life. The older I become, the more profound my regrets! Each year redoubles the bitterness. It seems to increase as her years would have increased. Now she would have been seventeen!"

"And her mother, monseigneur, does she still live?" asked Clémence.

"Oh! do not speak of her!" cried Rodolphe. "Her mother is an unworthy creature, a being bronzed by egotism and ambition. Sometimes I ask myself if it were not better my child should be dead, than to have remained in the hands of her mother."

Clémence experienced a kind of satisfaction in hearing Rodolphe express himself thus. "Oh! I conceive, then," cried she, "that you regret doubly your daughter!" "I should have loved her so well! and, besides, it seems to me that among us princes there is always in our love for a son a kind of interest of race and name; but a daughter! a daughter! she is loved for herself alone. And when one has seen, alas! humanity under the most sinister aspects, what delight to contemplate a pure and lovely being! to inhale her virgin purity, to watch over her with tender care! A mother the most fond, the most proud of her daughter cannot experience this feeling; she is herself too similar to taste these ineffable delights: she will appreciate much more the manly qualities of a bold and noble boy. For, in fine, do you not find that that which renders, perhaps, still more touching the love of a mother for her son, a father for his daughter, is, that there is always in these affections a feeble being who has need of protection? The son protects the mother, the father protects the daughter." "Oh, it is true, monseigneur." "But, alas! why understand the ineffable joys, when one can never experience them?" said Rodolphe, dejectedly.

"But pardon me, madame; my regrets and my souvenirs have, in spite of myself, carried me away; you will excuse me?"

"Ah, monseigneur! believe I partake of your sorrows. Have I not the right? Have you not partaken of mine? Unfortunately, the consolations that I can offer you are in vain."

"No, no; the expression of your interest is sweet and salutary to me. It is weakness, but I cannot hear a young girl spoken of without thinking of her whom I have lost."

"These thoughts are so natural! Hold, monseigneur; since I have seen you, I have accompanied, in her visits to the prisons, a lady of my acquaintance, who is a patroness of the work of the young women who are confined at Saint Lazare; this house contains many very culpable beings. If I were not a mother, I should have judged them, doubtless, with still more severity, while I now feel for them pity; much softened in thinking that, perhaps, they had not been lost, except for the state of poverty and neglect they had been in from their infancy. I do not know why, but after these thoughts it seemed to me I loved my child the more."

"Come, courage," said Rodolphe, with a melancholy smile; "this conversation leaves me quite reassured as to you. A salutary path is open to you; in following it, you will pass through, without stumbling, these years of trial, so dangerous for women, and, above all, for a woman gifted as you are; your reward shall be great; you will still have to struggle, to suffer—for you are very young—but you will renew your strength in thinking of the good you have done—of that which you still will do."

Madame d'Harville burst into tears. "At least," said she, "your assistance, your counsels, will never fail me: is it not so, monseigneur?" "Far or near, I shall always take the most lively interest in all that concerns you; always, as much as depends upon me, I will contribute to your happiness; to that of the man to whom I have vowed the most constant friendship."

"Oh! thank you, monseigneur, for this promise," said Clémence, drying her tears; "without your generous support, my strength would abandon me; but, believe me, I swear it here, I will constantly accomplish my duty." At these words, a small door concealed behind the tapestry was opened roughly. Clémence uttered a cry. Rodolphe shuddered. M. d'Harville appeared, pale, and profoundly affected; his eyes were wet with tears. The first astonishment over, the marquis said to Rodolphe, giving him Sarah's letter, "Monséigneur, here is the infamous letter which I received just now before you. I pray you to burn it after you have read it."

Clémence looked at her husband with alarm.

"Oh, this is infamous!" cried Rodolphe, indignantly.

"Well, monseigneur, there is something still more infamous than this anonymous scurrility

—it is my own conduct!" "What do you mean to say?" "A little while ago, instead of showing you this letter frankly, boldly, I concealed it from you; I pretended to be calm, while I had jealousy, anger, and despair in my heart: this is not all. Do you know what I did, monseigneur? I shamefully went and concealed myself behind this door to listen to you—to spy—yes, I have been wretch enough to doubt your honour. Oh! the author of this letter knows to whom he addresses it; he knows how weak my head is. Well, monseigneur, say, after hearing what I have just heard—for I have not lost a word of your conversation, and know why you go to the Rue du Temple—ought I not, on my knees, ask for pardon and pity? and I do it, monseigneur. I do it, Clémence; I have no more hope but in your generosity." "Ah, mon Dieu! my dear Albert, what have I to pardon?" said Rodolphe, extending both hands with the most touching cordiality. "*Now* you know our secrets, I am delighted. I can preach to you at my leisure. I am your confidant by compulsion, and, what is still better, you are the confidant of Madame d'Harville; that is to say, you now know all you have to expect from that noble heart."

"And you, Clémence, will you pardon me also?"

"Yes; on condition that you will assist me in assuring your own happiness;" and she extended her hand to her husband, who pressed it with emotion. "Ma foi, my dear marquis," cried Rodolphe, "our enemies are unlucky; thanks to them, we are only the more intimate from the past. You never have more justly appreciated Madame d'Harville; she has never been more devoted to you; acknowledge that we are well avenged of the envious and wicked. That will answer while waiting for something better, for I divine from whence this came, and I am not accustomed to suffer patiently the injuries done to my friends. But this regards me. Adieu, madame; here is our *intrigue* discovered; you will no longer be alone in assisting your protégées: be assured we will get up some new mysterious enterprise, which the marquis must be very cunning to discover." * * *

After having accompanied the prince to his carriage, to thank him again, the marquis retired to his own apartments without seeing Clémence again.

CHAPTER IV.

REFLECTIONS.

It would be difficult to describe the tumultuous and contrary sentiments which agitated M. d'Harville when he found himself alone. He acknowledged with joy the falsity of the accusation against Rodolphe and Clémence, but he was also convinced that he must renounce the hope of being loved by her. The more that, in her conversation with Rodolphe, Clémence had shown herself courageous, resolute to do good, the more he bitterly reproached himself for having, with culpable egotism, linked this unhappy young woman to his fate. Far from being consoled from the conversation he had just heard, he fell into a state of sadness, of inexpressible despondency. There is in a life of opulence without employment this terrible disadvantage; nothing turns its attention, nothing protects the mind from brooding on its sorrows, on itself. Never being compelled to occupy itself with the necessities of the future, or the labours of each day, it remains entirely a prey to great mental afflictions. Being able to possess all that gold can procure, it desires or regrets violently that which gold alone cannot procure.

The grief of M. d'Harville was desperate, for, after all, he desired nothing but what was just, what was legal. * * *

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To these transports of vain anger succeeded a feeling of gloomy dejection. "Oh!" cried he, at once softened and cast down, "it is my fault, it is my fault; poor unhappy woman, I have deceived her, unworthily deceived her! She can, she ought to hate me; and yet, just now again, she evinced the most touching interest for me; but, instead of contenting myself with that my foolish passions have carried me away. I became tender; I have spoken to her of my love, and hardly had my lips touched her hand, than she trembled with affright. If I could still have had any doubt of the invincible repugnance with which I inspire her, what she has just now said to the prince leaves me no illusion. Oh! it is frightful—frightful!

"And by what right did she confide to him this hideous secret? it is an unworthy betrayal of confidence! By what right? Alas! by the same right that prisoners have to complain of their executioner. Poor child! so young, so lovely, all that she could find to say that was cruel against the horrible fate to which I have doomed her, is, that such was not the lot she had dreamed of, and that she was very young to renounce love! I know Clémence; the word she has given me, which she has given to the prince, she will henceforth keep; she will be for me the most tender sister. Well! my position is not worthy of envy! to the cold and constrained feelings which existed between us, are going to succeed the most affectionate and the kindest relations, while she might have continued to treat me with a frozen contempt, without my daring to complain. * * * *

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"Another torture! How I have suffered, mon Dieu! when I thought her culpable—what terrible agony! But no, this fear is vain; Clémence has sworn not to fail in her duties; she will keep her promises; but at what price, mon Dieu! at what price! Just now, when she returned to me with her affectionate words, how her sad, soft, melancholy smile, caused me pain! How much this return to her executioner must have cost her! Poor woman! how handsome she looked! For the first time I felt acute remorse, for until then her haughty coldness was her revenge. Oh, unfortunate man, unfortunate man that I am!" * * *

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After a long, sleepless night of bitter reflections, the agitation of M. d'Harville ceased as by enchantment.

He awaited the day with impatience.

CHAPTER V.

PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE.

As soon as it was morning, M. d'Harville rang for his valet.

Old Joseph, on entering the room, heard his

master, to his great astonishment, humming a hunting song, a sign, as rare as it was sure, of the good-humour of M. d'Harville.

"Ah! Monsieur le Marquis," said the faithful servant, quite softened, "what a good voice you have! what a shame you do not sing oftener." "Really, Monsieur Joseph, have I a good voice?" said M. d'Harville, laughing. "M. le Marquis might have a voice as hoarse as an owl or a rattle, I should still think he had a good voice." "Hold your tongue, flatterer!"

"Dame! when you sing, Monsieur le Marquis, it is a sign you are contented; and then your voice appears to me the most charming music in the world." "In that case, my old Joseph, learn to open your long ears." "What do you say?"

"You can enjoy this charming music every day."

"You will be happy every day, Monsieur le Marquis?" cried Joseph, clasping his hands with astonished delight. "Every day, my old Joseph! happy every day. Yes, no more sorrow—no more sadness! I can tell this to you, sole and discreet confidant of all my sorrows! I am overjoyed with happiness! My wife is an angel of goodness! she has asked pardon for her past coldness, attributing it to—can you guess? to jealousy!" "To jealousy?"

"Yes! absurd suspicions, caused by anonymous letters!"

"What indignity!" "You comprehend? women have so much self-love! It needed nothing more to separate us; but, happily, last night we had an explanation. I undeceived her; to tell you of her joy would be impossible; for she loves me! oh! how she loves me! Thus, this cruel separation has ceased; judge of my joy!" "Can it be true?" cried Joseph, with tears in his eyes. "It is true, then, Monsieur le Marquis! now you are forever happy, since the love of Madame la Marquise was alone wanting, as you have told me."

"And to whom should I have told it, my poor old Joseph? Do you not possess a still more sorrowful secret? But let us not talk of sorrow; the day is too happy. You see, perhaps, I have wept! it is thus, you see, happiness overpowers me! I so little expected it! How weak I am! Is it not so?"

"Yes, yes, Monsieur le Marquis, you can well weep for joy! you who have wept so much for sorrow! And me, then! Hold! am I not acting as you are? Brave tears! I would not part with them for ten years of my life. I have only one fear, which is, that I shall hardly be able to keep from throwing myself at the feet of Madame la Marquise the first time I see her."

"Old fool! you are as unreasonable as your master! Now I have a fear also." "Which? mon Dieu!" "That this will not last! I am too happy! what is wanting?" "Nothing, Monsieur le Marquis, absolutely nothing." "It is on this account I am mistrustful of happiness so perfect—so complete!" "Alas! if it was not for that, Monsieur le Marquis—but no, I dare not." "I understand you! well, believe your fears are vain; the change that my happiness causes me is so great, so profound, that I am almost sure of being saved!" "How is that?" "My physician has told me a hundred times, that often a violent mental shock sufficed to give or cure this fatal malady. Why should not emotions of happiness produce the same effect?" "If you believe this, Monsieur le Marquis, it will be so—it is so—you are cured! Why this is, indeed, a blessed day! Ah! as you say, monsieur, Madame la Marquise is a good angel descended from heaven; and I begin to be almost alarmed myself, monsieur; it is, perhaps, too much felicity for one day; but I must think—if to reassure you it only needs a small sorrow—Dieu merci! I have it!" "How?" "One of your friends has received, very fortunately and seasonably, as it happens, a sword-cut—not at all serious, it is true; but no matter, it is enough to make you a little sorry; that there may be, as you desire it, a little trouble on this happy day. It is true, that in regard to that, it had been better if the thrust had been more dangerous; but we must be contented as it is." "Will you be quiet? And of whom do you speak?" "Of M. le Duc de Lucenay. He is wounded! a scratch on the arm. M. le Duc came yesterday to see monsieur, and he said he would come this morning and ask for a cup of tea." "Poor Lucenay! and why did you not tell me?" "Last night I was not able to see Monsieur le Marquis." After a moment's thought, M. d'Harville replied, "You are right; this light sorrow will doubtless satisfy jealous destiny. But an idea has just struck me; I have a mind to have this morning a déjeûner de garçons, all friends of M. de Lucenay, to congratulate him on the happy result of his duel; he will be enchanted." "A la bonne heure! Monsieur le Marquis! Joy forever! Make up lost time. How many covers? so that I can give the orders to the Maître d'Hôtel." "Six, in the little winter breakfast-parlour." "And the invitations?" "I will go and write them. A man from the stables can take them round on horseback. It is early; they will all be found at home. Ring."

M. d'Harville entered his cabinet, and wrote the following letters, without any other address than the name of the invited:

"My dear * * *—This is a circular; an impromptu is in agitation. Lucenay is to come and breakfast with me this morning; he counts only on a tête-à-tête; cause him a very agreeable surprise by joining me, and a few other of his friends, whom I have also advised.

"At noon, precisely. A. D'HARVILLE."

"Let some one mount a horse immediately," said M. d'Harville to a servant who answered the bell, "and take these letters." Then, turning to Joseph, he directed him to address them as follows: "M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy. Lucenay cannot do without him," said M. d'Harville to himself. "M. de Monville—one of his travelling companions. Lord Douglass—his faithful partner at whist. The Baron de Sézannes—the friend of his youth. Have you written?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Marquis." "Send these letters without losing a moment," said M. d'Harville. "Ah! Philippe, ask M. Doublet to come to me." The servant retired. "Well! what is the matter?" asked M. d'Harville of Joseph, who looked at him with amazement.

"I cannot get over it, monsieur! I never saw you so gay; and, besides, you, who are commonly so pale, you have a fine colour—your eyes sparkle." "Happiness, my old Joseph! happiness! Ah! now you must assist me in a scheme. You must go and find out from Mademoiselle Juliette, she who, I believe, has charge of the diamonds of Madame d'Harville."

"Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, it is Mademoi-

selle Juliette who takes care of them; I helped her, not a week ago, to clean them."

"You go and ask her the name and address of the jeweller of her mistress; but she must not say a word on the subject to the marquise!" "Ah! I understand, monsieur! A surprise."

"Go quickly. Here is M. Doublet. My dear Monsieur Doublet, I am going to frighten you," said he, laughing. "I am going to make you utter cries of distress."

"Me! Monsieur le Marquis?" "You!" "I will do all in my power to satisfy Monsieur le Marquis." "I am going to spend a great deal of money, Monsieur Doublet—an enormous amount of money." "What of that, Monsieur le Marquis? we are able to do it, Dieu merci! able to do it." "For a long time I am possessed with a notion of building. I have it in contemplation to add a gallery on the garden, to the right wing of the hotel. After a long hesitation, I have quite decided. You must tell my architect to-day, so that he can come and talk over the plans. Well! M. Doublet, you don't groan over this expense?" "I can assure Monsieur le Marquis that I do not groan." "This gallery will be destined for fêtes; I wish it to be built, as it were, by enchantment; now, enchantments being very dear, you must sell 15 or 20,000 livres of 'rentes,' to be ready to furnish the funds, for I wish the work commenced as soon as possible." Joseph entered.

"Here is, Monsieur le Marquis, the address of the jeweller; his name is M. Baudoin." "My dear Monsieur Doublet, you will go, I beg you, to this jeweller, and tell him to bring here, in an hour, a diamond necklace worth about two thousand louis. Women can never have too many jewels, now that dresses are trimmed with them. You will arrange with the jeweller for the payment." "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis. It is on account of the surprise that I do not groan this time! Diamonds are like buildings, the value remains; and, besides, this surprise to the marquise! It is as I had the honour to say the other day—there is not in the world a happier man than Monsieur le Marquis."

"This good M. Doublet!" said M. d'Harville, smiling; "his felicitations are always so inconceivably apropos."

"It is their sole merit, Monsieur le Marquis; and they have, perhaps, this merit because they come from the bottom of the heart. I go to the jeweller," said M. Doublet, retiring.

As soon as he was gone, M. d'Harville paced the floor of his cabinet, his arms crossed on his breast, his eye fixed and meditative.

Suddenly his countenance changed; it no longer expressed the content, of which the attendant and the old servant had just been the dupe, but a calm, cold, and mournful resolution. After having walked some time, he seated himself as if overcome by the weight of his troubles, with his face buried in his hands. Then he suddenly arose, wiped away a tear which moistened his burning evelid, and said, with an effort, "Come, courage."

He wrote letters to several persons about insignificant objects; but in the letters he appointed or put off different meetings several days. This correspondence finished, Joseph came in; he was so gay that he so far forgot himself as to sing in his turn. "Monsieur Joseph, you have a very fine voice," said his master, smiling. "Ma foi, so much the worse, M. le Marquis, I did not know it; something sings so loudly within that it must be heard without." "You will put these letters in the postoffice." "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis; but where will you receive these gentlemen?" "Here, in my cabinet; they will smoke after breakfast, and the odour of the tobacco will not reach Madame d'Harville." At this moment the noise of a carriage was heard in the courtyard. "It is Madame le Marquise, who is going out; she ordered her horses this morning at an early hour," said Joseph. "Run, then, and beg her to come here before she goes out." "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis."

Hardly had the domestic gone when M. d'Harville approached a glass and examined himself minutely. "Well, well," said he, in a gloomy tone; "that's right—the cheeks flushed, the eye sparkling—joy or fear—no matter—as long as they are deceived. Let us see now—a smile on the lips. There are so many kinds of smiles. But who can distinguish the false from the real? who can penetrate under this lying mask, to say, this smile conceals a black despair? no one, happily, no one! oh! yes, love could never be mistaken; no, its instinct would enlighten it. But I hear—my wife—my wife! Come, to your post, inauspicious buffoon." "Good-day, Albert, my good brother," said Madame d'Harville, with a sweet smile, and giving him her hand. "But what is the matter, my friend? You appear so happy and gay!"

"It is, that at the moment you came in, my dear little sister, I was thinking of you. Besides, I was under the influence of an excellent resolution." "That does not surprise me." "That which took place yesterday, your admirable generosity, the noble conduct of the prince, all this gave me much to think about, and I am a convert to your ideas. You would not have excused me last night if I had too easily renounced your love, I am sure, Clémence." "What language, what a happy change!" cried Madame d'Harville. "Oh! I was very sure, that in addressing myself to your heart, to your reason, you would comprehend me."

"Now I have no longer any doubts for the future."

"Nor I, Clémence, I assure you. Yes, since the resolution I have taken this night, the future, which seemed to me dark and gloomy, has become singularly cleared up—simplified." "Nothing is more natural, my friend; now we march towards one object, leaning fraternally on each other: at the end of our career we will find ourselves as we are to-day. In fine, I desire that you shall be happy, and this shall be so, for I have placed it there," said Clémence, putting her finger on his forehead. Then she resumed, with a charming expression, lowering her hand to his heart: "No, I am mistaken; it is there that this good thought will incessantly watch for you, and for me also; and you shall see, monsieur my brother, what is the obstinacy of a devoted heart." "Dear Clémence," answered M. d'Harville, with constrained emotion; then, after a pause, he added gayly, "I begged you to come here before your departure to inform you that I could not take tea with you this morning. I have a number of persons to breakfast with me; it is a kind of impromptu to congratulate M. de Lucenay on the happy issue of his duel."

Madame d'Harville blushed in thinking of the cause of this duel; she said to her husband, "See, now, what a coincidence: M. de Lucenay comes to breakfast with you; I go, perhaps very indiscreetly, to invite myself to do the same with

Madame de Lucenay; for I have much to talk to her about my unknown protégées. From there I intend to go to the prison of Saint Lazaré, with Madame de Blinval, for you do not know all my ambition; at this moment I am *intriguing* to be admitted in the work for the young 'détenues.'"

"Truly, you are insatiable," said the marquis; "thus," added he, restraining with great difficulty his emotion, "thus I shall see you no more—to-day!" he hastened to add. "Are you vexed that I go out this morning so early?" asked Madame d'Harville, quickly, astonished at the tone of his voice. "If you ask it, I will put off my visit to Madame de Lucenay." The marquis was on the point of betraying himself; he said in the most affectionate manner, "Yes, my dear little sister, I am as much vexed to see you go out, as I shall be impatient to see you return; these are defects I shall never correct myself for."

"And you will do well, my friend; for I should be very angry." A bell announcing a visit resounded throughout the hotel.

"Here are, doubtless, some of your guests," said Madame d'Harville; "I leave you—apropos, what are you going to do to-night? If you have not disposed of your evening, I require that you shall accompany me to the Italians; perhaps, now, music will please you more!" "I place myself under your orders with the greatest pleasure." "Are you going out soon? Shall I see you again before dinner?" "I am not going out. You will find me here." "Then, when I return, I will come and see if your bachelor breakfast has been amusing." "Adieu, Clémence." "Adieu, my friend—à bientôt!* I leave you the field clear; I wish you much fun. Be very gay!" And after having cordially pressed the hand of her husband, Clémence went out by one door a moment before M. de Lucenay entered by another.

"She wishes me much amusement—she tells me to be gay. To this word adieu, to this last cry of my soul in its agony, to this word of eternal separation, she has added, à bientôt; and she went away tranquilly—smiling—allons—this does honour to my dissimulation. By Heavens! I did not think myself so good a player. But here is Lucenay."

CHAPTER VI.

DEJEUNER DE GARÇONS.

M. DE LUCENAY entered the room; his wound had been so slight that he did not carry his arm in a sling; his countenance was always cheerful and contemptuous, his movements always restless, his mania to make a bustle insurmountable. Yet, notwithstanding his caprices, his pleasantries in very bad taste, and his enormous nose, he was not, as we have already said, a vulgar man, thanks to a kind of natural dignity and courageous impertinence which never abandoned him. "How indifferent you must suppose me to be as regards anything concerning you, my dear Henry!" said M. d'Harville, extending his hand to M. de Lucenay; "but it is only this morning I heard of your disagreeable adventure." "Disagreeable! come now, marquis! I got the worth of my money, as they say. I never laughed so much in my life! this excellent M. Robert appeared to be so solemnly determined not to pass for having the 'pituite.' Exactly; you don't know it was the cause of the duel? The other night, at the ambassade of ***, I asked him, before your wife and the Countess M'Gregor, how he got on with his pituite—indè iræ; for, between us, he had not this inconvenience. But never mind. You understand—to have that said before handsome women, it is annoying."

"What folly! I recognise you there! But who is this M. Robert?"

"Ma foi! I don't know anything about him; he is a gentleman whom I met aux eaux; he passed before us in the winter garden at the embassy; I called him to play off this joke; he answered the second day after by giving me, very gallantly, a nice little thrust with his sword. But don't let us talk of this nonsense. I come to beg a cup of tea." Saying this, M. de Lucenay threw himself at full length on the sofa; after which, introducing the end of his cane between the wall and the frame of a picture placed over his head, he commenced moving it backward and forward.

"I expected you, my dear Henry, and I have arranged a little surprise for you." "Oh, bah! and what is it?" cried M. de Lucenay, pushing the picture in a very ticklish position.

"You'll end by pulling that picture on to your head."

"It is true, pardieu! you have the eye of an eagle. But your surprise, what is it?" "I have sent for some of our friends to breakfast with us." "Ah! good; par exemple—for that, marquis bravo! bravissimo! archibravissimo!" scream-M. de Lucenay, striking heavy blows on the sofa cushions. "And whom shall we have? Saint Rémy?" "No; he has been in the country for some days. What the devil can he manage to do in the country in winter?" "Are you sure he is not in Paris?" "Very sure; I wrote to him to be my second; he was absent; I fell back on Lord Douglas and Césanne." "That is fortunate; they breakfast with us."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried M. de Lucenay, anew. Then he turned and twisted himself on the sofa, accompanying his loud cries with a series of somersets that would have astonished a rope-dancer. The acroatic evolutions of the duke were interrupted by the arrival of M. de Saint Rémy. "I have no need to ask if Lucenay was here," said the viscount, gayly. "He can be heard below." "How! is it you, beautiful Sylvan, countryman! wolf's cub!" cried the duke, much surprised; "I thought you were in the country." "I came back yesterday; I received the invitation just now, and here I am, quite delighted at this surprise," and M. de Saint Rémy gave his hand to M. de Lucenay, and then to the marquis.

"I take this very kind in you, my dear Saint Rémy. Is it not natural that the friends of Lucenay should rejoice at the happy issue of this duel, which, after all, might have had a very grievous result?"

"But," resumed the duke, obstinately, "what have you been doing in the country in midwinter, Saint Rémy? that beats me."

"How curious he is!" said the viscount, addressing M. d'Harville. "I wish to wean myself from Paris, since I must so soon quit it."

"Ah! yes, this beautiful imagination to attach yourself to the legation of France at Gérolstein. None of your nonsense and stuff about diplomacy; you will never go there. My wife says so, and everybody repeats it." "I assure you that

* A bientôt. The pleasure of soon seeing one again.

Madame de Lucenay is mistaken, like every one else." "She told you before me that it was a folly." "I have committed so many in my lifetime!"

"Elegant and charming follies, very well, so as to ruin yourself, as they say, by your Sardanapalus's magnificence, I admit that; but to go and bury yourself in such a hole of a court at Gérolstein! Come, now, this is no folly, it is a 'bêtise,' and you are too sensible to do a stupid thing." "Take care, my dear Lucenay, in abusing this German court you will have a quarrel with D'Harville, the intimate friend of the grand-duke, who, besides, received me most kindly the other night at the ambassade of * * *, where I was presented to him." "Really! my dear Henry," said M. d'Harville, "if you knew the grand-duke as I know him, you would comprehend that Saint Rémy could have no repugnance to go and pass some time at Gérolstein." "I believe you, marquis, although he is said to be proudly original, your grand-duke; but that doesn't prevent that a beau like Saint Rémy, the finest flower among pea blossoms, cannot live, excepting at Paris; his value is only known at Paris."

The other guests of M. d'Harville had just arrived, when Joseph entered and said some words in a low tone to his master.

"Gentlemen, will you allow me," said the marquis; "it is the jeweller of my wife, who brings me some diamonds to choose for her—a surprise. You know that, Lucenay, we—you and I—are husbands of the old school." "Oh! pardieu, if you talk of a surprise," cried the duke, "my wife gave me one yesterday; and a famous one, I tell you!" "Some splendid present?" "She asked for a hundred thousand francs." "And as you are a 'magnifico,' you have—" "Lent them! they will be mortgaged on her Arnouville farm—short accounts make long friends. But never mind; to lend in two hours 100,000 francs to some one who wants them, is genteel and rare. Is it not, spendthrift? you who are a 'connaisseur' in loans," said the Duke de Lucenay, laughing, without dreaming of the bearing of his speech. Notwithstanding his audacity, the viscount at first slightly blushed; then he said, with effrontery, "One hundred thousand francs! why, it is enormous. How can a woman ever have need of such an amount? We men, that's another story."

"Ma foi, I don't know what she wanted with the money. Besides, it is all the same to me. Some bills, probably, some urgent creditors; that's her look-out. And, besides, you well know, my dear Saint Rémy, that lending her my money, it would have been in the worst taste in the world to ask what she wanted it for." "It is, however, a very excusable curiosity in those who lend, to wish to know what the borrower wants to do with the money," said the viscount, laughing.

"Parbleu! Saint Rémy," said M. d'Harville, "you, who have such excellent taste, you must aid me in choosing the set I intend for my wife; your approbation will sanction my choice, your approval is the law."

The jeweller entered, carrying several caskets in a large leather bag. "Ah! here is M. Baudoin!" said M. de Lucenay. "At your service, Monsieur le Duc." "I am sure that it is you who ruin my wife with your infernal and dazzling temptations?" said M. de Lucenay. "Madame la Duchesse has only had her diamonds reset this winter," said the jeweller, slightly embarrassed." "I have this moment left them with Madame la Duchesse, on my way here."

M. de Saint Rémy knew that Madame de Lucenay, to come to his assistance, had changed her diamonds for false ones; this conversation was very disagreeable to him, but he said boldly,

"These husbands, how curious they are! do not answer, Monsieur Baudoin." "Curious! ma foi, no," answered the duke; "it is my wife who pays; she is richer than I am." During this conversation, M. Baudoin had displayed on a bureau several admirable necklaces of rubies and diamonds. "How splendid! and these stones, how divinely they are cut!" said Lord Douglass. "Alas! monsieur," answered the jeweller, "I employed in this work one of the best artisans in Paris; unfortunately, he has become mad, and I shall never find his equal. My broker tells me that it is probably misery which has turned his brain, poor man." "Misery! and you confide diamonds to a man in poverty!"

"Certainly, monsieur, and I have never known an instance of an artisan concealing or secreting anything confided to him, however poor he might be." "How much for this necklace?" asked M. d'Harville.

"Monsieur le Marquis will remark that the stones are of splendid cutting, and the purest water, almost all of the same size."

"Here are some wordy precautions most menacing for your purse," said M. de Saint Rémy, laughing; "expect, now, D'Harville, some exorbitant price." "Come, Monsieur Baudoin, your lowest price?" said M. d'Harville. "I do not wish to make Monsieur le Marquis bargain, so I say the lowest is 42,000 francs."

"Messieurs!" cried M. de Lucenay, "we husbands, let us admire D'Harville in silence. To arrange a surprise for his wife for 42,000 francs! The devil! don't go and noise that abroad; it will be a detestable example." "Laugh as much as you please, gentlemen," said the marquis, gayly. "I am in love with my wife, I do not conceal it; I boast of it!" "That is easily seen," said M. de Saint Rémy; "such a present speaks more than all the protestations in the world."

"I take this necklace, then," said M. d'Harville, "if you approve of this black enamel setting, Saint Rémy." "It sets off to advantage the brilliancy of the stones; they are beautifully arranged."

"I decide, then, for this necklace," said M. d'Harville." "You will have to settle with M. Doublet, my intendant, Monsieur Baudoin." "M. Doublet has advised me, Monsieur le Marquis," said the jeweller, and he went out, after having put in his sack, without counting them, the different sets of jewels which he had brought, and which M. de Saint Rémy had for a long time handled and examined during this conversation. M. d'Harville, in giving the necklace to Joseph, who awaited his orders, whispered to him, "Mlle. Juliette must put these diamonds quietly with those of her mistress, without her suspecting it, so that the surprise will be complete." At this moment the Maître d'Hôtel announced that the breakfast was served; the guests of the marquis passed into the breakfast-room and seated themselves at table.

"Do you know, my dear D'Harville," said M. de Lucenay, "that this house is one of the most elegant and best arranged in Paris?"

"It is commodious enough, but it wants space; my project is to add a gallery on the garden. Madame d'Harville desires to give some grand balls, and our three saloons are not large enough; besides, I find nothing more inconvenient than the encroachments made by a fête on the apartments which one habitually occupies, and from which, for the time, you are exiled." "I am of your opinion," said M. de Saint Rémy; "nothing is in worse taste, more in the 'bourgeois' fashion, than these forced removals by authority of a ball or concert. To give fêtes really splendid, without any inconvenience to one's self, a particular suite of apartments must be arranged exclusively for them; and, besides, vast and splendid saloons, destined for grand balls, ought to have a different character, style, from the rooms in ordinary occupation: there is between these two species of apartments the same difference as between a splendid fresco and an easel picture." "He is right," said M. d'Harville; "what a pity, messieurs, that Saint Rémy has not twelve or fifteen hundred thousand livres income! what wonders we should enjoy!"

"Since we have the happiness to enjoy a representative government," said the Duke de Lucenay, "ought not the country to vote a million a year to Saint Rémy, and charge him to represent at Paris French taste and fashion, which would thus decide the fashion of Europe, of the world?" "Adopted!" was cried in chorus. "And this million should be annually raised, in form of a tax on these abominable misers who, possessors of enormous fortunes, shall be arraigned, tried, and convicted of living like skinflints," added M. de Lucenay. "And as such," said M. d'Harville, "condemned to defray the magnificences which they ought to display."

* * * * *

"While waiting for the decision which will legalize the supremacy which Saint Rémy now exercises in fact," said M. d'Harville, "I shall ask his advice for the gallery I am about to construct."

"My feeble lights are at your disposal, D'Harville."

"And when shall this inauguration take place, mon cher?"

"Next year, I suppose, for I am going to commence immediately."

"What a man of projects you are!" "I have many others, ma foi. I contemplate a complete change at Val Richer."

"Your estate in Burgundy?" "Yes; there are some admirable plans to execute there, if, always, God spares my life."

"Poor old man! But have you not lately bought a farm near Val-Richer to add to your estate?" "Yes, a very good affair that my notary advised." "And who is this rare and precious notary who advises such good affairs?" "M. Jacques Ferrand." At this name a slight shade passed over the brow of the viscount. "Is he really an honest man, as he is reputed to be?" asked he, carelessly, of M. d'Harville, who then remembered what Rodolphe had related to Clémence concerning the notary.

"Jacques Ferrand? what a question; why, he is a man of antique probity!" said M. de Lucenay. "As respected as respectable." "Very pious—that hurts no one." "Excessively avaricious—which is a guarantee for his clients."

"He is, in fine, one of our notaries of the old school, who ask you for whom you take them when you speak of a receipt for money confided to them." "For no other cause than that, I would confide my whole fortune to him." "But where the devil, Saint Rémy, did you get your doubts concerning this worthy man, of proverbial integrity?" "I am only the echo of vague rumours, otherwise I have no reason to deny this phœnix of notaries. But to return to your projects, D'Harville: what are you going to build at Val Richer? The chateau is said to be superb."

"You shall be consulted, my dear Saint Rémy, and sooner, perhaps, than you think, for I delight in these works; it seems to me there is nothing more pleasant than to have your plans spread out for years to come. To-day this project—in a year this one—still later some other; add to this a charming wife whom one adores, who is the motive in all your plans, and, ma foi, life passes gently enough." "I believe you, pardieu! it is a real paradise on earth." "Now, messieurs," said D'Harville, when breakfast was over, "if you will smoke a cigar in my cabinet, you will find some excellent ones there."

They arose from the table and returned to the cabinet of the marquis; the door of his sleeping apartment, which communicated with it, was open. We have already said that the sole ornament of this room was a panoply of arms. M. de Lucenay, having lighted a cigar, followed the marquis into his chamber. "Here are some splendid guns, truly; ma foi, I do not know which to prefer, the French or the English." "Douglass!" cried M. de Lucenay, "come, then, and see if these guns will not compare with the best *Mantans*." Lord Douglass, Saint Rémy, and two other guests entered the chamber of the marquis to examine the arms.

M. d'Harville took a pistol, cocked it, and said, laughing, "Here, messieurs, is the universal panacea for all woes, the spleen, ennui." And he placed the muzzle laughingly to his mouth. "Ma foi! I prefer another specific," said Saint Rémy; "this is only good in desperate cases."

"Yes, but it is so prompt," said D'Harville. "Click! and it is done; the will is not more rapid. Really, it is marvellous!"

"Take care then, D'Harville, these pleasantries are always dangerous, and accident might happen," said M. de Lucenay, seeing the marquis again place the pistol to his lips.

"Parbleu, mon cher, do you think that if it was loaded I would play these tricks?" "Doubtless no, but it is always wrong." "Look here, messieurs, this is the way they do it; the barrel is introduced delicately between the teeth, and then—"

"Mon Dieu! how foolish you are, D'Harville, when you once get a going," said M. de Lucenay, shrugging his shoulders.

"The finger is placed on the trigger," added M. d'Harville.

"Is he not a child—childish at his age?"

"A little movement on the lock," continued the marquis, "and one goes straight to the land of spirits."

With these words, the pistol went off.

M. d'Harville had blown his brains out.

* * * * *

We will renounce the task; we cannot describe the affright, the amazement, of the guests of M. d'Harville.

The next day would be seen in a newspaper.

"Yesterday an event, as unforeseen as deplorable, agitated the whole Faubourg St. Ger-

main. One of those imprudences, which lead every year to such fatal accidents, has caused a most lamentable affair. Here are the facts, which we have gathered, and whose authenticity we can guaranty:

"M. le Marquis d'Harville, possessor of an immense fortune, hardly twenty-six years of age, noted for the elevation of his character and the goodness of his heart, married to a lady whom he adored, had invited a few friends to breakfast. On leaving the table, they passed into the sleeping apartment of M. d'Harville, where was displayed several valuable arms. In showing some of the guns to his guests, M. d'Harville, in jest, placed a pistol, which he did not know was loaded, to his lips. In his security, he drew the trigger; it went off! and the unhappy young man fell dead, with his skull fractured! The frightful consternation of the surrounding friends may easily be imagined, to whom, but a moment before, in the bloom of youth, he had just been conversing of his projects for the future! And as if all the circumstances attending this painful event should be more cruel from contrast, the same morning, M. d'Harville, wishing to surprise his wife, had just purchased a valuable necklace. And it is just at this moment, when, perhaps, life never appeared more smiling, more desirable, that he falls a victim to a deplorable accident.

"Before such a misfortune, all reflections are useless; we can only remain, as it were, annihilated by the inscrutable decrees of Providence." * *

We quote the papers merely to show that general belief attributed the death of M. d'Harville to a deplorable accident. It is hardly necessary to say, that M. d'Harville carried with him to the tomb the mysterious secret of this voluntary death. Yes, voluntary; and calculated and meditated with as much sang-froid as generosity, so that Clémence could not have the slightest suspicion of the true cause of this suicide.

Thus the project of which M. d'Harville had conversed with his friends and his intendant, his confidential communications to his old servant, the surprise which he arranged for his wife, were just so many snares laid for public credulity.

How could a man be supposed about to kill himself, who was so much occupied with plans for the future—so desirous of pleasing his wife? His death was then attributed, and could only be attributed, to an imprudence. As to his resolution, an incurable despair had dictated it.

* * * *

"My death alone can dissolve these ties—it must be—I shall kill myself." And this is the reason why M. d'Harville had accomplished this grave, this melancholy sacrifice.

If a law of divorce had existed, would he have committed suicide? No! He could have repaired in part the evil he had done; restored his wife to liberty; permitted her to find happiness in another union. The inexorable immutability of the law, then, often renders certain faults irremediable; or, as in this case, only allows them to be effaced by a new crime.

CHAPTER VII.

SAINT LAZARE.

We think we ought to inform the most scrupulous of our readers that the prison of Saint Lazare, specially destined to prostitutes and female thieves, is daily visited by several ladies, whose charities, whose name, whose social position, command the respect of all. These ladies, brought up amid the splendours of fortune—these ladies, who with good reason are classed among the most elevated in society, come every week to pass long hours with the miserable prisoners of Saint Lazare. Observing in these degraded beings the least aspiration after virtue, the least regret for a past crime, they encourage the better tendencies and repentance; and, by the powerful magic of these words, *duty*, *honour*, *virtue*, sometimes they rescue from the depths of degradation one of these abandoned, despised, ruined beings.

Accustomed to the refinements of the best society, these courageous women leave their houses, press their lips to the virginal cheek of their daughters, pure as the angels of heaven, and go to the gloomy prisons to brave the gross indifference or the criminal conversation of these thieves and prostitutes.

Faithful to their mission of high morality, they valiantly descend into this infected receptacle, place the hand on all these ulcerated hearts, and if some feeble pulsation of honour reveals to them the slightest hope of saving them, they contend and tear from an irrevocable perdition the wretched being of whom they do not despair. The scrupulous reader, to whom we address ourselves, will calm, then, his susceptibility in thinking that he will only hear and see, after all, what these venerated women see and hear every day. Without daring to establish an ambitious parallel between their mission and ours, may we say, that that which also sustains us in this painful, difficult work, is the conviction of having awakened some noble sympathies for the unfortunate who are honest, courageous, worthy, for sincere repentance, for a simple and "naïve" uprightness, and to have inspired disgust, aversion, horror, the salutary fear of all that which was absolutely impure and criminal? We have not recoiled before descriptions the most hideously true, thinking that, like fire, true morality purifies all.

Our only hope is to call the attention of people of wealth, and those who reflect on these things, to the great social miseries, the reality of which may be deplored, but not contested.

* * * *

This work, which we recognise without difficulty as a *bad book*, looking at it as a work of art—but we maintain that it is not a *bad book* in a moral point of view—this work, we say, had it not had, in its ephemeral career, but one single one of the results of which we have spoken, we should be very proud, honoured by our attempt. What more glorious recompense for us than the benedictions of some poor family, who should owe their relief to the thoughts we have awakened?

All this is said in reference to the new peregrinations we propose to the reader. After having, we hope, appeased his scruples, we shall introduce him to Saint Lazare, an immense edifice, of imposing and gloomy aspect, situated in the Rue du Faubourg Saint Denis.

Ignorant of the terrible drama that was passing at home, Madame d'Harville had gone to the prison, after having obtained some information from Madame de Lucenay concerning the two unhappy women whom the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand had plunged into distress. Madame

de Blinval, one of the patronesses before spoken of, not being able to accompany Clémence to Saint Lazare, she came alone. She was received with much kindness by the director, and by several lady inspectresses, known by their black dresses and a blue riband with a silver medal.

One of these, a woman of advanced age, of a soft and grave expression, remained alone with Madame d'Harville, in a little saloon adjoining the office. * * * *

Madame Armand, the inspectress who had remained alone with Madame d'Harville, possessed to an extreme degree this foreknowledge, this insight into the character of the prisoners. Her word, her judgment, was of paramount authority in the house.

She said to Clemence: "Since Madame la Marquise has been kind enough to request me to point out those of our inmates who, from good conduct or sincere repentance, should merit her interest, I believe I can recommend an unfortunate, whom I think more unhappy than culpable; for I do not think I deceive myself in affirming that it is not too late to save this young girl, a poor child of sixteen or seventeen years at most."

"And for what has she been confined?"

"She is guilty of being found in the Champs Elysées in the evening. As it is forbidden to those of her class, under very severe penalties, to frequent, either day or night, certain places, and the Champs Elysées are among the number of these prohibited places, she was arrested."

"And she appears interesting to you?"

"I have never seen more regular or more ingenuous features. Imagine, Madame la Marquise, a picture of the Virgin. That which gave still more to her appearance a most modest expression was, that when she came here she was dressed like a peasant girl of the environs of Paris." "She is, then, a country girl?" "No, Madame la Marquise. The inspectors recognised her. She lived in a horrible house in the cité, from which she was absent for two or three months; but as she has not demanded to have her name erased from the registers of the police, she remained under the control of the officers who sent her here." "But perhaps she left Paris to endeavour to reinstate herself?" "I think so, madame. I felt at once interested in her. I interrogated her as to the past; I asked her if she came from the country, telling her to be of good cheer, if, as I hoped, she wished to return to the paths of virtue."

"What did she reply?" "Lifting on me her large blue, melancholy eyes, and full of tears, she said to me, in a tone of angelic sweetness, 'I thank you, madame, for your kindness, but I cannot speak of the past; I have been arrested—I was wrong—I do not complain.' 'But where do you come from? Where have you been since you left the cité? If you have been to the country to seek an honourable existence, say so; prove it; we will write to the prefect to obtain your discharge. You shall be erased from the police lists, and your good resolutions shall be encouraged.' 'I entreat you, madame, do not interrogate me; I cannot answer you,' she replied. 'But when you leave here, do you wish to return to this horrible house again?' 'Oh! never!' she cried. 'What will you do, then?' 'God knows!' she replied, letting her head fall on her breast." "This is very strange! She expresses herself—" "In very good terms, madame; her deportment is timid, respectful, but without meanness. I will say more. Notwithstanding the extreme sweetness of her voice and her look, there is at times in her accent, in her attitude, a kind of sorrowful pride which confounds me. If she did not belong to the unhappy class of which she is a part, I should almost think that this pride is a soul conscious of its elevation."

CHAPTER VIII.

MONT SAINT JEAN.

THE clock of the prison of Saint Lazare struck two.

To the severe frost which had reigned for some days, a temperature, soft, mild, almost springlike, had succeeded; the rays of the sun were reflected on the water of a large square basin, with a stone margin, situated in the middle of a court, planted with trees and surrounded by high, gloomy walls, pierced with a number of grated windows; wooden benches were placed here and there in this vast enclosure, which served as a promenade for the prisoners.

The tinkling of a bell announcing the hour of recreation, the prisoners noisily rushed into the court through a strong wicket door which was opened for them. These women, dressed in uniform, wore black caps and long frocks of blue woollen, confined by a belt and iron buckle. There were two hundred prostitutes there, condemned for infringements of the particular laws which register them, and place them without the common law. * * *

At the sight of this collection of lost creatures, one cannot prevent the sad thought, that many among them have been pure and virtuous, at least some time. We make this restriction, because that a great number have been vitiated, corrupted, depraved, not only from their youth, but from their most tender infancy, as we shall see directly. * * * *

When the prisoners rushed into the court, screeching and shouting, it was easy to see that joy alone at escaping from labour did not render them so noisy. After having pushed through the only door that led to the yard, the crowd separated and made a circle around a deformed being, whom they overwhelmed with hootings.

She was a small woman of about thirty-six to forty years of age, short, thick set, crooked, having the neck sunk between the two unequal shoulders. They had taken off her cap, and her hair, of a blonde, or rather faded yellow, uncombed, tangled, striped with gray, fell on her low and stupid face. She was dressed in a blue frock like the other prisoners, and carried under her arm a little bundle tied up in a miserable, ragged handkerchief. She tried to ward off the threatened blows with her left arm.

Nothing could be more sadly grotesque than the features of this poor creature: it was a ridiculous and hideous face, lengthened to a snout, wrinkled, tanned, and dirty, pierced with two nostrils, and two little red eyes, squinting and bloodshot; in turn supplicating or angry, she implored, she scolded, but they laughed more at her complaints than at her threats. This woman was the butt of the prisoners. One thing alone, however, should have saved her from their bad treatment; she was about to become a mother. But her ugliness, her imbecility, and

the habit they had to look upon her as a victim devoted to the general amusement, rendered ner persecutors implacable, notwithstanding their ordinary respect for maternity. Among the most furious of the enemies of Mont Saint Jean (this was the name of the drudge), could have been remarked La Louve. La Louve was a tall girl of about twenty, active, masculine, and with rather regular features; her coarse, black hair was shaded with red; her face was disfigured with pimples; her thick lips were slightly covered with a bluish down; her dark eyebrows, very thick and heavy, met above her large brown eyes; something violent, ferocious, brutal, in her expression, a kind of habitual laugh, which, lifting her upper lip when she was angry, showing her white and scattering teeth, explains her surname of La Louve (the wolf). Nevertheless, this face expressed more audacity and insolence than cruelty; in a word, one can comprehend that, more vicious than thoroughly bad, this woman was yet susceptible of some good feelings, as the inspectors had related to Madame d'Harville. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! what have I done to you?" cried Mont Saint Jean; "why do you treat me so?"

"Because it amuses us. Because you are only good to be tormented. It is your trade. Look at yourself; you will see you have no right to complain." "But you know I do not complain until I can't stand it any longer."

"Well, we'll leave you alone if you will tell us why you are called Mont Saint Jean." "Yes, yes, tell us that."

"And I have told you this a hundred times: it is an old soldier, whom I once loved, and who was called so, because he was wounded in the battle of Mont Saint Jean. I took his name. Are you content now? You make me repeat the same things!" "If he looked like you he was a beauty! He must have been one of the 'Invalides.'" "I am ugly; I know it. Say what you please; all the same to me; but don't strike me, that's all I ask." "What have you got in that old handkerchief?" said La Louve. "Yes, yes, what is it? Come, show it!" "Oh! no, I entreat you!" said the poor creature, holding the bundle tightly in her hands. "You must give it up." "Yes, take it from her, La Louve." "What is it?" "Well! it is some clothes (layette) I have commenced for my child. I make them with the old pieces of linen I pick up; it is of no consequence to you, is it?"

"Oh! 'La Layette;' let us see 'La Layette' of Mont Saint Jean!" "Come, come!" "A vous, à vous, La Layette!" cried La Louve, snatching the bundle from the hands of Mont Saint Jean. The wretched handkerchief was torn to pieces in the struggle, and its contents, composed of rags and bits of stuff of all colours, were strewn on the ground and trampled under foot, amid shouts of laughter.

"What rags! What trash! An old rag shop! Takes more thread than stuff!" "Here, pick up your duds, Mont Saint Jean!" "How wicked you are! Mon Dieu, how bad you must be!" cried the poor creature, running here and there after the scraps and rags, which she tried to pick up, notwithstanding the blows they gave her. "I have never harmed any one," said she, weeping; "I have offered, if they would let me alone, to do anything for them they wanted; to give them half of my rations, although I am very hungry. Ah well! no, no, it is just the same. But what must I do for peace? They have not even pity on a poor woman 'enciente!' They must be more savage than wild beasts! I had so much trouble to collect these little scraps of linen! How do you think I shall make my 'layette,' since I have no money to buy anything?" Suddenly she cried, in an accent of joy, "Oh! since you have come, La Goualeuse, I am saved. Speak to them for me. They will listen to you, surely, since they love you as much as they hate me."

The Goualeuse, arriving the last of the prisoners, then entered the yard.

CHAPTER IX.

LA GOUALEUSE AND LOUISE.

Before we continue the account of this horrible scene—before we cause to appear in this picture the angelic figure of Fleur de Marie—we must return to the Marquise d'Harville and Madame Armand, whose conversation had been for a moment interrupted. At the ringing of the bell, the inspectress had hastened to one of the doors which opened into the court of the prison, to be ready to prevent by her presence, or calm by her authority, any tumult or quarrels that might arise among these *scholars*, whose passions, restrained for some time by discipline and employment, only waited the hour of idleness and recreation to be aroused and excited. Madame Armand had witnessed, in mournful silence, the cruel treatment of which Mont Saint Jean was a victim, and she had already advanced to snatch her from her tormentors when Fleur de Marie appeared.

"She is saved!" said she to herself, and returned to the parlour, where Madame d'Harville awaited her. "But this is quite a romance that you have just related," cried she, without giving Madame Armand time to apologize for her absence. "And this young girl, whose beauty, language, and manners form such a strange contrast to her past degradation, to her present situation, what are her relations with the other prisoners? If she is endowed with the elevation of mind that you suppose, she must suffer much from associating with her miserable companions?" "Mon Dieu! Madame la Marquise, as for me, everything concerning this young girl is a subject of astonishment. Hardly has she been here three days, yet already she possesses a kind of influence over the other prisoners."

"In so short a time?" "They show her not only interest, but almost respect."

"How! these unfortunates—"

"Have sometimes an instinct of singular delicacy in perceiving the noble qualities of others; yet they often hate those whose superiority they are obliged to admit."

"And they do not hate this young girl?"

"Far from that, madame; not one of them knew her before she entered here. They were at first struck with her beauty. Her features, although of rare beauty, are, it is true, veiled with a touching and unhealthy paleness; this melancholy and sweet face inspired them at first with more interest than jealousy. Then she became very quiet: another subject of astonishment for these creatures, who, for the most part, endeavour always to drown the voice of conscience by force of noise and tumult. In fine, although dignified and reserved, she showed herself compassionate, which prevented her companions from being exasperated at her coldness. This

is not all. There is here, since a month, an unruly creature, called La Louve, so violent, audacious, and ferocious is her character; she is a girl of about twenty, tall, masculine, rather a fine face, but very coarse; we are often obliged to put her in confinement to subdue her turbulence. Only the day before yesterday she came out of the cell, very much irritated at the punishment she had just received. It was the hour of repast; the poor girl of whom I have spoken did not eat; she said, sadly, to her companions, 'Who wants my bread?' 'I!' said La Louve, first; 'I!' said a poor deformed creature, afterward, called Mont Saint Jean, who serves as a laughing-stock, and sometimes, in spite of us, as a butt to the other prisoners. The young girl gave her bread to the latter, to the great rage of La Louve. 'It is I who asked you first!' cried she, furiously. 'It is true, but this poor woman is enceinte; she has more need of it than you,' answered the young girl. La Louve, nevertheless, snatched the bread from the hands of Mont Saint Jean, and began to vociferate, brandishing her knife. As she is very irrascible, and very much feared, no one dared to take the part of poor Goualeuse."

"How do you call that name, madame?"

"La Goualeuse. It is the name, or, rather, surname, under which she has been confined here. Almost all of them have similar borrowed names."

"It is very singular."

"It signifies, in their hideous language, *the singer;* for this young girl has, they say, a very fine voice; and I readily believe it, for her accent is enchanting." "And how did she escape from this villainous Louve?" "Rendered still more furious by the *sang froid* of La Goualeuse, she ran towards her, with an oath and uplifted knife. All the prisoners screamed with terror. The Goualeuse alone regarded without fear this formidable creature. Smiling bitterly, she said, in her angelic voice, 'Oh! kill me, kill me; I desire it; but do not make me suffer much!' These words, it was reported to me, were pronounced with a simplicity so touching, that almost all the prisoners had tears in their eyes."

"I believe it," said M. d'Harville, painfully affected.

"'The worst characters,' answered the inspectress, 'happily, have sometimes moments of reflection—a kind of return to the correct path.' On hearing these words, expressed with such resignation, La Louve, touched to the heart, as she afterward said, threw her knife on the ground, trampled it under foot, and cried, 'I was wrong to threaten you, La Goualeuse, for I am stronger than you; you were not afraid of my knife; you are courageous—I love courage; so now, if any one attempts to hurt you, I'll defend you.'" "What a singular character!" The example of La Louve increased the influence of La Goualeuse, and, at present, a thing almost without a precedent, hardly any of the prisoners address her familiarly; the greater part respect her, and even offer to render her any little service that can be rendered among prisoners. I asked some of the prisoners who slept in the same room with her, what was the cause of the deference shown her. 'That's more than we can tell,' they answered: 'it is plain to be seen *she is not one of us.*' 'But who told you so?' 'No one told us: we see.' 'By what?' 'In a thousand things.' 'For instance, last night, before she went to bed, she went on her knees and said her prayers; as she prays, as La Louve said, she must have *a right* to pray!'" "What a strange observation!"

"These poor creatures have no sentiment of religion, yet they never utter here a sacrilegious or impious word; you will see, madame, in all our rooms a kind of altar, where the statue of the Virgin is surrounded with offerings and ornaments made by themselves. * * * *

"But to return to La Goualeuse: her companions said to me, 'We see that *she is not as we are,* from her soft manners, her sadness, the way in which she speaks.' And then said La Louve, who was present at this conversation, 'It must be that she is not one of us; for this morning, in our sleeping room, without knowing why, we were ashamed to dress ourselves before her.'" "What strange delicacy in the midst of so much degradation!" cried M. d'Harville. * * * "They have, then, a profound sense of their degradation?"

"No one can despise them as much as they despise themselves; among some of them, whose repentance is sincere, this original stain of vice remains indelible in their eyes, even when they find themselves in a better situation; others become insane; so much does the sense of their former abberation remain fixed and implacable. Thus, madame, I should not be surprised if the profound sorrow of the Goualeuse proceeds from some such cause."

"If this should be so, what torture for her! a remorse which nothing can soothe!" "Happily, madame, for the honour of the human race, this remorse occurs oftener than is supposed; avenging conscience never completely sleeps, or, rather, strange thing! sometimes one would say that the spirit watches while the body sleeps; it is an observation that I made only this night again in reference to my protégée. Very often, when the prisoners are asleep, I make the round of the sleeping apartments. You cannot imagine, madame, how much the physiognomies of these women differ in expression while they sleep. A great number of them whom I had seen during the day careless, bold, brazen, impudent, seemed completely to have changed when sleep had deprived their features of all the audacity of wickedness; for vice, alas! has its pride. Oh! madame, what sorrowful revelations on these countenances, then dejected, melancholy and sad! what involuntary starts! what mournful sighs torn from them by a dream, doubtless impressed with an inexorable reality! I spoke to you just now, madame, of this girl called La Louve. About fifteen days ago she insulted me brutally before all the prisoners; I shrugged my shoulders; my indifference but exasperated her; then she thought to wound me by uttering something disgraceful concerning my mother, who she had often seen here on a visit to me. Ah, how horrid! I acknowledge, stupid as this attack was, she hurt me. La Louve saw it, and triumphed. That night I went to make an inspection in the sleeping apartment; I reached the bed of La Louve, who was to be put in the cell next morning; I was struck with the sweetness of her face, compared with the hard and insolent expression which was habitual to her; her features seemed supplicating, full of sadness and contrition; her lips were half open, her breathing oppressed; finally, a thing which appeared to me incredible, for I thought it impossible, two tears—two large tears fell from the eyes of this woman. I looked at her in silence for some moments, when I heard

her pronounce these words, '*Pardon pardon! her mother!*' I listened more attentively, but all that I could hear was my name, Madame Armand, pronounced with a sigh." "She repented, during her sleep, of having abused your mother?" "I thought so—and it made me less severe."

"And the next day, did she express any regret for her past conduct?"

"None; she showed herself just the same as always."

* * * * *

"But, madame, you must need great courage, much strength of mind, not to recoil before the unpleasantness of a task which brings such rare returns!" "The consciousness of fulfilling a duty sustains and encourages me; besides, sometimes, one is recompensed by some happy discovery."

"No matter; women like you, madame, are seldom to be found."

"No, no; I assure you that which I do others do, and with more success and intelligence than me. One of the inspectresses of the other quarter of Saint Lazare, destined for those accused of other crimes, will interest you much more. She related to me the arrival, this morning, of a young girl, accused of infanticide. Never have I heard anything more touching. The father of the poor unfortunate is become insane from grief, on learning the shame of his child. It appears that nothing could be more frightful than the poverty of this family, who lived in a wretched garret in the Rue du Temple." "The Rue du Temple!" cried Madame d'Harville, astonished. "What is the name of the family?"

"Morel. Her name is Louise Morel."

"This poor family has been recommended to me," said Clémence, blushing, "but I was far from expecting to hear such terrible news—and Louise Morel—" "Says she is innocent; she swears her child was dead; and her words have the accent of truth." "Since you have interested yourself in her family, Madame la Marquise, if you would have the kindness to see her, this mark of your goodness would calm her despair, which they say is fearful." "Certainly, I will see her, and the Goualeuse also; for all you tell me about this poor girl affects me sincerely. But what must I do to obtain her liberty? Then I will find her a place; I will take charge of her." "With the relations you have, Madame la Marquise, it will be very easy for you to get her discharge to-day or to-morrow; this depends entirely on the prefect of the police. The recommendation of a person of consideration would be decisive with him. But I have wandered far, madame, from the observation that I made on the slumber of the Goualeuse. And on this subject, I must confess that I should not be astonished that, to the sentiments of profound grief for her first fault, is joined another sorrow, not less cruel."

"What do you mean to say, madame?"

"Perhaps I am deceived; but I should not be astonished that this young girl, emancipated, as it were, from the degradation into which she was first plunged, had experienced, perhaps, a virtuous love, which was at once her happiness and her misery."

"And for what reasons do you think so?"

"The obstinate silence she keeps as to the place where she passed the three months which followed her departure from the cité, makes me think that she fears to be reclaimed by the persons with whom, perhaps, she found a refuge." "And why this fear?"

"Because she would then have to avow a past life, of which they are, doubtless, ignorant." "Really, this peasant's dress—"

"Besides, another circumstance has strengthened my suspicions. Last night, as I made my inspections, I drew near the bed of the Goualeuse; she slept profoundly; her face was calm and serene; her thick flaxen hair, half escaping from under her cap, fell in profusion on her neck and shoulders. She had her small hands clasped, and crossed on her bosom, as if she had fallen asleep while in the act of prayer. I contemplated with compassion this angelic countenance, when, in a low voice, and in a tone at once respectful, sorrowful, and endearing, she pronounced a name." "And this name?" After a moment's silence, Madame Armand said gravely, "Although I consider as sacred that which one hears another express in their sleep, you interest yourself so generously in this unfortunate, madame, that I can confide to you this secret. This name was *Rodolphe*." "Rodolphe!" cried Madame d'Harville, thinking of the prince. Then, reflecting that, after all, the Grande duke of Gerolstein could have no connexion with the Rodolphe of the poor Goualeuse, she said to the inspectress, who seemed astonished at her exclamation, "This name surprised me, madame, for, by a singular chance, one of my relations has it also; but all that you have told me of the Goualeuse interests me more and more. Can I not see her to-day? Now?" "Yes, madame, I will go, if you wish it, to find her. I can also ask about Louise Morel, who is in the other part of the prison." "I shall be much obliged," answered Madame d'Harville, and she remained alone.

"It is singular," said she; "I cannot account for the strange impression which the name of Rodolphe caused me. Truly, I am mad! between *him* and such a creature, what relations can exist?" Then, after a pause, the marquise added, "He was right! how much all this interests me! the mind, the heart, expands when they are applied to such noble occupations! Thus, as he says, it seems as if one participated in the power of Providence, when relieving those who are deserving. And, then, these excursions in a world of the existence of which we have no suspicion are so interesting, so *amusing*, as *he* was pleased to say! What romance could give me such touching emotions, excite to this point my curiosity! This poor Goualeuse, for example, inspires me with profound pity; and this other unfortunate, the daughter of the artisan, whom the prince had so generously relieved in my name! Poor people! their frightful misery served as a pretext to save me. I have escaped shame, death, perhaps, by a hypocritical falsehood; this deceit oppresses me; but I will expiate it by force of benefactions. This will be easy! it is so sweet to follow the noble counsels of Rodolphe! it is more to love than to obey him! Oh! I feel it—I know it. I experience a sweet delight in acting through him; for I love him. Oh! yes, I love him! and he will be forever ignorant of this eternal passion of my life.' While Madame d'Harville awaits the Goualeuse, we will return to the prison-yard.

CHAPTER X.

LA LOUVE AND LA GOUALEUSE.

Fleur de Marie wore the blue dress and black cap of the prisoners; but even in this com-

mon costume, she was still charming. Yet since she was carried off from the farm of Bouqueval, her features were much altered; her natural paleness, slightly tinted with rose, was now as dead as the whitest of alabaster; her expression had also changed; it had now assumed a kind of dignified sadness. Fleur de Marie knew that to endure courageously the grievous sacrifices of expiation is almost to obtain a kind of regeneration. "Ask them, then, pardon for me, La Goualeuse," said Mont Saint Jean. "See how they drag in the dirt all that I had collected with so much trouble to commence the layette of my child; what good can it do them?" Fleur de Marie did not say a word, but she began actively to collect, one by one, from under the feet of the prisoners, all the rags she could find. One of the prisoners retaining mischievously under her foot a kind of waistcoat made of coarse muslin, Fleur de Marie, always stooping, raised her enchanting face towards this woman, and said, in her sweet voice,

"I beg you, let me take this, in the name of the poor weeping woman." The prisoner withdrew her foot. The waistcoat was saved, as well as all the other rags, which the Goualeuse secured piece by piece. There remained only one little cap, which two of them were contending for, laughing. Fleur de Marie said to them, "Come, be good now, and give her this little cap."

"Ah! well, yes; it is for a baby harlequin, this cap! it is made of a piece of gray stuff, with peaks of green and black fustian, and a bedtick lining." This description of the cap was received with shouts of laughter. "Laugh at it as much as you please, but give it to me," said Mont Saint Jean; "but don't drag it in the gutter as you did the rest." "I beg your pardon, La Goualeuse, for having made you soil your hands for me," added she, in a grateful voice. "Give me the harlequin cap!" said La Louve, who caught it, and shook it in the air as a trophy. "I entreat you to give it to me," said La Goualeuse. "No! because you will give it to Mont Saint Jean." "Certainly." "Ah! bah! it is not worth the trouble, such a rag!"

"It is because Mont Saint Jean has nothing but rags to dress her child with, that you should have pity on her, La Louve," said Fleur de Marie, sadly, extending her hand towards the cap. "You shan't have it!" answered La Louve, brutally; "must one always give up to you—to you, because you are the weakest? You take advantage of this!"

"Where would be the merit of giving it to me if I were the strongest?" answered La Goualeuse, with a smile full of grace. "No, no, you wish to twist me about again with your little soft voice; you shan't have it!" "Come, now, La Louve, don't be naughty." "Leave me alone, you tire me." "I entreat you!" "Stop! don't make me angry—I have said no, and no it is!" cried La Louve, very much irritated

"Have pity upon her; see how she weeps!" "What is that to me? so much the worse for her! she is our *souffre-douleur*." "That's true, that's true, don't give it up," murmured several of the prisoners, carried away by the example of La Louve. "You are right—so much the worse for her!" said Fleur de Marie, with bitterness; "she is your *souffre-douleur*, but she ought to be resigned to it; her groans amuse you, her tears make you laugh; you must pass the time in some way! if you should kill her on the spot, she has no right to say anything. You are right, La Louve—it is just! this poor woman has done no harm; she cannot defend herself; she is one against the whole—you overpower her—that is very brave and very generous." "We are cowards, then!" cried La Louve, carried away by the violence of her character, and by her impatience of all contradiction; "will you answer? are we cowards, hey?" said she, more and more irritated. Murmurs, very threatening for the Goualeuse, began to be heard. The offended prisoners approached and surrounded her, vociferating, forgetting or revolting against the ascendency that the young girl had until then obtained over them. "She calls us cowards! By what right does she scold us? Is it because she is greater than we are? We have been too good to her, and now she wants to take *airs* with us. If we choose to torment Mont Saint Jean, what has she got to say about it? Since it is so, you shall be worse beaten than before, do you hear, Mont Saint Jean?" "Hold, here is one to begin with," said one of them, giving her a blow. "And if you meddle with what don't concern you, La Goualeuse, we'll treat you in the same way." "Yes, yes!" "This isn't all!" cried La Louve; "La Goualeuse must ask our pardon for having called us cowards! If not, and we let her go on, she'll finish by eating us with the wool on our backs; we are very stupid not to have seen that! She must ask our pardon! On her knee! on both knees! or we'll treat her like Mont Saint Jean, her protegee. On your knees—on your knees! Oh! we are cowards! Repeat it then, heiu!" Fleur de Marie was not alarmed at these furious cries; she let the storm rage, and then as soon as she could be heard, casting a calm and melancholy glance around her, she replied to La Louve, who vociferated anew, "Dare to repeat, then, that we are cowards!"

"You? no, no; it is this poor woman whose clothes you have torn, whom you have beaten, dragged in the mire; it is she who is a coward! Do you not see how she weeps, how she trembles in looking at you? once more, it is she who is a coward, since she is afraid of you."

The discernment of Fleur de Marie served her perfectly. She might have invoked justice, and duty, to disarm the stupid and brutal conduct of the prisoners, they would not have listened to her; but in addressing them with this sentiment of natural generosity, which is never extinct even in the most contemptible natures, she awoke a feeling of pity.

La Louve and her companions still murmured; Fleur de Marie continued: "Your 'souffre-douleur' does not deserve compassion, you say; but, mon Dieu! her child deserves it. Alas! does it not feel the blows given to the mother? When she cries for mercy; it is not for her, it is for her child! When she asks for some of your bread, if you have too much, because she has more hunger than usual, it is not for her, it is for her child! When she begs you, with tears in her eyes, to spare these rags, which she has had so much trouble to collect, it is not for her, it is for her child! This poor little cap, which you have made so much fun of, is laughable, perhaps; yet, to me, only to look at it, makes me feel like weeping. I avow it. Laugh at us both, Mont Saint Jean and me, if you will." The prisoners did not laugh. La Louve even looked sadly at the little cap she held in her hand. "Mon Dieu!" continued Fleur de Marie, wiping

her eyes with the back of her white and delicate hand; "I know you are not cruel. You torment Mont Saint Jean from want of employment, not from cruelty. But you forget that they are two, she and the child. Should she hold it in her arms that it should protect her from you, not only you would not strike her, for fear of hurting the poor innocent, but if it was cold you would give to its mother all you could to cover it, is it not so, La Louve?"

"It is true; a child, who would not pity it?"

"It is very plain, that." "If it was hungry you would take the bread out of your own mouth; would you not, La Louve?"

"Yes, and willingly. I am no worse than others." "Nor we, neither." "A poor little innocent!" "Who would have a heart to hurt it?" "Must be a monster!" "No hearts!" "Wild beasts!"

"I told you truly," said Fleur de Marie, "that you were not cruel. You are kind; your error is not to reflect that Mont Saint Jean, instead of having her child in her arms to excite your compassion, has it in her bosom—that's all."

"That's all!" cried La Louve, with warmth: "no; that's not all. You were right, La Goualeuse; we were cowards, and you were brave in daring to tell us so; and you are brave in not trembling after having told us. Do you see, we have well said and done to constantly insist that *you are not one of us*—it must always come to this. It vexes me; but so it is. We were all wrong just now. You were more courageous than we were."

"That's true; this little blonde must have had courage, to tell us the truth right in our faces."

"Oh! but it is that these blue eyes—so soft! so soft! when once you look at them." "After all, it is true: when we strike Mont Saint Jean, we strike her child." "I didn't think of that." "Nor I neither."

"But La Goualeuse, she thinks of everything." "And to strike a child is shameful!" "There isn't one of us capable of doing it."

Nothing is more easily moved than popular passions—nothing more blunt, more rapid, than the return from evil to good and from good to evil. Some simple and touching words of Fleur de Marie had caused a sudden reaction in favour of Mont Saint Jean, who wept gently.

Suddenly, La Louve, violent and hasty in everything, took the little cap she held in her hand, made a kind of purse of it, fumbled in her pocket, drew out twenty sous, threw them into the cap, and cried, in presenting it to her companions, "I give twenty sous towards buying a 'layette' for Mont Saint Jean. We'll cut it all out and sew it ourselves, so that the making up shan't cost one sous."

"Yes, yes." "That's it! let us club together." "I'm agreed!" "Famous idea!" "Poor woman!" "She is as ugly as a monster; but she is a mother, like any one else." "I give ten sous." "I thirty." "I twenty." "I four sous; got no more." "I have nothing; but I will sell my ration for to-morrow—who'll buy?" "I," said La Louve; "I put ten sous for you; but you'll keep your ration, and Mont Saint Jean shall have a 'layette' like a princess."

To express the surprise, the joy of Mont Saint Jean, would be impossible: her grotesque and ugly visage became almost touching. Happiness and gratitude beamed there.

Fleur de Marie was also very happy, although she had been obliged to say to La Louve, when she held the little cap towards her, "I have no money; but I will work as much as you wish."

"Oh! my good little angel from Paradise," cried Mont Saint Jean, falling at the feet of La Goualeuse, and trying to take her hand to kiss it, "what is it I have done that you should be so charitable towards me, and all these *ladies* also? Is it possible, my good angel? A layette for my child—a good layette—everything that I want! Who could have believed it? I shall become crazy, I am sure. I, who was just now the scapegoat of every one! In a moment, because you said something in your dear little voice of a séraph, you turn them from evil to good; and now they love me, and I love them. They are so good! I was wrong to get angry. Wasn't I a fool, and unjust, and ungrateful? All that they have done to me was only for a laugh: they didn't wish me any harm—it was for my good; and here is the proof. Oh! now if they were to kill me on the spot, I would not say a word."

"We have eighty-eight francs and seven sous," said La Louve, having finished counting the money she had collected. "Who will be treasurer? Mustn't give it to Mont Saint Jean; she is too stupid."

"Let the Goualeuse take charge of the money," they all cried unanimously.

"If you yield to me," said Fleur de Marie, "you will beg Madame Armand, the inspectress, to take charge of this sum, and make the necessary purchases for the 'layette;' and, then, who knows? Madame Armand will know the good action you have done, and, perhaps, she will ask to have your time reduced. Ah, well, La Louve," added she, taking her companion by the arm, "don't you now feel happier than when you were casting to the winds, just now, the poor rags of Mont Saint Jean?"

La Louve at first did not answer. To the generous warmth which had for a moment animated her features had succeeded a kind of savage defiance.

Fleur de Marie looked at her with surprise, not understanding this sudden change.

"La Goualeuse, come; I want to speak to you," said La Louve, in a sullen manner; and, leaving the other prisoners, she led Fleur de Marie near to the basin which was in the centre of the court. La Louve and her companion seated themselves, isolated, as it were, from the rest of their companions.

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The reconciliation of these two young girls, their appearance, offered a singular contrast. A winter's sun shed its pale rays upon them, the blue sky was partially obscured by white and fleecy clouds; some birds, deceived by the mildness of the atmosphere, were warbling in the black branches of the large chestnut-trees in the court; two or three sparrows, bolder than the rest, came to drink and to bathe in a little brook which flowed from the fountain; the stone margin was covered with green moss, and here and there from the interstices raised their head some tufts of green herbs, which the frost had spared. This description of the prison basin may seem trifling, but Fleur de Marie lost not one of these details; with her eyes fixed sadly on the clouds as they broke the azure of the sky, or reflected the golden rays of the sun, she thought, with a sigh, of the magnificence of nature, which she so much loved, which she admired so poetically, and of which she was again deprived.

"What do you wish to say to me?" asked La Goualeuse of her companion, who, seated alongside of her, remained sombre and silent. "It is necessary that we have an explanation," cried La Louve, harshly: "this cannot last so."

"I do not understand you, La Louve." "Just now, in the court, I had said to myself, I will not yield to La Goualeuse, and yet I have again given way to you." "But." "But I tell you, this cannot last so." "What have you against me, La Louve?" "I have—that I am no longer the same since your arrival; no, I have no longer any courage, strength, nor hardihood."

Then, interrupting herself, she pushed up the sleeve of her dress, and showed to La Goualeuse her strong white arm, and pointed out to her, printed with indelible ink, a poniard half plunged in a red heart; over this emblem were these words:

Mort aux lâches!
Martial
P. L. V. (pour la vie).

"Do you see that?" cried La Louve. "Yes; it makes me afraid," said La Goualeuse, turning away her head.

"When Martial, my lover, wrote this with a redhot needle, *Mort aux lâches!* he thought me brave; if he knew my conduct for three days past, he would plant his knife in my body as this poniard is planted in this heart; and he would be right, for he has written there, *Mort aux lâches* (death to the coward)! and I am a *lâche!*" "What have you done that is *lâche?*" "Everything." "Do you regret what you have done just now?" "Yes!" "Ah! I do not believe you." "I tell you that I regret it, for it is another proof of the power you have over us all. Did you not hear what Mont Saint Jean said when she was on her knees to thank you?" "What did she say?" "She said, in speaking of us, that with nothing you turn us from evil to good. I could have strangled her when she said that, for, to our shame, it is true. Yes, in a moment, you change us from white to black: we listen to you, we give way to our first feelings, and we are your dupes." "My dupe—because you have generously assisted this poor woman!" "It shall not be said," cried La Louve, "that a little girl like you shall trample me under foot." "I! and how?" "Do I know how? You come here—you commence at first by offending me." "Offend you?" "Yes: you ask who wants your bread; I answer the first, 'I!' Mont Saint Jean only asks for it afterward, and you give her the preference. Furious at this, I rush on you with my knife raised." "And I said to you, 'Kill me if you will, but do not make me suffer too much,'" answered La Goualeuse: "that was all."

"That was all! Yes, that was all! and yet, these words alone caused the knife to fall from my hands; made me ask your pardon—from you, who had offended me. Is it natural? Hold! when I return to my senses, I pity myself. And, the night when you arrived here, when you knelt to say your prayers, why, instead of laughing at you, and arousing the whole company—why is it that I said to myself, 'Leave her alone; she prays because she has the right to do so.' And, the next morning, why were we all ashamed to dress before you?"

"I do not know, La Louve." "Really!" said this violent creature, with irony, "you don't know! It is, doubtless, as we have told you sometimes in jest, that you are of another species from us. Perhaps you believe that?" "I never said so." "You never said so, but you act so." "I pray you to listen to me."

"No! it has been of no service for me to listen to you—to look at you. Until now I have never envied any one. Well, two or three times I have surprised myself in envying—can anything be more lâche—in envying your face—like the Holy Virgin's! your soft and sad manner! Yes, I have envied even your fair hair, and your blue eyes. I, who have always detested the blondes, since I am a brunette—to wish to resemble you!" "I? La Louve! I?" "Eight days ago I should have left my mark on any one who would have dared to tell me this. However, I do not envy you your lot; you are as sad as a Magdalen. Is it natural? speak!" "How can you expect me to account to you for the impressions I cause?" "Oh, you know well enough what you do, with your touch-me-not air." "But what design can I have?" "Do you think I know? It is exactly that I cannot understand all this that I suspect you. There is another thing: until now I have always been gay or angry—but never a thinker; and you have made me think. Yes, there are some words you say which, in spite of me, have touched my heart and make me think all manner of sad things." "I am sorry to have made you sad, La Louve; but I do not remember to have said any—" "Eh! mon Dieu!" cried La Louve, "what you do is often as touching as what you say! You are so malignant!"

"Do not be angry, La Louve! explain yourself."

"Yesterday, in the workshop, I saw you well. You had your eyes and head down, fixed on your work; a large tear fell on your hand; you looked at it for a moment, and then you carried your hand to your lips, as if to kiss away this tear; is it not true?"

"It is true," said La Goualeuse, blushing.

"That has the appearance of nothing! But, at that moment you looked so unhappy—so unhappy, that I felt myself all heartache—every feeling stirred up. Say now? do you think this is amusing? How! I have always been as hard as a rock about everything concerning myself. No one can boast of ever having seen me weep; and it must be that in looking at your little face I should feel cowardice at my heart! Yes, for all that is pure cowardice; and the proof is, that for three days I have not dared to write to Martial, my conscience accuses me so much. Yes, keeping company with you has weakened my character; it must stop; I have enough of it; I wish to remain as I am, and not have them to laugh at me."

"And why should they laugh at you?" "Pardieu! because they would see me acting a stupid, good-natured part—I, who made them all tremble here! No, no; I am twenty; I am as handsome as you, in my way; I am wicked; I am feared, and that's what I want. I laugh at the rest. Perish! who says the contrary?" "You are angry with me, La Louve?" "Yes, you are for me a bad acquaintance; if this is continued, in fifteen days, instead of being called La Louve (the wolf), they will call me the Brebis (sheep). Thank you! it's not me they'll baptize so. Martial would kill me. In fine, I want none of your company; I am going to ask to be put in another hall; if they refuse, I'll do something so that they will put me in the dungeon until my time

is up. That's what I have to say to you, La Goualeuse." * *

"I assure you, La Louve, said Fleur de Marie, "that you feel an interest in me, not because you are 'lâche,' but because you are generous—brave hearts alone feel the misfortunes of others." "There is neither generosity nor courage in this," said La Louve, brutally; "it is cowardice. Besides, I do not wish you to tell me that I am touched—softened; it is not true." "I will not say so any more, La Louve; but since you have shown some interest for me, you will let me be grateful to you for it, will you not?" "To-night I shall be in another hall from you, or alone in the dungeon; and soon I shall be away from here, Dieu merci!" "And where will you go then?" "I shall go to my own home, Rue Pierre Lescot. I have my own furnished rooms."

"And Martial!" said La Goualeuse, who hoped to continue the conversation by speaking of an object interesting to her; "and Martial! you'll be very happy to see him?" "Yes; oh, yes!" answered she: "when I was arrested he was recovering from sickness—a fever which he had, because he is always on the water. For sixteen or seventeen nights I never left him for a moment. I sold half that I possessed to pay for a physician and medicines. I can boast of it; and I do boast of it. If my man lives, he owes it to me. I yesterday burned a candle before the Virgin for him. It is foolish; but never mind, some very good effects have proceeded from this for a convalescent."

"And where is he now? what does he do?" "He lives near the bridge of Asnières, on the shore." "On the shore?" "Yes, he is established there with his family, in a solitary house. He is always warring with the 'gardes-pêche,' and when once he is in his boat, with his double-barrelled gun, it's no good to approach him, allez!" said La Louve, proudly. "What is his trade?" "He fishes by stealth at night; his father had some *misunderstanding* with justice. He has still a mother, two sisters, and a brother. So much the better it would be for him not to have such a brother, for he is a scoundrel, who will be guillotined one of these days; his sisters also. However, never mind, their necks belong to themselves." "And where did you first know Martial?" "In Paris. He wished to learn the trade of a locksmith; a fine trade, always red hot iron and fire around one, and danger, too! that suited him, but, like me, he had a bad head—couldn't agree with the bourgeois; so he returned to his family, and began to maraud on the river. He came to Paris to see me, and I went to see him at Asnières; it is very near; but if it had been farther, I should have gone, even if I had been obliged to go on my hands and knees."

"You will be very happy to go to the country, you, La Louve!" said the Goualeuse, sighing; "above all, if you love, as I do, to walk in the fields." "I prefer to walk in the woods—in the large forests, with Martial." "In forests? are you not afraid?" "Afraid! ah, yes—afraid! Is a wolf afraid? The thicker and darker the forest, the more I like it. A lonely hut, where I should live with Martial, who should be a poacher; to go with him at night, make traps for the game; and then, if the guards come to arrest us, to fire on them, hiding ourselves in the bushes—ah! dame, that's what I would like!" "You have, then, lived in a forest, La Louve?" "Never." "Who gave you such ideas?" "Martial." "How?" "He was a poacher in the forest of Rambouillet. About a year ago he was *looked upon* as having fired upon a guard who had fired upon him; villain of a guard! it was not proved in court, but Martial was obliged to leave. So he then came to Paris to learn a trade; as I said, he left and went to maraud on the river; it is less slavish. But he always regrets the woods, and will return there some day or other." * *

"And your parents, La Louve, where are they?" "Do you think I know!" "Is it a long time since you have seen them?"

"I do not know if they are dead or alive."

* * * *

Fleur de Marie, although plunged very young into an atmosphere of corruption, had since respired an air so pure, that she experienced a painful oppression at the horrid story of La Louve.

* * * *

CHAPTER VIII.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

La Goualeuse, suppressing the emotion which the sad confession of her companion had caused her, said to her, timidly,

"Listen to me without being angry." "Come, say on; I hope I have talked enough; but, in truth, all the same, since it is the last time we shall converse together." "Are you happy, La Louve?" "How?" "With the life you lead?" "Here at Saint Legare?" "No; at your home, when you are free."

"Yes, I am happy." "Always?" "Always."

"You would not change your lot for any other?"

"For what other? There's no other lot for me."

"Tell me, La Louve," continued Fleur de Marie, after a moment's silence, "do you not sometimes like to build castles in the air here in prison? It is so amusing."

"Respecting what — castles in the air?" "About Martial?" "Martial!" "Yes." "Ma foi, I never have." "Let me build one for you and Martial." "Bah! for what good?" "To pass the time." "Well, let us see this castle." "Just imagine, for example, that by chance you should meet some one who should say to you, 'Abandoned by your father and mother, your childhood has been surrounded by bad examples; that you must be pitied as much as blamed for having become—'" "Having become what?" "What you and I — have become," answered the Goualeuse, in a soft voice. "Suppose this person were to say to you, 'You love Martial — he loves you; leave your present mode of life, and become his wife.'" La Louve shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you think he would take me for his wife?"

"Except his poaching, has he ever committed any other culpable action?" "No; he is a poacher on the river, as he was in the woods; and he is right. Hold; are not the fish like the game, belonging to him who can take them? Where, then, is the mark of their owner?" "Well, suppose, having renounced this, he wishes to become an honest man; suppose that he inspires, by the frankness of his good resolu-

tions, enough confidence in an unknown benefactor, so that he would give him a place—now, see, this is always a castle—give him a place as gamekeeper, for example. To him who was a poacher, it would be to his liking, I hope. It is the same trade, only lawful."

"Ma foi, yes; it is always living in the woods."

"Only this place would be given to him on the sole condition that he would marry you and take you with him."

"I go with Martial?" "Yes; you would be so happy, you say, to live together in a forest. Would you not like better, instead of a miserable poacher's hut, where you would hide yourselves like criminals, to have a nice little cottage, of which you should be the active and industrious housekeeper?"

"You make fun of me. Can this be possible?"

"Who knows? Chance? Besides, it is always a castle." "Ah! true; very well." "I say, La Louve, it seems to me I already see you established in your cottage in the forest, with your husband, and two or three children. What happiness! is it not?" "Children! Martial!" cried La Louve; "oh, yes, they would be *proudly* loved!"

"How much company they would be for you in your solitude! Then, when they began to grow up, they could render you some assistance: the smallest could pick up the dead branches for your fire; the largest could lead the cow to pasture—the cow which has been given to your husband for his activity; for, having been a poacher himself, he would make all the better gamekeeper."

"Just so; that's true. Ah, it is amusing, these castles in the air. Tell me some more, La Goualeuse."

"They will be very much pleased with your husband. You will receive from his master some presents. A nice courtyard—a garden. But, marry! you will have to work, La Louve, and that from morning to night." "Oh, if that was all, once along with Martial, work wouldn't make me afraid. I have strong arms."

"And you would have enough to occupy them, I answer for it. There is so much to do. There are the meals to prepare, clothes to mend; one day the washing, another day baking, or the house to clean from top to bottom; so that the other gamekeepers would say, 'Oh, there is not a housekeeper like Martial's wife; from the cellar to the garret, her house is as nice as wax; and the children always so neat and clean! It is because she is so industrious, Madame Martial.'" "Tell me, La Goualeuse, is it true I shall be called Madame Martial?" "It is a great deal better than to be called La Louve, is it not?" "Certainly; I prefer the name of any man to the name of a beast. But, bah! bah! *louve* I am born, and *louve* I shall die." "Who knows? who knows? do not recoil from a hard life, but an honest one, that brings happiness. Thus, work would not alarm you." "Oh, as to that, no." "And then, besides, it is not all labour; there are moments of repose. In the winter evenings, while your children are asleep, and your husband smoking his pipe, cleaning his gun, or caressing his dogs, listen, now, you can have a nice little quiet time."

"Bah! bah! a quiet time; sit with my arms folded. Ma foi, no; I would prefer to mend the linen of the family, in the evening, at the corner of the fire; that is not so tiresome. The days are so short in winter." At the words of Fleur de Marie, La Louve forgot more and more the present for these dreams of the future, as vividly interested as Goualeuse had been before when Rodolphe had spoken to her of the rustic enjoyments at the farm of De Bouqueval. La Louve did not conceal the wild tastes with which her lover had inspired her. Remembering the profound and salutary impression that she had received from the smiling description of a country life by Rodolphe, Fleur de Marie wished to try the same mode of action on La Louve, thinking, with reason, that if her companion would suffer herself to be sufficiently moved at this picture of a rough, poor, and solitary life, to ardently desire to live such a one, this woman would deserve interest and pity.

Enchanted at seeing her companion listen with curiosity, La Goualeuse continued, smiling, "And then, do you see, *Madame Martial*—let me call you so; what do you care?" "On the contrary, that flatters me," said La Louve, shrugging her shoulders, and smiling also. "What folly—to play *Madame!* What children we are! Never mind, go on—it is amusing. You said, then—" "I say, Madame Martial, that in speaking of your mode of living in winter, in the woods, we only think of the worst part of the season." "Ma foi, no; that is not the worst. To hear the wind whistle at night in the forest, and from time to time the wolves howl, far off—far off; I do not find this tiresome, not I, if I am alongside of a good fire, with my man and my brats; or even all alone with my children, while he is gone to make his rounds. Oh! a gun doesn't frighten me. If I had my chil[illegible]n to defend, I'd be good then. Allez! La Lo[illegible] would take good care of her whelps!" "[illegible]! I believe you—you are very brave; but [illegible]ward, I prefer spring to winter. Oh! the spr[illegible]g, Madame Martial, the spring! when the lea[illegible] burst forth; when the pretty wood-flowers blossom, which smell so good—so good, that the air is perfumed. Then it is that your children will tumble gayly on the new grass, and the forest will become so thick and bushy, that your house can hardly be seen for the foliage; I think I can see it from here. There is a bower before the door that your husband has planted, and which shades the seat of turf where he sleeps during the heat of the day, while you go and come, and tell the children not to wake their father. I do not know if you have remarked it, but at noon, in the middle of summer, it is as silent in the woods as during the night. Not a leaf stirs, nor is a bird heard to sing."

"That is true," repeated La Louve mechanically, who, forgetting more and more the reality, believed almost that she saw displayed before her eyes the smiling pictures described by the poetic imagination of Fleur de Marie—of Fleur de Marie, so instinctively a lover of the beauties of nature. Delighted with the profound attention which her companion lent her, she continued, allowing herself to be carried away by the charm of the thoughts she evoked: "There is one thing that I like almost as well as the silence of the woods—it is the noise of the large drops of rain in the summer, falling on the leaves: do you like this also?" "Oh yes! I like also, very much, the summer rain." "Is it not so? when the trees, the moss, the grass—all is well moistened, what a fine fresh odour? And then, now

the sun peeping through the trees, makes all these drops of water sparkle which hang from the leaves after the shower! Have you remarked this also?" "Yes, but I don't remember it now, because you tell it to me. How droll it is! you tell it so well, La Goualeuse, that one seems to see everything, everything as you speak; and then, dame! I do not know how to explain this to you; but, look here what you have said—smells good—it is refreshing—like the summer rain, of which you spoke." Thus, like the beautiful, the good, poetry is often contagious. La Louve, this brutal and savage nature, had to submit in everything to the influence of Fleur de Marie. She added, smiling, "We must not believe that we are alone in loving the summer rain." "And the birds there?—how happy they are! how they shake their wings in warbling joyously—not more joyously, however, than your children—your children, free, gay, and lively as they are: see now, at the close of day, the youngest running through the woods to meet their brother, who brings the two heifers from the pasture; they soon heard the tinkling of their bells, allez!"

"Say, now, La Goualeuse, it seems to me that I can see the smallest and the boldest, who has caused himself to be placed by his brother, who sustains him, astraddle the back of one of the cows."

"And one would say that the poor beast knew what burden she was bearing, she walks with so much precaution." "But now it is the hour for supper; your eldest, while the cattle were grazing, has amused himself in filling a basket for you with wild strawberries, which he has brought covered with violets."

"Strawberries and violets—oh; that must be a balm! But, mon Dieu! mon Dieu! where the devil do you go, then, to get such ideas, La Goualeuse?" "In the woods, where the strawberries ripen, where the violets bloom; it is only to look and collect, Madame Martial. But let us speak of the house keeping: now it is night, you must milk your cows, prepare the supper under the arbour, for you hear now your husband's dogs bark, and soon the voice of their master, who, tired as he is, comes home singing. And why should he not sing, when, on a fine summer evening, with a contented mind, he regains his house, where a good wife and fine children await him? is it not so, Madame Martial?" "True, one could not do otherwise than to sing," said La Louve, becoming more and more thoughtful. "At least, if one does not weep from joy," continued Fleur de Marie, herself affected. "And such tears are as sweet as songs. And then, when night has closed in, what happiness to remain under the arbour, to enjoy the serenity of a fine evening; to breathe the perfume of the forest; to hear the children prattle; to look at the stars! Then the heart is so full—so full, that it must be relieved by prayer. How! not to thank Him to whom one owes the freshness of the night, the perfume of the woods, the sweet light of the starry heavens? After these thanks, or this prayer, you go to sleep peacefully until the morning, and then again you thank the Creator; for this poor, industrious, but calm and honest life, is that of every day." "Of every day!" repeated La Louve, her head on her bosom, her eyes fixed, her breathing oppressed; "for it is true, the bon Dieu is good to give us the power to live happy on so little." "Well, now say," continued Fleur de Marie, gently, "say, ought he not be blessed and thanked like the bon Dieu, who would give you this peaceful and industrious life, instead of the miserable one you lead in the mud in the streets of Paris?"

This word Paris called La Louve to the reality.

A strange phenomenon had just been occuring in the mind, the soul of this creatnre. A natural picture of an humble and rude condition, this simple recital, now lighted up by the soft glimmerings of a domestic fireside, gilded by some joyous rays of the sun, refreshed by the gentle winds of the forest, or perfumed by the odour of wild flowers—this recital had made on La Louve an impression more profound, more striking, than all the exhortations of a transcendent morality could have effected. Yes, as Fleur de Marie spoke, La Louve had desired to be an indefatigable housekeeper, an honest wife, a pious and devoted mother. To inspire, even for a moment, a violent, immoral, degraded woman, with a love of family, the respect of duty, the desire to labour, gratitude towards the Creator, and that only by promising her that which God gives to all, the sun of the heavens, and the shade of the forests, that which man owes to the sweat of his brow, bread and shelter, was it not a triumph for Fleur de Marie? The moralist the most severe, the preacher the most fulminating, would they have obtained more by their menacing threats of every vengeance, human and Divine? The angry feelings showed by La Louve when she awoke from her dream to the reality, showed the effects or influence of the words of her companion. The more her regrets were bitter on awakening to the sense of her horrible position, the more the triumph of the Goualouse was manifest.

After a moment of silence and reflection, La Louve suddenly raised her head, passed her hand over her face, and arose from her seat threatening and angry.

"Do you see, do you see that I had reason to avoid you, and not listen to you, because it only does me harm? Why have you talked in this way to me? to laugh at me? to torment me? And this because I was fool enough to tell you that I would like to live in a forest with Martial! But, who are you, then? Why do you turn my head in this way? You do not know what you have done, unlucky girl! Now, in spite of myself, I shall always be thinking of this wood, this house, these children, all this happiness, which I never shall have—never—never! And if I cannot forget what you have told me, my life will be a torment, a hell; and this, by your fault—yes, by your fault!"

"So much the better! oh! so much the better!" said Fleur de Marie. "You say so?" cried La Louve, with threatening eyes. "Yes. so much the better; for if your miserable mode of living from henceforth proves a hell, you will prefer that of which I have spoken."

"And what good to me to prefer it, since I cannot enjoy it? why regret being a girl of the streets, since I must die one?" cried La Louve, more and more irritated, seizing hold of the small hand of Fleur de Marie. Answer—answer! Why have you made me wish for a life I cannot have?"

"To wish for an honest and industrious life is to be worthy of such a life, I have told you," answered Fleur de Marie, without seeking to disengage her hand. "Well! what then, when I

shall be worthy? what does that prove? how does it advance me?"

"To see realized that which you regard as a dream," said Fleur de Marie, in a voice so serious, so convincing, that La Louve, again overpowered, abandoned the hand of La Goualeuse, and remained struck with astonishment. "Listen to me, La Louve," added Marie, in a voice full of compassion; "do not think me so cruel as to awaken in you these thoughts, these hopes, if I were not sure, in making you ashamed of your present condition, to give you the means to escape from it?" "You! you cannot do that."

"I—no; but some one who is good, great, all-powerful."

"All-powerful?" "Listen again, La Louve. Three months since, like you I was a poor, lost, abandoned creature. One day, he, of whom I speak with tears of gratitude"—and Fleur de Marie wiped her tears—"one day he came to me; he was not afraid, all debased, all despised as I was, to speak to me words of consolation—the first I ever heard! I told him my sufferings, my misery, my shame, without concealing anything, just as you have now related to me your life, La Louve. After having listened to me with kindness, he did not blame—he pitied me; he did not deride me for my degradation—he extolled the happy and peaceful life of the country."

"Like you just now."

"Then my situation appeared the more frightful, as the possible future which he pointed out seemed to me more enchanting."

"Like me, mon Dieu!"

"Yes; and thus like you I said 'What good, alas! to show me this paradise—I, who am condemned to a hell upon earth?' But I was wrong to despair; for he of whom I speak is like the 'bon Dieu,' sovereignly just, sovereignly good, and incapable of causing a false hope to shine in the eyes of a poor creature who asked neither pity, nor hope, nor happiness from any one."

"And for you—what did he do?"

"He treated me like a sick child; I was, like you, plunged in an air so corrupt, he sent me to respire a salubrious and vivifying atmosphere; I lived also among hideous and criminal beings; he confided me to beings made after his own image, who have purified my soul, elevated my mind; for, like the bon Dieu again, to all those he loves and respects he gives a spark of his celestial intelligence. Yes, if my words move you, La Louve, if my tears cause your tears to flow, it is his mind, his thoughts inspire me! if I speak to you of a future more happy, which you will obtain by repentance, it is that I can promise you this future in his name, although he is now ignorant of the engagement I make! In fine, if I say to you, 'Hope!' it is because he always hears the voice of those who desire to become better; for God has sent him on this earth to cause a belief in Providence."

Thus speaking, the countenance of Fleur de Marie became glowing and inspired; her pale cheeks were coloured for a moment with a slight carnation; her beautiful blue eyes softly sparkled; she beamed forth a beauty so noble, so touching, that La Louve, profoundly affected at this conversation, looked at her companion with admiration, and cried, "Mon Dieu! where am I? Do I dream? I have never heard nor seen anything like this; it is not possible! but who are you, once more? oh! I said truly that you were not one of us! But then you who speak so well, you who can do so much, you who know such powerful people, how is it that you are here, a prisoner with us? But—but—it is, then, to tempt us? You are, then, for—good—what the devil is for evil?"

Fleur de Marie was about to reply, when Madame Armand came and interrupted her to conduct her to Madame d'Harville. She said to La Louve, who remained dumb from surprise, "I see with pleasure that the presence of La Goualeuse in the prison has been beneficial to you and your companions. I know that you have made a collection for this poor Mont Saint Jean; this is good, this is charitable, La Louve. This shall be reckoned to you. I was sure that you were better than you appeared to be. In recompense for your good action, I think I can promise you that your imprisonment shall be abridged by many days." And Madame Armand departed, followed by Fleur de Marie.*

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CHAPTER XII.

THE PROTECTRESS.

The inspectress entered, with La Goualeuse, the room where Clémence was; the pale cheeks of the young girl were slightly flushed from her earnest conversation with La Louve.

"Madame la Marquise, pleased with the excellent accounts I have given of you," said Madame Armand to Fleur de Marie, "desires to see you, and perhaps will deign to obtain permission for you to leave here before the expiration of your time." "I thank you, madame," answered Fleur de Marie, timidly, to Madame Armand, who left her alone with the marquise.

Clémence, struck with the beautiful features of her protégée, and her graceful and modest bearing, could not prevent herself from remembering that the Goualeuse had, in her sleep, pronounced the name of Rodolphe, and that the inspectress believed her to be preyed upon by a deep and concealed love. Although perfectly convinced that the Grand-duke Rodolphe could not be in the question, Clémence allowed that, at least in point of beauty, La Goualeuse was worthy of the love of a prince. At the sight of her protectress, whose expression, as we have said, was that of ineffable goodness, Fleur de Marie felt herself irresistibly drawn towards her.

"My child," said Clémence, "in praising much the sweetness of your disposition and the exemplary propriety of your conduct, Madame Armand complains of your want of confidence in her."

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* The reflections of the author on the present state of the criminal law in France we omit. He contends for a system of rewards as well as punishments. He says, "Justice is represented as blind, carrying in one hand a sword to punish; in the other, the scales to weigh the accusation and defence. This is not the image of Justice. It is an image of the Law, or, rather, of the man who condemns or absolves according to his conscience. Justice should have in one hand a sword, in the other a crown; the one to punish the guilty, the other to reward the good." We omit, as we have said, many of the author's meditations and descriptions, for several reasons; perhaps it will suffice to mention one. In describing some of the *mysteries*, and the thoughts which they occasion, the author is naturally obliged to be very minute, too much so to be rendered into English. We have therefore concluded to pass lightly over these passages, strongly advising all those who have a knowledge of the French language to read the original, for much, very much, is lost by the translation.—*Note by the Translator.*

Fleur de Marie held down her head without replying.

"The peasant dress in which you were clothed when you were arrested, your silence on the subject of where you resided before you came here, prove that you conceal something."

"Madame—" "I have no right to your confidence, my poor child, I wish to ask you no improper questions; only I am assured, that if I ask your release from prison, it will be granted. Before I ask, I wish to talk with you of your projects, your resources for the future. Once free, what will you do? If, as I doubt not, you are decided to follow in the good path you have entered, have confidence in me—I will put you in a way to gain your living honourably."

La Goualeuse was affected to tears at the interest Madame d'Harville evinced for her. She said, after a moment's thought, "You deign, madame, to show yourself so benevolent, so generous, that I ought, perhaps, to break the silence which I have hitherto preserved as to the past; an oath compelled me." "An oath?" "Yes, madame; I have sworn to conceal from justice, and from the persons employed in this prison, in what manner I have been brought here; yet, if you will, madame, make me a promise—" "What promise?" "To keep my secret, I can, thanks to you, madame, without breaking my oath, relieve some respectable people, who, doubtless, are very uneasy about me." "Count on my discretion; I will only tell what you authorize me to say." "Oh! thank you, madame; I feared so much that my silence towards my benefactors would look like ingratitude." The sweet tears of Fleur de Marie, her language, almost chosen, struck Madame d'Harville with renewed astonishment. "I cannot conceal from you," said she, "that your bearing, your words, all astonish me much. How, with an education such as you appear to have had, how could you—" "Fall so low? Is it not, madame?" said the Goualeuse, bitterly. "It is that, alas!" "It is but a short time since I received it. I owe it to a generous protector, who, like you, madame, without knowing me, without ever having the favourable accounts which they have given you here of me, took compassion on me." "And this protector, who is he?" "I am ignorant, madame." "You are ignorant?" "He has only made himself known to me by his inexhaustible goodness; thanks to heaven I found myself in his way." "And where did you meet him?" "One night, in the cité, madame," said La Goualeuse, casting down her eyes, "a man wanted to strike me; this unknown benefactor courageously defended me; such was my first rencounter with him." "He was, then, a man of the common order?" "The first time I saw him, he had their dress and language, but afterward—" "Afterward?" "The manner in which he spoke to me, the profound respect shown him by the people to whom he confided me, all proved to me that he had disguised himself as one of the men who frequent la cité." "But for what purpose?" "I do not know." "And the name of this mysterious protector, do you know it?" "Oh yes, madame," said the Goualeuse, with warmth, "Dieu merci! for I can bless and adore without ceasing this name. My deliverer is called M. Rodolphe, madame."

Clemence blushed deeply: "And has he no other name?" asked she, quickly, of Fleur de Marie. "I do not know, madame. At the farm where he sent me, he was only known by the name of M. Rodolphe." "And his age?" "He is still young, madame." "And handsome?" "Oh yes; handsome, noble—as his heart." The grateful, feeling manner with which Fleur de Marie pronounced these words, caused a disagreeable sensation to Madame D'Harville. An invincible, an inexplicable presentiment told her that this Rodolphe was the prince.

"The observations of the inspectress were well founded," thought Clémence. "The Goualeuse loved Rodolphe; it was his name she pronounced in her sleep? Under what strange circumstances had the prince and this poor girl met? Why did Rodolphe go disguised into the cité?" The marquise could not resolve these questions; only she remembered that Sarah had formerly, wickedly and falsely, related to her some pretended eccentricities of Rodolphe, and of his strange "amours." Was it not, in effect, strange that he had taken from a life of misery this creature, of ravishing beauty, and of no common mind? Clémence had noble qualities, but she was a woman, and she loved Rodolphe profoundly, although she had determined to bury this secret in the very depths of her heart. Without reflecting that this, no doubt, was one of those generous actions which the prince was accustomed to do secretly; without reflecting that, perhaps, she confounded with love, a sentiment of warm gratitude; without reflecting, finally, that this sentiment, even if it were more tender, Rodolphe might be ignorant of it, the marquise, in the first feeling of bitterness and injustice, could not prevent herself from considering the Goualeuse as a rival. Her pride revolted in feeling that she blushed, that she suffered, in spite of herself, at a rivalry so abject. She resumed, then, in a cold manner, which cruelly contrasted with the affectionate benevolence of her first words: "And how is it, mademoiselle, that your protector leaves you in prison? How did you get here?" "Mon Dieu! madame," said Fleur de Marie, timidly, struck with this change of language; "have I displeased you in any way?" "And in what could you have displeased me?" demanded Madame d'Harville, with hauteur.

"It is, that it seems to me that just now you spoke to me with more kindness, madame." "Truly, mademoiselle, must I weigh each of my words, since I consent to interest myself in you? I have the right, I think, to address to you certain questions." Hardly were these words pronounced, than Clémence, for many reasons, regretted their severity. In the first place, by a praiseworthy return of generosity; then because she thought by offending her *rival*, she could learn nothing more of what she wished to know.

In effect, the countenance of La Goualeuse, one moment open and confiding, became instantly "craintive."

Like the sensitive plant, which at the first touch closes its delicate leaves, and folds them within its bosom, the heart of Fleur de Marie contracted painfully. Clémence resumed gently, not to awaken the suspicions of her protégée by too sudden a change. "In truth, I repeat to

you, I cannot comprehend that, having so much to praise in your benefactor, you should be a prisoner here; how, after having sincerely returned to the paths of rectitude, could you cause yourself to be arrested in a place to you interdicted? All this seems to me extraordinary. You speak of an oath which so far has imposed silence upon you; but this oath, even, is so strange!" "I have told the truth, madame." "I am sure of it: one has only to see and hear you, to believe you incapable of a falsehood; but, what is incomprehensible in your situation, augments, irritates my impatient curiosity; it is only to that that you must attribute the vivacity of my words just now. Come, I avow it. I was wrong, for although I had no other right to your confidence than my earnest wish to be useful to you, you have offered to tell me that which you have told to no one, and I am very sensible, believe me, my poor child, of this proof of your faith in the interest I have for you. Hence, I promise you, in guarding scrupulously your secret, if you confide it to me, I will do all in my power to meet your wishes." Thanks to this palliating speech, Madame d'Harville regained the confidence of La Goualeuse, for a moment impaired. Fleur de Marie, in her innocence, reproached herself for having misinterpreted the words which had wounded her.

"Pardon me, madame," said she: "I was doubtless wrong not to tell you at once what you wished to know; but you asked me the name of my saviour: in spite of myself, I cannot resist the pleasure of speaking of him." "Nothing is better; it proves how grateful you are towards him. But why have you left the good people with whom he had placed you? Does your oath have reference to this?" "Yes, madame; but, thanks to you, I believe now, still keeping my word, I shall be able to satisfy my benefactors as to my disappearance." "Come, my poor child, I listen." "It is about three months since M. Rodolphe placed me at a farm situated four or five leagues hence." "He conducted you there himself?" "Yes, madame; he confided me to the care of a lady as good as she was venerable, whom I soon loved as a mother. She and the curé of the village, at the request of M. Rodolphe, took charge of my education." "And Monsieur Rodolphe, did he often come to the farm?" "No, madame; he came there only three times while I was there." Clémence could not conceal a thrill of joy.

"And when he came to see you, it made you very happy, did it not?" "Oh! yes, madame! it was for me more than happiness; it was a sentiment mixed with gratitude, respect, admiration, and even a little fear." "Fear!" "From him to me—from him to others—the distance is so great!" "But what is his rank?" "I am ignorant if he has any rank, madame." "Yet, you speak of the distance which exists between him and others." "Oh! madame, that which places him above the rest of the world, is the elevation of his character—his inexhaustible generosity for those who suffer; it is the enthusiasm with which he inspires everybody. The wicked even cannot hear his name without trembling; they respect him as much as they fear him. But pardon me, Madame, for having again spoken of him—'je dois me taire'—I should give you but an imperfect idea of him whom I ought to content myself with adoring in silence. As well attempt to express by words the grandeur of God! This comparison is, perhaps, sacrilegious, madame. But will it offend God to compare to him the man who has given me a consciousness of good and evil—who has dragged me from the abyss—to whom I owe a new existence?"

"I do not blame you, my child; I comprehend your feelings. But how have you abandoned this farm, where you were so happy?"

"Alas, it was not voluntary, madame!"

"Who forced you, then?" "One night, a short time since," said Fleur de Marie, trembling at the recital, "I went to the parsonage of the village, when a wicked woman, who had treated me cruelly in my childhood, and a man, her accomplice, who was concealed with her in a ravine, threw themselves upon me, wrapped me up, and carried me off in a carriage." "And for what purpose?" "I do not know, madame. My waylayers were acting, I think, under the orders of some powerful persons." "What then ensued?" "Hardly had the vehicle moved, than the bad woman, whose name was La Chouette, cried, 'I have got some vitriol; I am going to wash the face of La Goualeuse, to disfigure her.'" "How horrid! unfortunate child! and what saved you from this danger?" "The accomplice of this woman, a blind man, called the Maître d'Ecole." "He defended you?" "Yes, madame, on this occasion and on another. This time a struggle ensued between him and La Chouette. Availing himself of his strength, he forced her to throw out of the window the bottle which contained the vitriol. This was the first service he rendered me, after having assisted in carrying me off. The night was very dark. At the end of an hour and a half the carriage stopped, I believe on the high road which crosses the plain of Saint Denis; a man on horseback waited for us here: 'Well!' said he, 'have you got her at last?' 'Yes, we have her,' answered La Chouette, who was furious at having been prevented from disfiguring me. 'If you wish to get rid of this little thing, there is a good way; I will stretch her on the road—drive the wheels of the carriage over her head—she will look as if she was run over by accident.'" "Oh! this is frightful!" "Alas! madame, La Chouette was well capable of doing what she said. Happily, the man on horseback said that he did not wish to harm me; that it was only necessary to keep me shut up for two months in some place where I could neither get out, nor write to any one. Then La Chouette proposed to take me to a man called Bras-Rouge, who kept a tavern in the Champs Elysées. In this tavern there were several subterranean chambers; one of them, La Chouette said, could answer for my prison; the man on horseback accepted this proposition; then he promised me that, after remaining two months with Bras-Rouge, I should be so provided for, that I would not regret the farm at Bouqueval."

"What strange mystery!" "This man gave some money to La Chouette, promised her some more when I should be taken from Bras-Rouge, and set out on a gallop. We continued our route towards Paris. A short time before we arrived at the gates, the Maître d'Ecole said to La Chouette, 'You wish to

shut up La Goualeuse in one of the cellars of Bras-Rouge; you know very well that, being near the river, these cellars in winter are always inundated.' 'Do you wish, then, to drown her?' 'Yes,' answered La Chouette." "But, mon Dieu! what had you done to this horrible woman?" "Nothing, madame; and yet, since my infancy, she has always shown this feeling towards me. The Maître d'Ecole answered, 'I will not have the Goualeuse drowned; she shall not go to Bras-Rouge.' La Chouette was as much surprised as I was, madame, to hear this man defend me thus. She became furious, and swore that she would take me to Bras-Rouge in spite of him. 'I defy you,' said he, 'for I have La Goualeuse by the arm; I will not let her go, and I'll strangle you if you come near her.' 'But what do you mean to do with her there?' cried La Chouette, 'since she must be put out of the way for two months.' 'There is a way,' said the Maître d'Ecole; 'we are going to the Champs Elysées; we will stop the carriage near the guard-house; you will go and look for Bras-Rouge at his tavern—it is midnight; you will find him there; you will bring him with you; he will take La Goualeuse to the post, and declare she is a "fille de-la cité," whom he found near his tavern. As these girls are condemned to three months imprisonment when they are caught in the Champs Elysées, and the Goualeuse is still on the lists at the police, she will be arrested, and sent to Saint Lazare, where she will be as well guarded and concealed as in the cellar of Bras-Rouge.' 'But,' replied La Chouette, 'the Goualeuse will not suffer herself to be arrested; once at the guard-house, she will tell all; she will denounce us. Supposing, even, that she is imprisoned, she will write to her protectors; all will be discovered.' 'No, she will go to prison willingly,' answered the Maître d'Ecole; 'she will swear that she will not denounce us to any one as long as she remains at Saint Lazare, nor afterward neither; she owes this to me, for I have prevented her being disfigured by you, and drowned at Bras-Rouge's; but if, after having sworn not to speak, she should do it, we will put the farm at Bouqueval to fire and blood!' Then, addressing me, he said, 'Decide; swear the oath I ask; you shall go to prison for two months; otherwise I abandon you to La Chouette, who will take you to the cellar of Bras-Rouge, where you shall be drowned. Come, decide. I know, if you swear, you will keep your oath.'" "And you have sworn?"

"Alas! yes, madame; I feared so much to be disfigured by La Chouette or to be drowned in a cellar; this appeared to me so frightful. Any other kind of death would have appeared less fearful. I should not, perhaps, have endeavoured to escape."

"What a gloomy idea at your age!" said Madame d'Harville, looking at La Goualeuse with surprise. "Once away from this place, returned to your benefactors, will you not be very happy? Has not your repentance effaced the past!" "Can the past be effaced? Can the past be forgotten? Can repentance destroy the memory, madame?" cried Fleur de Marie, in a tone so despairing, that Clémence shuddered. "But all faults can be redeemed, unhappy child!" "And the recollection of the stain—madame, does it not become more and more terrible in measure as the mind is purified, as the soul becomes elevated? Alas! the more you mount, the deeper appears the abyss from which you have emerged." "Then you renounce all hope of re-esatblishment, of pardon?" "On the part of others—no, madame; your goodness proves that indulgence is never wanting to the penitent." "You will then be the only one without pity towards yourself!" "Others may be ignorant, may pardon and forget what I have been. I, madame, I never can forget." "And sometimes you wish to die!" "Sometimes!" said La Goualeuse, smiling bitterly; "yes, madame, sometimes." "Yet you feared to be disfigured by that horrible woman? you hold to your beauty, then, poor child? That announces that life has still some charms for you. Courage, then—courage!"

"It is perhaps, a weakness to think so; but if I were handsome, as you say, madame, I should wish to die handsome, in pronouncing the name of my benefactor."

The eyes of Madame d'Harville filled with tears.

Fleur de Marie had said these words so simply; her angelic features, pale and cast down, her mournful smile, were so much in unison with her words, that no one could doubt the reality of her gloomy desire. Madame d'Harville was endowed with too much sensibility not to feel what was fatal and inflexible in this thought of La Goualeuse—"*I shall never forget what I have been*"—a fixed, constant idea, which would predominate, torture the life of Fleur de Marie. Clémence, ashamed at having for a moment misunderstood the generosity, always so disinterested, of the prince, also regretted that she should have had for a moment a feeling of jealousy towards La Goualeuse, who had expressed, with so much warmth, her gratitude towards her protector. Strange thing—the admiration which this poor prisoner showed so vividly for Rodolphe, augmented, perhaps, still more the profound love which Clémence was forever to conceal from him. She resumed, to drive away her thoughts: "I hope that, in future, you will be less severe towards yourself. But let us speak of your oath; now I can understand your silence. You did not wish to denounce these wretches?" "Although the Maître d'Ecole took part in my abduction, he had twice defended me—I was afraid of being ungrateful towards him." "And you lent yourself to the designs of these monsters?" "Yes, madame, I was so much alarmed! La Chouette went to seek Bras-Rouge; he took me to the guard-house, saying he found me roving about his inn; I did not deny it; I was arrested, and brought here." "But your friends at the farm must be very much alarmed?" "Alas! madame, in my fright, I did not reflect that my oath would prevent me from informing them; now it gives me much pain, but I believe, is it not so? that without breaking my oath, I can beg you to write to Madame Georges, at the farm of Bouqueval, to have no uneasiness about me, without telling her where I am, for I have promised to be silent."

"My child, these precautions will become useless if, at my recommendation, you are par-

doned; to-morrow you shall return to the farm, without having broken your oath; you can then consult your benefactors, to know how far you are restricted by this oath, drawn from you by threats.

"You think, madame, that, thanks to your kindness, I can hope to leave here soon?" "You deserve so much interest, that I shall succeed, I am sure, and I doubt not that after to-morrow you can go yourself to reassure your benefactors."

"Mon Dieu! madame, how can I have merited so much kindness on your part? how can I show my gratitude?"

"By continuing to conduct yourself as you have done. I only regret I can do nothing for your future welfare—it is a pleasure that your friends have reserved." Madame Armand entered suddenly, with an alarmed air. "Madame la Marquise," said she to Clémence with hesitation, "I am grieved at the message I have to deliver to you." "What do you mean to say, madame?" "M. le Duc de Lucenay is below—he comes from your house, madame. "Mon Dieu! you frighten me: what is it?" "I am ignorant, madame; but M. de Lucenay has information for you, he says, as sad as it was unforeseen. He learned at Madame la Duchesse, his wife's, that you were here, and he came in all haste."

"Sad news!" said Madame d'Harville. Then suddenly she cried, in a heart-rending tone, "My daughter—my child, perhaps! oh! speak, madame!" "I am ignorant, madame." "Oh! in mercy, mercy, madame, take me to M. de Lucenay," cried Madame d'Harville, going out, quite bewildered, and followed by Madame Armand. "Poor mother!" said the Goualeuse sadly, "oh! no, it is impossible! at the moment even when she was showing so much benevolence towards me, such a blow to fall! No, no—once more, it is impossible!"

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CHAPTER XIII.

A FORCED INTIMACY.

We will conduct the reader to the house in the Rue du Temple, the day of the suicide of M. d'Harville, about three o'clock in the afternoon. M. Pipelet, alone in the lodge, conscientious and indefatigable workman, was occupied in mending the boot which had more than once fallen from his hands, during the last and audacious insult of Cabrion. The physiognomy of the chaste porter was dejected, and much more melancholy than usual. Thus, like a soldier, in the humiliation of his defeat, passes his hand sadly over his scars, M. Pipelet breathed a profound sigh, stopped his work, and moved his trembling finger over the transverse fracture, of which his venerable "chapeau tromblon" had been the victim, by the insolent hand of Cabrion. Then all the chagrin, all the inquietude, all the fears of Alfred were awakened in thinking of the inconceivable and incessant pursuits of the "rapin."

M. Pipelet had not a very extended or elevated mind; his imagination was not the most lively nor the most poetical, but he possessed a very solid, very logical, very common sense.

Unfortunately, by a natural consequence of the rectitude of his judgment, not being able to comprehend the eccentricity and foolish bearing of that which, in the language of workshops, is called "*une charge*," M. Pipelet endeavoured to find some reasonable possible motive for the outrageous conduct of Cabrion, and on this subject he posed himself with a thousand not to be solved questions. Thus, sometimes a new Pascal, he felt himself seized with a vertigo in trying to sound the bottomless abyss which the infernal genius of the painter had dug under his feet. How many times, in the overflowings of his imagination, he had been forced to commune within himself, thanks to the phrensied skepticism of Madame Pipelet, who, only looking at facts, and disdaining to seek after causes, grossly considered the incomprehensible conduct of Cabrion towards Alfred as a simple farce.

M. Pipelet, a serious and grave man, could not admit of such an interpretation; he groaned at the blindness of his wife; his dignity as a man revolted at the thought that he could be the plaything of a combination so vulgar: *a farce!* He was absolutely convinced that the unheard-of conduct of Cabrion concealed some mysterious plot under a frivolous appearance.

We have said it was to resolve this fatal problem that the man in the "chapeau tromblon," exhausted his powerful logic. "I would sooner lay my head on the scaffold," said this austere man, who, as soon as he touched them, increased immensely the importance of any propositions, "I would sooner lay my head upon the scaffold than to admit that, in the unique intention of a stupid pleasantry, Cabrion could be so obstinately exasperated against me; *a farce* is only played for the gallery. Now, in his last undertaking, this obnoxious creature had no witness; he acted alone and in obscurity, as always; he has clandestinely introduced himself into the solitude of my lodge to deposite on my forehead his hideous kiss. And that! I will ask any disinterested person, for what purpose? It was not from bravado—no one saw him; it was not from pleasure—the laws of nature oppose it; it was not from friendship—I have but one enemy in the world—it is he. It must, then, be acknowledged that there is a mystery there which my reason cannot penetrate! Then what does this diabolical plot tend to? a plot concerted with a long hand and pursued with a persistence which alarms me. This is what I cannot comprehend: it is this impossibility to raise the veil, which, by degrees, is undermining and consumes me."

Such were the painful reflections of M. Pipelet at the moment when we present him to our readers. The honest porter had just torn open his bleeding wounds, by carrying his hand mechanically to the fracture of his hat, when a piercing voice, coming from one of the upper stories of the house, made these words resound again: "Monsieur Pipelet, quick! quick! come up! make haste!" "I do not know this organ," said Alfred, after a moment of anxious listening, and he let his arm, enclosed in the boot he was mending, fall on his knees. "Monsieur Pipelet! make haste, then!" repeated the voice in a pressing tone. "This organ is completely strange to me. It is masculine: it calls me,

that I can affirm. It is not a sufficient reason that I should abandon my lodge. Leave it alone—desert it in the absence of my wife—never!" cried Alfred, heroically, "never!" "Monsieur Pipelet," said the voice, "come up quick! Madame Pipelet is sick!"

"Anastasia!" cried Alfred, rising from his seat; then he fell back again, saying to himself, "Child that I am—it is impossible; my wife went out an hour ago; yes, but might she not have returned without my seeing her? This would be rather irregular; but I must declare that it is possible."

"Monsieur Pipelet, come up, then, I have your wife in my arms!" "Some one has my wife in their arms!!" said M. Pipelet, rising abruptly. "I cannot unlace Madame Pipelet all alone!" added the voice. These words produced a magical effect upon Alfred: his face became flush; his chastity revolted. "The masculine and unknown organ speaks of unlacing Anastasia!" cried he; "I oppose it! I forbid it!!" and he rushed out of the lodge; but on the threshold he stopped. M. Pipelet found himself in one of those horribly critical, and eminently dramatical positions, so often described by poets. On the one hand, duty retained him in his lodge: on the other, his chaste and conjugal susceptibility called him to the upper stories of the house. In the midst of these terrible perplexities, the voice said, "You don't come, Monsieur Pipelet? so much the worse—I cut the strings, and I shut my eyes!" This threat decided M. Pipelet.

"*Môssieurr!*" cried he, in a stentorian voice, "in the name of honour, I conjure you, *môssieurr*, to cut nothing—to leave my wife intact! I come!" and Alfred rushed up stairs, leaving, in his alarm, the door of the lodge open. Hardly had he left it, when a man entered quickly, took from the table a hammer, jumped on the bed, at the back part of the obscure alcove of M. Pipelet, and then vanished. This operation was done so quickly, that the porter, remembering, almost immediately, that he had left the door open, returned precipitately, shut it, and carried off the key, without suspecting that any one could have entered in this interval. After this measure of precaution, Alfred started again to the assistance of Anastasia, crying, with all his strength, "*Môssieurr!* cut nothing—I am coming—here I am—I place my wife under the safeguard of your delicacy!"

Hardly had he mounted the first flight, before he heard the voice of Anastasia, not from the upper story, but in the "allée." This voice, shriller than ever, cried, "Alfred! here you leave the lodge alone! Where are you, then, old gad-about?" At this moment, M. Pipelet was about placing his right foot on the landing-place of the first story; he remained petrified, his head turned towards the bottom of the stairs, his mouth open, his eyes fixed, his foot raised. "Alfred!!" cried Madame Pipelet, anew. "Anastasia is below—she is not above, occupied in being sick?" said M. Pipelet to himself, faithful to his logical and close argumentation. "But, then, this unknown and masculine organ, who threatened me to unlace her, who is it? Is it an impostor? He, then, has been playing a cruel game with my inquietude! What is his design? There is something extraordinary going on here! No matter: *do your duty, happen what may!* After having responded to my wife, I shall mount to enlighten this mystery, and verify this organ."

M. Pipelet descended, very much troubled, and found himself face to face with his wife. "It is you!" said he. "Well! yes, it is me; whom would you have it to be?" "It is you,—my eyes do not deceive me!" "Ah, now! what is the matter now, that makes your big eyes look like loto balls? You look at me as if you were going to eat me." "It is that your presence reveals to me that something has been passing here—things—" "What things? Come, give me the key of the lodge; why do you leave it alone? I come from the office of the diligences from Normandy, where I went in a hack, to carry the trunk of M. Bradamanté, who did not wish it to be known that he was about to leave to-night, and who could not depend on that little scoundrel, Tortillard—and he is right!" On saying these words, Madame Pipelet took the key, which her husband held in his hand, opened the lodge, and went in before her husband.

Hardly had they entered, when a person, descending the staircase lightly, passed rapidly and unperceived before the lodge. It was the masculine organ which had so vividly excited the inquietudes of Alfred.

M. Pipelet rested himself heavily on his chair, and said to his wife, in a trembling voice, "Anastasia, I do not feel at my accustomed ease; things occurring here—events—" "Now you repeat this again; but things occur everywhere; what is the matter? Come, let us see—ah! now, but you are all wet—all in a sweat! What effort have you been making? He's all a-trickling—the old darling!"

"Yes, I trickle, and I have reason to;" and M. Pipelet passed his hand over his face dripping with perspiration; "for there are passing here things to overturn." "Again I ask what is it? You never can remain quiet. You must always be trotting about like a lean cat, instead of remaining in your chair to take care of the lodge." "Anastasia, you are unjust in saying that I trot like a lean cat. If I trot, it is for you." "For me?" "Yes; to spare you an outrage of which we both should have groaned and blushed, I have deserted a post which I consider as sacred as the sentry-box of a soldier." "Some one wished to commit an outrage on me—on me?"

"It was not on you, since the outrage of which you were threatened was to have been accomplished upstairs, and that you were gone out; but—" "May the devil run away with me, if I understand a single word of what you are singing there! Ah! ah! is it that you are decidely losing your noddle? Look here! do you see? I shall begin to think that you are absent-minded—hammer-struck; and this the fault of this beggarly Cabrion, whom the devil confound! Since his farce of the other day, I don't know you; you look struck all of a heap. That being will be, then, always your nightmare?" Hardly had Anastasia pronounced the words than a strange thing came to pass. Alfred remained sitting, his face turned towards the bed. The lodge was lighted by the sickly light of a winter's day, and by a lamp. At the

moment when his wife pronounced the name of *Cabrion*, M. Pipelet thought he saw in the shade of the alcove the immovable and cunning face of the painter. It was he, his pointed hat, his long hair, his thin face, his satanic smile, his beard, and his paralyzing gaze. For a moment M. Pipelet thought himself in a dream; he passed his hand over his eyes, believing that he was the victim of an illusion. It was not an illusion. Nothing could be more real than this apparition. Frightful thing, no body could be seen, but only a head, of which the living flesh stood out in bold relief from the obscurity of the alcove. At this sight, M. Pipelet fell over backward, without saying a word; he raised his right arm towards the bed, and pointed at this terrible vision, with a gesture so alarming, that Madame Pipelet turned to seek the cause of an alarm of which she soon partook, in spite of her habitual courage. She recoiled two steps, seized with force the hand of Alfred, and cried, "Cabrion!"

"Yes!" murmured M. Pipelet, in a hollow voice, almost extinct, shutting his eyes. The stupor of the pair paid the greatest honour to the talent of the artist who had so admirably painted on the pasteboard the features of Cabrion. Her first surprise over, Anastasia, as bold as a lion, ran to the bed, got on it, and tore the picture from the wall.

The amazon crowned this valiant enterprise in shouting, as a war-cry, her favourite exclamation, "Et allez donc!" Alfred, with his eyes closed, his hands stretched forth, remained immovable, as he had always been accustomed to do in the critical moments of his life. The convulsive oscillations of his "chapeau tromblon" alone revealed, from time to time, the continued violence of his interior emotions. "Open your eyes, old darling," said Madame Pipelet, triumphantly; "it's nothing; it's a picture; the portrait of this scoundrel of a Cabrion! Look, see how I stamp upon him!" and Anastasia, in her indignation, threw the picture on the ground, and trampled it under her feet, crying, "That's the way I would like to treat his flesh and bones, the wretch!" then, picking it up, "See," said she, "now it has my marks; look now!" Alfred shook his head negatively, without saying a word, and making a sign to his wife to take away the detested picture. "Has ever any one seen such impudence? This is not all; he has written at the bottom, in red letters, '*Cabrion, to his good friend Pipelet; for life,*'" said the portière, examining the picture by the light. "*His good friend for life!*" murmured Alfred; and he raised his hands towards heaven, as if to call it to witness this new and outrageous irony. "But, how could he do it?" said Anastasia. "This portrait was not there this morning when I made the bed, very sure. You took the key with you just now: nobody could have entered while you were absent? How, then, once more, could this portrait get there? Ah now, could it be—could it be you, by chance, who put it there, old darling?" At this monstrous hypothesis, Alfred bounced from his seat; he opened his eyes, wide and threatening. "I—I fasten in my alcove the portrait of this evildoer, who, not content with persecuting me by his odious presence, pursues me at night in my dreams—the daytime in a picture! But will you make me mad, then, Anastasia? mad enough to be chained?" "Well! what then? When, for the sake of making peace, you should have agreed with Cabrion during my absence. Where would be the great harm?

"I make up with—oh, mon Dieu! you hear her!" "And then, he would have given you his portrait, as a pledge of friendship. If this is so, do not deny it." "Anastasia! if this is so, it must be confessed you are as capricious as a pretty woman." "My wife!" "But, in fine, it must have been you who placed the portrait!" "I—oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" "But who is it, then?" "You, madame." "I!" "Yes," cried M. Pipelet, wildly, "it is you; I have reason to believe it is you. This morning, having my back turned towards the bed, I could see nothing." "But, old darling, I tell you it must be you, otherwise I shall think it was the devil—since I have not left the lodge, and that when I went up stairs to answer to the call of the *masculine organ*, I had the key; the door was shut—you opened it: deny that!" "Ma foi, it is true!" "You confess, then?" "I confess that I comprehend nothing. It's a farce, and it is prettily played—must be just." "A farce!" cried M. Pipelet, carried away by a phrensied indignation. "Ah! there you are again—a farce! I tell you, I, that all this conceals some abominable plot: there is something under all this—a complot. The abyss is hidden under flowers—they try to stun me to prevent my seeing the precipice from which they wish to plunge me. It only remains for me to place myself under the protection of the laws. Happily, 'Dieu protégee la France' (God protects France); and M. Pipelet turned towards the door. "Where are you going to, old darling?" "To the commissary's to lodge my complaint, and this portrait as proof of the persecutions I am overwhelmed with." "But what will you complain of?" "What will I complain of? How! my most inveterate enemy shall find means by proceedings—fraudulent—to force me to have his portrait in my house, even on my nuptial bed! and the magistrates will not take me under their *ægis*? Give me this portrait, Anastasia—give it to me—not the side where the painting is, that sight revolts me! The traitor cannot deny it; it is in his hand: *Cabrion to his good friend Pipelet for life.* For life? Yes, it is that—it is for my life, without doubt, that he pursues me, and he will finish by having it. I live in continual alarm: I shall think that this infernal being is there, always there—under the floor, in the walls, in the ceiling! at night, that he sees me reposing in the arms of my wife; in the daytime, that he is standing behind me, always with his satanic smile; and who will tell me that even at this moment he is not here, concealed somewhere, like a venomous insect? Come, now! are you there, monster? are you here?" cried M. Pipelet, accompanying this furious imprecation with a circular movement of the head, as if he had wished to interrogate all parts of the lodge

"I am here, good friend!" said, most affectionately, the well-known voice of Cabrion. These words seemed to come from the bottom of the alcove, merely from the effects of ventriloquism; for the infernal '*rapin*' was standing outside

the door of the lodge, enjoying the smallest details of this scene; however, after having pronounced these last words, he prudently made off, not without leaving, as we shall see, a new subject of rage, astonishment, and meditation to his victim. Madame Pipelet, always courageous and skeptical, looked under the bed, and in every hole and corner, without success, while M. Pipelet, undone by the last blow, had fallen on his chair, in a state of utter despair. "It's nothing, Alfred," said Anastasia; "the scoundrel was concealed behind the door, and while I looked one way, he escaped the other. Patience, I'll catch him one of these days, and then, let him look out! he shall eat the handle of my broom!" The door opened, and Madame Séraphin, housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand, entered.

"Good-day, Madame Seraphin," said Madame Pipelet, who, wishing to conceal from a stranger her domestic sorrows, assumed a very gracious and smiling air: "what can I do to serve you?" "First, tell me, then, what is your new sign?" "New sign?" "The little sign." "A little sign?" "Yes, black with red letters, which is nailed over the door of your alley." "How! in the street?" "Why yes, in the street, just over your door." "My dear Madame Séraphin, may I never speak again, if I understand a word; and you, old darling?"

Alfred remained dumb. "In truth, it concerns M. Pipelet," said Madame Séraphin; "he must explain this to me." Alfred uttered a sort of low, inarticulate groan, shaking his "chapeau tromblon." This pantomime signified that Alfred found himself incapable of explaining anything to others, being sufficiently preoccupied with an infinity of problems, each one more difficult of solution than the other. "Pay no attention, Madame Séraphin," said Anastasia: "this poor Alfred has got the cramp in his bowels, that makes him—" "But what is this sign, then, of which you speak?" "Perhaps our neighbour the rogomiste—" "But no, no; I tell you it is a little sign nailed over your door." "Come, you want to joke." "Not at all, I saw it as I came in; there is written on it in large letters, '*Pipelet et Cabrion font commerce d'amitié et autres. Adressez au portier.*'" "Ah, mon Dieu! there is this written over our door, do you hear, Alfred?"

M. Pipelet looked at Madame Séraphin with a wild stare; he did not comprehend; he did not wish to comprehend.

"There it is—in the street—on a sign!" repeated Madame Pipelet, confounded at this new audacity. "Yes, for I have just read it. Then I said to myself, 'What a funny thing! M. Pipelet is a cobbler by trade, and he informs the passers-by that he is engaged in a *commerce d'amitié* with a Monsieur Cabrion. What does it signify? There is something concealed, it is clear; but as the sign says, inquire of the porter, Madame Pipelet will explain it.' But look there," cried Madame Séraphin, suddenly, "your husband looks as if he was sick: take care, he will fall backward!" Madame Pipelet received Alfred in her arms, in a fainting state. This last blow had been too violent; the man in the "chapeau tromblou" nearly lost all consciousness as he pronounced these words: "The creature has publicly posted me!" "I told you,

Madame Séraphin, Alfred has the cramp in his bowels, without speaking of an unchained blackguard, who undermines him with his sorry tricks. The poor old darling cannot resist it! Happily, I have a drop of absinthe here; probably it will put him on his legs."

In effect, thanks to the infallible remedy of Madame Pipelet, Alfred by degrees recovered his senses; but, alas! hardly had he come to, than he had to undergo another trial.

A middle aged person, neatly dressed, and very pleasing face, opened the door, and said, "I have just seen on a sign placed over this allée, *Pipelet et Cabrion font commerce d'amitié, et autres. Adressez vous au portier.* Can you, if you please, do me the honour to inform me what this means—you, who are the porter of this house?" "What this means!" cried M. Pipelet in a thundering voice, giving vent to his indignation, too long suppressed; "this means that M. Cabrion is an infamous impostor, *môssieur!*"

The man, at this sudden and furious explosion, drew back a step. Alfred, much exasperated, with a fiery look and purple face, had stretched his body half out of the lodge, and leaned his two contracted hands on the lower part of the door, while the figures of Madame Séraphin and Anastasia could be vaguely seen in the background, in the semi-obscure light of the lodge. "Learn, *môssieur*," cried M. Pipelet, "that I have no commerce with this scoundrel Cabrion, and that of friendship still less than any other!"

"It is true; and you must be very queer, old 'cornichori' as you are, to come and ask such a question," cried Madame Pipelet, sharply, showing her quarrelsome face over the shoulder of her husband.

"Madame!" said the man sententiously, falling back another step, "notices are made to be read; you put them up, I read; I have the right to do so, but you have no right to say such rude things."

"Rude things yourself, you beggarly wretch!" replied Anastasia, showing her teeth." "You are a low-bred person!"

"Alfred, your boot measure, that I can take the length of his muzzle, to teach him to come and play the 'forceur' at his age, old clown!" "Insults, when one comes to ask the meaning of a notice placed over your own door? It shall not pass over in this way, madame!" "But, môssieur," cried the unhappy porter. "But, monsieur," answered the quiz, pretending to be angry, "be as friendly as you please with your M. Cabrion, but, corbleu! don't stick it in large letters under the noses of the passers-by! I find myself under the necessity of telling you that you are a pitiful wretch, and that I shall go and make my complaint to the commissary," and the quiz departed in a great rage.

"Anastasia!" said M. Pipelet, in a sorrowful tone, "I shall not survive this, I feel it; I am wounded to death. I have no hope of escaping him. You see, my name is publicly stuck up alongside of this wretch. He dares to say that I have a friendly trade with him, and the public will believe it. I inform you—I say it—I communicate it; it is monstrous, it is enormous, it is an infernal idea: but it must finish; the measure is full; either he or I must fall in this struggle!" and, overcoming his

habitual apathy, M. Pipelet determined on a vigorous resolution, seized the portrait of Cabrion, and rushed towards the door. "Where are you going to, Alfred?" "To the commissary's. At the same time I am going to tear down this infamous sign; then, with this portrait and this sign in my hand, I will cry to the commissary, 'Defend me! avenge me! deliver me from Cabrion!'" "Well said, old darling; stir yourself, shake yourself; if you cannot get the sign down, tell the rogomiste to help you, and to lend you his little ladder." "Rascally Cabrion! Oh! if I had him, and I could do it, I'd fry him on my stove. I should like so much to see him suffer. Yes, there are people who are guillotined, who do not deserve it as much as he does. The wretch! I should like to see him on the Place du Gréve, the villain!" Alfred showed under these circumstances the most sublime equanimity. Notwithstanding his great causes of revenge against Cabrion, he had the generosity to feel sentiments akin to pity for him. "No," said he, "no; even if I could, I would not ask for his head! As for me—yes, yes, yes—so much the worse. And—" "Allez donc!" cried the ferocious Anastasia. "No," replied Alfred, "I do not like blood; but I have a right to claim the perpetual seclusion of this evildoer; my repose requires it; my health commands it; the law accords me this reparation: otherwise, I leave la France—ma belle France! That is what they'll gain." And Alfred, swallowed up in his grief, walked majestically out of the lodge, like one of those imposing victims of ancient fatality.

CHAPTER XIV.

CECILY.

Before we relate the conversation between Madame Séraphin and Madame Pipelet, we will inform the reader that Anastasia, without suspecting the least in the world the virtue and devotion of the notary, blamed extremely the severity he had shown towards Louise Morel and Germain. Naturally, the "portiére" included Madame Séraphin in her reprobation; but like a skilful politician, for reasons which we will show by-and-by, she concealed her feeling for the housekeeper under a most cordial reception. After having formally disapproved of the unworthy conduct of Cabrion, Madame Séraphin added, "Ah, now! what has become of M. Bradamanti (Polidori)? Last night I wrote to him—no answer; this morning I came to find him—no one. I hope at this time I shall be more fortunate." Madame Pipelet feigned to be very much vexed. "Ah! for example," cried she, "you must have bad luck!" "How!" "M. Bradamanti has not come in." "It is insupportable!" "Heiu! it is vexing, my poor Madame Séraphin?" "I, who have so much to say to him." "If it is not just like a fate!" "So much the more, as I have to invent so many pretexts for coming here; for if M. Ferrand ever suspected that I knew a quack, he who is so devout, so scrupulous, you can judge what a scene!" "Just like Alfred. He is so prudish, that he is startled at everything." "And you do not know when Bradamanti will come in?" "He made an appointment for six or seven o'clock in the evening, for he told me to say to the person to call again if he had not returned. Come back this evening, you will be sure to find him." And Anastasia added, mentally, "You can count on this: in one hour he will be on the road to Normandy." "I will return, then, to-night," said Madame Séraphin, much annoyed; "but I have something else to say to you, my dear Madame Pipelet. You know what has happened to this wench of a Louise, whom every one thought so virtuous?" "Don't speak of it," answered Madame Pipelet, raising her eyes with compunction: "it makes my hair stand on end." "I want to tell you that we have no servant; and that, if by chance, you should hear spoken of a young girl, virtuous, good worker, honest, you will be very kind if you will address her to me. Good subjects are so difficult to find, that one has to look on all sides to find them." "Be quite easy, Madame Séraphin. If I hear of any one, I will inform you. Good places are as difficult to find as good subjects;" then she added, mentally, "very likely I'd send you a poor girl to be starved to death in your hovel! Your master is too miserly and too wicked—to denounce, in one breath, this poor Louise and poor M. Germain!" "I need not tell you," said Madame Séraphin, "how quiet our house is; a young girl gains much in getting with us, and this Louise must have been an incarnate 'mauvais sujet,' to have turned out so bad, notwithstanding all the good and holy advice M. Ferrand gave her."

"Certainly; then depend upon me: if I hear any one spoken of I think will answer, I will send them to you." "There is one thing more," said Madame Séraphin; "M. Ferrand will prefer that this servant should have no family, because, you comprehend, having no occasion to go out, she will run less risk; so, if by chance she could be found, monsieur would prefer an orphan, I suppose; in the first place, because it would be a good action, and then because, having no friends, she would have no pretext to go out. This miserable Louise is a good lesson for monsieur, allez, my poor Madame Pipelet! It is this that makes him so difficult in the choice of a domestic. Such a scandalous affair in a pious house like ours—how horrid! well, good-by; to-night, when I go to see M. Bradamanti, I'll call upon la Mère Burette." "Good-by, Madame Séraphin—you will certainly see him to-night." Madame Séraphin took her departure.

"Isn't she crazy after Bradamanti!" said Madame Pipelet. "What can she want with him? and he, wasn't he crazy for fear he should see her before he left for Normandy? I was afraid she wouldn't go, as M. Bradamanti expects the lady who came last night; I couldn't see her, but this time I'll try to unmask her—neither more nor less than I did with the lady who came to see the twopenny commandant. He has not had his foot here since! To teach him, I mean to burn his wood; yes, I will burn it, all your wood, disappointed coxcomb! get out! with your dirty twelve francs, and your glow-worm robe de chambre. That did you a great deal of good. But who can this lady be, of M. Bradamanti's? A lady or a common

woman? I'd like to know, for I am as curious as a magpie. It is not my fault—the bon Dieu made me so. It is my character. Ah, hold! an idea, and a famous one too—to find out her name! I'll try it. But who comes there? Ah! it, is my prince of lodgers. Salute! Monsieur Rodolphe," said Madame Pipelet, putting herself in the attitude of *carry arms*, the back of her left hand to her periwig.

It was Rodolphe, as yet ignorant of the death of M. d'Harville. "Good-day, Madame Pipelet," said he on entering. "M'lle Rigolette, is she at home? I wish to speak to her." "She? poor little puss, is she not always at home! and her work, then! Does she ever take a holyday?" "And how is Morel's wife? does she cheer up any?" "Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; many thanks to you or to the protector of whom you are the agent, she and her children are so happy now! They are like fish *in* water; they have fire, air, good beds, good food, a nurse to take care of them, without reckoning M'lle Rigolette, who, in working like a little beaver, and without appearing to, keeps them under her eye, allez! and besides, a negro doctor has been to see them. Eh! eh! eh! I say, Monsieur Rodolphe, I said to myself, 'Ah! but this is the doctor of the coalmen, this black man? he can feel their pulse without soiling his hands—but never mind, colour is nothing; he seems to be a first-rate—all the same?' He ordered a potion for Madame Morel, which relieved her at once." "Poor woman! she must be very sad." "Oh! yes, Monsieur Rodolphe, what would you? her husband mad, and then her Louise in prison. Do you see—her Louise—it is her heart's grief! for an honest family it is terrible; and when I think that just now la mère Séraphin came here to say such things about her. If I had not had a gudgeon to make her swallow, the Séraphin, she would not have got off in this way, but for a quarter of an hour I gave her fair words. Didn't she have the brass to come and ask me if I knew of any young body to take the place of Louise, at this beggar of a notary's? Ain't he close and miserly? Just imagine, they want an orphan, if she can be found. Do you know why, Monsieur Rodolphe? Because she would never want to go out. But that is not it—trash, a lie! The truth is, that they want to get hold of a young girl, who, having no one to advise her, they'll grind her out of her wages at their pleasure. Isn't it true?" "Yes, yes," answered Rodolphe, in a thoughtful manner. Learning that Madame Séraphin sought an orphan to take the place of Louise, Rodolphe foresaw in this circumstance a means, perhaps, certain of obtaining the punishment of the notary. While Madame Pipelet was speaking, he arranged in his mind the part Cecily had to play, as a principal instrument in the just punishment which he wished to inflict on the executioner of Louise Morel. "I was sure you would think as I did," said Madame Pipelet: "yes, I repeat it, and I would sooner die than to send any one to them. Am I not right, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "Madame Pipelet, will you render me a great service?" "Dieu de Dieu! M. Rodolphe, do you wish me to throw myself across the fire, curl my periwig with boiling oil? or would you prefer I should bite some one? speak, I am wholly yours, I and my heart—we are your slaves, except—"

"Make yourself easy, Madame Pipelet; this is not what I mean. I want a place for a young orphan. She is a stranger; she has never been at Paris, and I wish to send her to M. Ferrand's." "You suffocate me! How! in his barrack? to this old miser's?" "It is nevertheless a place. If the young girl should not like it, she can leave; but, at least, she will at once earn her living, and I shall be easy on her account."

"Marry! Monsieur Rodolphe, it's your affair; you are warned. If, notwithstanding, you find the place good, you are the master; and, besides, I must be just—speaking of the notary—if there's something against, there's also something for. He is as miserly as a dog, hard as an ass, bigoted as a sacristan, it is true; but he is as honest as one can be. He gives small wages, but he pays like a man. The food is bad. In fine, it is a house where one must work like a horse, but where there is no risk of a young girl's reputation. Louise was a chance!" "Madame Pipelet, I am going to confide a secret to your honour." "On the faith of Anastasia Pipelet, whose maiden name was Galimard, as true as there is a bon Dieu in heaven, and that Alfred wears only green coats, I shall be dumb as my dead aunt!"

"You must not say a word to M. Pipelet!" "I swear it on the head of my old darling! If the motive is honest—" "Ah! Madame Pipelet!" "It is between us—*life to death*, my prince of lodgers. Go on." "The young girl of whom I have spoken has committed a fault" "Understood! If I had not at fifteen married Alfred, I should have perhaps committed fifty—hundreds of faults! I, such as you see me. I was a real saltpetre unchained, nom de nom! Happily, Pipelet extinguished me in his virtue: without that I should have committed follies. It is to say to you that, if your young girl has only committed one fault, there is yet some hope." "I think so also. The young girl was a servant in Germany, at one of my relative's; the son of this relative has been the accomplice of the fault: you comprehend?"

"Al-l-l-l-l-lez donc! I comprehend—as if I had committed the fault!"

"The mother drove away the servant; but the young man was mad enough to leave his paternal home, and bring this poor girl to Paris."

"What would you have? These young folks—"

"After this came reflections—so much the wiser, as the money they had was all gone. My young relative called upon me; I consented to give him enough to return to his mother, but on condition that he should leave this girl here, and I would endeavour to place her."

"I could not have done better for my own son, if Pipelet had been pleased to grant me one." "I am enchanted with your approbation; only, as the young girl has no recommendations, and that she is a stranger, it is very difficult to find a place. If you would tell Madame Séraphin that one of your relations in Germany had addressed and recommended this young girl to you, and the notary would take her in his service, I should be doubly pleased. Cecily—this is her name—having been only led astray, would

be made correct, certainly, in a house so strict as that of the notary. It is for this reason I wish to see her enter the service of M. Ferrand. I need not tell you that, presented by you—a person so respectable—" "Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe—" "So estimable—" "Ah, my prince of lodgers—" "That this young girl, recommended by you, will be certainly accepted by Madame Séraphin, while presented by me—" "Understood! It is as if I presented a small young man! Ah! well! done; it suits me. Allez donc! Stick the Séraphin! So much the better! I have a bone to pick with her. I will answer for the affair, Monsieur Rodolphe! I'll make her see stars at noon. I'll tell her that, for how long a time I don't know, I have a cousin established in Germany, one of the Galimards—my family name; that I have just received the news that she is defunct, her husband also, and that their daughter, who is now an orphan, will be on my hands immediately." "Very well. You will take Cecily yourself to M. Ferrand, without saying anything more to Madame Séraphin. As it is twenty years since you have seen your cousin, you will have nothing to answer except that, since her departure for Germany, you have received no news from her." "Ah, now! but if the young woman only jabbers German?"

"She speaks French perfectly; I will give her her lesson; all you have to do is to recommend her strongly to Madame Séraphin; or, rather, I think, no—for she would suspect, perhaps, that you wished to force her. You know it suffices often merely to ask for a thing, that you are refused." "To whom do you tell this? That's the way I always served cajolers. If they had asked nothing, I do not say—" "This always happens. You must say, then, that Cecily is an orphan and a stranger, very young and very handsome; that she is going to be a heavy charge for you; that you feel but slight affection for her, as you had quarrelled with your cousin, and that you are not much obliged for such a present as she has made you."

"Dieu de Dieu! how cunning you are! But be easy—we two, we'll fix the pair. I say, Monsieur Rodolphe, how we understand each other—we two! When I think that if you had been of my age in the time when I was a real saltpetre—ma foi, I don't know—and you?" "Chut! if M. Pipelet—" "Ah! well, yes! poor dear man! You don't know a new infamy of this Cabrion? But I will tell you this directly. As to your young girl, be easy; I bet that I'll lead Séraphin to ask me to place my relation with them." "If you succeed, my dear Madame Pipelet, there is a hundred francs for you. I am not rich, but—" "Do you mock at me, Monsieur Rodolphe? Do you think I do this from interested feelings? Dieu de Dieu! it is pure friendship—a hundred francs!" "But judge, then, that if I had this young girl for a long time under my charge, it would cost me more than this, at the end of some months."

"It is, then, to oblige you that I shall take the hundred francs, Monsieur Rodolphe; but it was a famous ticket in the lottery for us when you came to this house. I can cry from the roof, you are the prince of lodgers. Holloa! a hack! it is doubtless the little lady for M. Bradamanti. She came yesterday; I could not see her. I am going to trifle with her, to make her show her face; without counting that I have invented a way to find out her name. You'll see me work; it will amuse you." "No, no, Madame Pipelet, the name and face of this lady is of no importance to me," said Rodolphe, retreating to the back part of the lodge.

"Madame!" cried Anastasia, rushing out before the lady, who entered, "where are you going, madame?" To M. Bradamanti's," said the female, visibly annoyed at thus being stopped in the passage. "He is not at home." "It is impossible; I have an appointment with him." "He is not at home." "You are mistaken." "I am not mistaken at all," trying all the time to catch a glimpse of her face. "M. Bradamanti has gone out, certainly gone out—very certainly gone out—that is to say, except for a lady." "Well! it is I! you annoy me; let me pass." "Your name, madame? I shall soon know if it is the person M. Bradamanti told me to pass in. If you have not that name, you must step over my body before you shall enter." "He told you my name!" cried the woman, with as much surprise as inquietude. "Yes, madame." "What imprudence!" murmured the young woman; then, after a moment's pause, she added impatiently, in a low voice, and as if she feared to be overheard, "Well! my name is Madame d'Orbigny."

At this name Rodolphe shuddered. It was the name of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville. Instead of remaining in the shade, he advanced; and, by the light of the day and the lamp, he easily recognised this woman, from the description that Clémence had more than once given him. "Madame d'Orbigny?" repeated Madame Pipelet, "that's the name; you can go up, madame." The stepmother of Clémence passed rapidly before the lodge. "And al-l-lez donc!" cried the portière, in a triumphant manner; "gammoned the citizen! know her name—she is called D'Orbigny; the means not bad, hein, Monsieur Rodolphe? But what is the matter? You are quite pensive!" "This lady has been here before?" asked Rodolphe.

"Yes, last night; as soon as she was gone, M. Bradamanti went out, probably to take his place in the diligence for to-day; for on his return, last night, he begged me to go with his trunk to the office, as he could not depend upon the little devil Tortillard." "And where is M. Bradamanti going to? do you know?" "To Normandy — to Alençon." Rodolphe remembered that the estate of Aubiers, where M. d'Orbigny resided, was situated in Normandy. There could be no doubt the quack was going to see the father of Clémence for no good purpose!

"It is the departure of M. Bradamanti, which will finely provoke the Séraphin!" said Madame Pipelet. "She is like a mad wolf after M. César, who avoids her as much as he can; for he told me to conceal from her that he was going to leave to-night; thus, when she returns, she will find nobody at home! I'll profit by this to speak of your young woman. Apropos, how is she called—Cicé?" "Cecily." "It is the same as if you said Cécile with an é at the end. All the same; I must put a piece of paper in my snuffbox to remember this name—Cici—Casi—Cécily, good, I have it."

"Now I go to see Madamoiselle Rigolette," said Rodolphe; and, singularly preoccupied with the visit of Madame d'Orbigny to Polidori, he ascended to the fourth story.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST GRIEF OF RIGOLETTE.

The chamber of Rigolette shone, as always, with the same coquettish nicety; the heavy silver watch, placed on the chimney, marked four o'clock; the very cold weather having passed, the economical workwoman had not put any fire in her stove. Hardly could one see from the window any part of the sky, the rough, the irregular mass of roofs, garrets, and high chimneys, which, on the other side of the street, formed the horizon.

Suddenly a ray of the sun, astray, as it were, glancing between two high roofs, came to light up, for some moments, with its purple tints, the windows of the young girl's chamber.

Rigolette was working, seated near the casement, sewing, with her feet on a tabouret placed before her. Thus, as some grand seignior amuses himself sometimes, through caprice, in concealing the walls of a cottage by the most splendid draperies, for a moment the setting sun illuminated the little apartment with a thousand sparkling fires, cast its golden rays on the gray and green chints curtains, made the highly-polished furniture sparkle, the waxed floor to glisten like copper, and surrounded with gilded wire the bird-cage of the grisette.

But, alas! notwithstanding the provoking joyousness of this ray of the sun, the two canaries flew about with an unquiet air, and, contrary to custom, did not sing.

It was because, contrary to custom, also, Rigolette did not sing. None of the three warbled without the others. Almost always the fresh and matinal song of this one awoke the song of the others, who, more lazy, did not leave their nests at so early an hour. Then it was a defiance, a contest of clear, sonorous, brilliant, silvery notes, in which the birds did not always have the advantage.

Rigolette sang no more, because that, for the first time in her life, she experienced a *sorrow*.

Until then, the sight of the misery of the Morels had often afflicted her, but such scenes are too familiar to the poorer classes to make any durable impression.

After having each day assisted these unfortunates as much as was in her power, sincerely wept with them, and for them, the young girl felt at once affected and satisfied: affected with their misfortunes, and satisfied with her conduct towards them. But this was no *sorrow*.

Soon the natural gayety of character of Rigolette resumed its empire. And besides, without egotism, but from comparison, she found herself so happy in her little chamber, on leaving the horrible den of the Morels, that her ephemeral sadness was soon dissipated.

Before we inform the reader of the cause of the first grief of Rigolette, we wish to assure him completely as to the virtue of this young girl. We regret to use this word, virtue—a grave, pompous, and solemn word, which always carries along with it ideas of a grievous sacrifice, of a painful contest with the passions, austere meditations on the end of things here below. Such was not the virtue of Rigolette. She had neither struggled nor meditated. She had worked, laughed and sung.

It depended, as she said to Rodolphe, on a question of time. She had not the leisure to be in love.

Before all, gay, industrious, managing; order, work, gayety, had, unknown to her, defended, sustained, saved her. Perhaps this morality will be found light, easy, and joyous; but what matters the cause, provided the effect subsists? What matters the direction of the roots, if the flower blooms brilliant and perfumed?

* * * * * * *

But let us descend from our utopian sphere, and return to the cause of Rigolette's first grief.

Except Germain, a good and serious young man, the neighbours of the grisette had taken, at first, her original familiarity, her offers of a good neighbourhood, for very significant encouragement; but these gentlemen had been obliged to acknowedge, with as much surprise as vexation, that they found in Rigolette an amiable and gay companion for their Sunday recreations, a kind neighbour and "bonne enfant," but nothing more. Their surprise and their vexation quailed by degrees to the frank and charming disposition of the grisette, and then, as she had judiciously told Rodolphe, her neighbours were proud on Sunday to have on their arm a pretty girl who did them honour (Rigolette cared little for appearances) and who only cost the partaking of their modest pleasures, which her presence and sprightliness enhanced. Besides, the dear girl was so easily contented; in the days of penury she dined so well and so gayly on a piece of hot cake, which she ate with all the force of her little white teeth; after which she amused herself so much with a walk on the boulevards or in the "passages!"

François Germain alone founded no foolish hopes on the familiarity of the young girl; either from penetration or delicacy of mind, he saw at once all that could be agreeable in the mode of living offered by Rigolette. That which, of course, would happen, happened. He became desperately in love with his neighbour, without daring to speak of this love. Far from imitating his predecessors, who, soon convinced of the vanity of their pursuits, had consoled themselves elsewhere, Germain had deliciously enjoyed his intimacy with the young girl, passing with her not only Sundays, but every evening that he was not occupied.

During these long hours, Rigolette had conducted herself, as always, lively and gay; Germain, tender, attentive, serious, and often a little melancholy. This sadness was the only inconvenience; for his manners, naturally "distingué," could not be compared to the ridiculous pretensions of M. Girandeau, the travelling clerk, nor to the noisy eccentricities of Cabrion; but M. Girandeau by his inexhaustible loquacity, and the painter by his hiliarity not less so, had the advantage of Germain, whose gentle gravity awed a little his lively neighbour.

Rigolette had not, then, had, until now, any marked preference for either of her three lovers; but as she was not wanting in judgment,

she found that Germain alone united all the qualities necessary to make a reasonable woman happy.

These antecedents disposed of, we will say why Rigolette was sad, and why neither she nor her birds sang.

Her round and blooming face was rather pale; her large black eyes, ordinarily bright and sparkling, were cast down and dull; her expression showed unaccustomed fatigue. She had worked more than half the night. From time to time she regarded sadly a letter placed open upon a table beside her; this letter was from Germain, and contained what follows:

"Prison de la Conciergerie.

"MADEMOISELLE,

"The place from whence I write will tell you the extent of my misfortune. I am incarcerated as a thief—I am criminal in the eyes of the world, though I dare to write to you! It would be frightful for me to think that you also looked upon me as a degraded and guilty being. I implore you, do not condemn me before having read this letter. If you cast me off, this last blow will overwhelm me quite! Here is what has taken place:

"For some time past I have not lived in the Rue du Temple, but I knew through poor Louise that the family Morel, for whom we were so much interested, were more and more wretched. Alas! my pity for these poor people has ruined me! I do not repent it, but my fate is a cruel one! Yesterday I remained quite late at M. Ferrand's, occupied with some pressing writings. In the room where I worked was a bureau; each day my patron locked up in it the work I had done. This night he appeared restless and agitated; he said to me, 'Do not go until these accounts are finished; you will place them in the bureau, of which I leave you the key,' and he went out.

"My work being finished, I opened the drawer to put it away; mechanically my eyes fell upon an open letter, where I read the name of *Jérôme Morel*, the artisan. I confess, seeing that it referred to his unfortunate man, I had the indiscretion to read this letter; I thus learned that the artisan was to be arrested the next morning for a note of thirteen hundred francs, at the suit of M. Ferrand, who, under an assumed name, would cause him to be imprisoned. This notice was from the agent of my patron. I knew the situation of the family well enough to foresee what a horrible blow this would be for them. I was as sorry as I was indignant. Unfortunately, I saw in the same drawer an open box containing some gold; there was about two thousand francs. At this moment I heard Louise on the staircase; without reflecting on the gravity of my action, profiting by the occasion which chance offered, I took thirteen hundred francs; I went into the passage and placed the money into the hand of Louise, telling her, 'Your father is to be arrested to-morrow at daylight for thirteen hundred francs; here they are; save him, but do not say you had this money from me. M. Ferrand is a bad man.'

"You see, mademoiselle, my intention was good, though my conduct was culpable; I conceal nothing. Now hear my excuse.

"For a long time, by economy, I have saved and placed at a banker's the small sum of fifteen hundred francs. About a week ago, he notified me that, the term of his obligation towards me being arrived, he held my funds subject to my order, if I did not wish them to remain with him

"I thus possessed more than I took from the notary. I could the next day replace it; but the cashier of the banker did not reach his office before twelve o'clock, and at daybreak they were to arrest poor Morel. It was necessary, then, to place him in a situation to pay, otherwise, even if I were to go and take him from prison, the arrest might have already killed his wife; besides, the very considerable expenses attending this would have been at the cost of the artisan. You comprehend, that all these misfortunes would not have happened, if I could have returned the thirteen hundred francs before M. Ferrand discovered their loss.

"I left the house no longer under the impression of indignation and pity which had made me act in this manner. I reflected on all the dangers of my position; a thousand fears assailed me. I knew the severity of the notary; he could, after my departure, return and go to the bureau, find out the *theft:* for in his eyes, to the eyes of everybody, it is a theft.

"These ideas quite upset me: although it was late, I ran to the banker's to beg him to return my money instantly. I should have explained this extraordinary demand, afterward I would have returned to M. Ferrand and replaced the money I had taken.

"The banker, by a fatal chance, had been for two days at Belleville, at his country house; I awaited the daylight with increasing agony; at length I arrived at Belleville. Everything seemed leagued against me; the banker had left for Paris; I flew back, I got my money, I went to M. Ferrand's—all was discovered!

"But this is only a part of my misfortunes: now the notary accuses me of having stolen fifteen thousand francs in notes, which were, he said, in the drawer with the two thousand francs in gold. It is a false accusation, an infamous lie! I avow myself guilty of the first charge, but by all that is sacred, I swear to you, mademoiselle, that I am innocent of the second. I have seen no bills in the drawer; there was only the gold, as I said before.

"Such is the truth, mademoiselle; I am under the charge of an overwhelming accusation, and yet I affirm that you ought to think me incapable of telling a falsehood. But will you believe me? Alas! as M. Ferrand told me, he who has stolen a small sum can easily steal a large one, and his words deserve no confidence.

"I have always found you so good and devoted to the unfortunate, mademoiselle, I know you are so faithful and frank, that your heart will guide you, I hope, in the appreciation of the truth—I ask nothing more. Give faith to my words, and you will find me as much to be pitied as blamed; for I repeat, my intention was good; circumstances impossible to foresee have ruined me.

"Ah! Mademoiselle Rigolette, I am very unhappy! If you knew what kind of people I am destined to live among until the day of my trial! Yesterday they took me to a place which is called the depôt of the Prefecture of Police. I cannot tell you what I experienced when, after having mounted a gloomy staircase, I arri-

ved before a door with an iron wicket, which they opened, and then was soon closed upon me. I was so much troubled, that at first I could distinguish nothing. A hot, disagreeable air struck me in the face; I heard a great noise of voices mingled with sinister laughs, accents of rage, and common songs; I held myself immovable near the door, looking at the stone flaggings, daring neither to advance nor raise my eyes, believing that every one was looking at me. They did not trouble themselves about me: one prisoner more or less is of no consequence to them; at length I raised my head. What horrible figures, mon Dieu! how many clothed in rags! how many ragged clothes soiled with mud! All the externals of vice and misery. There are about forty or fifty, seated, standing, or lying on benches fast to the walls; vagabonds, robbers, assassins, in fine, all those who had been arrested that night or day.

"When they perceived me, I found a sad consolation in seeing that they did not recognise me as one of their fellows. Some of them looked at me with an insolent and jeering air; then they began to talk among themselves, in a low tone, and in a hideous language I did not comprehend. At the end of a short time, the most audacious of them came and struck me on the shoulder, and asked me for some money to pay my welcome.

"I gave them some money, in hopes to purchase repose: it was not enough; they required more; I refused. Then several of them surrounded me loading me with threats and insults; they were about to throw themselves upon me, when happily, attracted by the noise, a keeper entered; I complained to him; he made them give up the money I had given them, and told me that, if I wished, I should be for a small amount conducted to what they call *la pistole;* that is to say, I could be put alone in a cell. I accepted with gratitude, and left these bandits in the midst of their threats for the future. The keeper placed me in a cell, where I passed the rest of the night. It is from hence that I write you this morning, Mademoiselle Rigolette; immediately after my examination, I shall be conducted to another prison, which is called *La Force*, where I fear I shall meet many of my companions of the *Dépôt*. The keeper, interested by my grief and by my tears, has promised me to send you this letter, although it is strictly forbidden. I expect, Mademoiselle Rigolette, a last service of your old friendship, if now you should not blush at this friendship.

"If you are willing to grant my demand, here it is:

"You will receive with this a small key and a line for the porter of the house where I reside, Boulevard Saint Dénis, No. 11. I inform him that you can dispose of all that belongs to me, and that he must obey your orders. He will show you my room. You will have the kindness to open my secretary with the key I send you; you will find a large envelope covering many papers, which I wish you to take care of; one of them was destined for you, as you will see by the address; others have been written concerning you, in our happy days. Do not be angry—you never would have known it.

"I beg you also to take the small sum of money which is in this secretary, also a 'sacket' of satin, enclosing a little cravat of orange silk, that you wore on our last Sunday walk, and that you gave me the day I left the Rue du Temple. I wish, in fine, that, with the exception of some linen, which you will send to *La Force*, you would sell the furniture and effects I possess: acquitted or condemned, I shall not be the less ruined and obliged to leave Paris. Where shall I go? What are my resources? God knows!

"Madame Bouvard, the 'marchande' in the Temple, who has already sold and bought for me, will doubtless arrange all this; she's an honest woman; this arrangement will spare you much embarrassment, for I know how precious your time is.

"I have paid my rent in advance; I beg you, then, to give a small gratuity to the porter. Pardon me, mademoiselle, for imposing on you with these details, but you are the only person in the world to whom I dare and can address myself.

"I might have asked this service from one of the clerks at M. Ferrand's, but I feared his discretion respecting sundry papers; many of them concern you, as I have already told you; others have reference to some sad events of my life.

"Ah! believe me, Mademoiselle Rigolette, if you grant it, this last proof of your former affection will be my sole consolation in the great trouble which crushes me; in spite of myself, I hope you will not refuse me.

"I ask, also, permission to write you sometimes—it will be so soothing, so precious, to be able to pour out, to disclose to a benevolent heart, the sorrows which overwhelm me.

"Alas! I am alone in the world; no one feels any interest in me. This isolated conditon was alway painful—judge now!

"And yet, I am honest; and I have the consciousness of never having injured any one; of having always, even at the peril of my life, shown my aversion for evil, as you will see by the papers, which I beg you to keep, and which you can read. But when I say this, who will believe me. M. Ferrand is respected by everybody; his reputation is well established; he will crush me; I resign myself, in advance, to my fate.

"In fine, Mademoiselle Rigolette, if you believe me, you will not have, I hope, any contempt for me; you will pity me, and you will sometimes think of a sincere friend; then, if I cause you much—much pity, perhaps you will push your generosity so far as to come, some day—*a Sunday* (alas! what recollections does this word awaken)—to *brave* the 'parloir' of my prison.

"But no, no! to see you in such a place—I never can dare. Yet you are so kind—that—

"I am obliged to stop, and send you this, with the key and the note to the porter, which I shall write in haste, as the keeper has come to tell me I am to be taken before the judge. Adieu, adieu, Mademoiselle Rigolette. Do not cast me off. I have no hope but in you—in you alone!

"Francois Germain.

"P. S. If you answer, address your letter to the prison of La Force."

The reader can now comprehend the cause of the first grief of La Rigolette. Her excellent heart was profoundly affected at a calamity of which she had not had until then any suspicion. She believed implicitly in the entire veracity of the story of Germain, the unfortunate son of the Maître d'Ecole. Not very severe, she even found that her old neighbour enormously exaggerated his fault. To save an unfortunate father, he had taken the money, which he knew he could return. This action, in the eyes of the grisette, was only generous.

By one of those inconsistencies natural to women, and, above all, to those of her class, this young girl, who until then had felt for Germain, as for her other neighbours, a joyous and cordial friendship, now acknowledged a decided preference.

As soon as she knew he was unfortunate, unjustly accused, and a prisoner, she thought no more of his rivals.

With Rigolette it was not yet love; it was a lively, sincere affection, filled with commiseration and resolute devotion: a very new sentiment for her, from the bitterness which was joined to it. Such was the situation *morale* of Rigolette, when Rodolphe entered her room, after having discreetly knocked at the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

FRIENDSHIP.

"Good-day, my neighbour," said Rodolphe; "I hope I do not disturb you?" "No, my neighbour; I am, on the contrary, very glad to see you, for I have much sorrow!" "Why, I do find you pale; you seem to have been weeping!"

"I think I have wept! There is reason for it. Poor Germain! Here, read;" and Rigolette handed to Rodolphe the letter of the prisoner. "If this is not enough to break one's heart! You told me you were interested in him. Now is the time to show it," added she, while Rodolphe read attentively. "Must it be that this villain, M. Ferrand, is thirsting for the blood of everybody! First it was Louise, now it is Germain. Oh! I am not cruel; but if some misfortune should happen to this notary I should be content! To accuse such an honest young man of having stolen 1300 francs! Germain—him!!—truth and honesty itself, and then so regular, so mild, so sad—is he not to be pitied, mon Dieu! among all these scoundrels—in his prison! Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, from to-day I begin to see that all is not 'couleur de rose' in life." "And what do you mean to do, my neighbour?" "What I mean to do? why, everything he asks, and that as soon as possible. I should have already been off, but for this work which I must finish, and which I am going to take to the Rue Saint Honoré, as I go to Germain's room to get the papers he speaks of. I have passed a part of the night in working, so as to gain some hours in advance. I am going to have so many things to do, besides my work, that I must get in readiness. In the first place, Madame Morel wishes me to see Louise in her prison. It is, perhaps, very difficult, but I will try. Unfortunately, I do not know who to address myself to." "I have thought of that." "You, my neighbour?" "Here is a permission." "What happiness! Can you not get me one also for the prison of this unfortunate Germain? it will give him so much pleasure!" "I will give you, also, the means to see Germain." "Oh, thank you, Monsieur Rodolphe." "You are not afraid, then, to go to his prison?" "Very certain, my heart will beat the first time. But never mind. When Germain was happy, did I not always find him ready to anticipate all my wishes? To take me to the theatre, or a walk? to read to me at night? to assist me in arranging my flowers? to wax my floor? Well! he is in trouble—now it is my turn; a poor little mouse like me can't do much; I know it; but all I can do I will do—he can count on it; he shall see if I am a good friend! Hold, Monsieur Rodolphe, there is one thing that vexes me; it is his suspicion—to believe me capable of despising him! I! I ask you why? This old miser of a notary accuses him of theft; what is that to me? I know it is not true. The letter of Germain, does it not prove, as clear as day, that he is innocent, who I should never have thought guilty? it was only to see him, to know him, to be sure that he is incapable of a wrong action. One must be as wicked as M. Ferrand to maintain such false assertions." "Bravo, my neighbour. I like your indignation!" "Oh! stop—I wish I was a man, to go see this notary, and say to him, 'Ah! you maintain that Germain has robbed you; well, look here, take that! old liar, he won't steal this from you! And pau! pau! pau! I'd beat him to a mummy." "You'd have very expeditious justice," said Rodolphe, smiling at the animation of Rigolette. "It is so revolting; and, as Germain says in his letter, everybody will take the part of his patron against him, because his patron is rich, and thought much of, while Germain is a poor young man without protection; unless you come to his assistance, Monsieur Rodolphe, you, who know so many benevolent persons. Can nothing be done?" "He must wait for his trial. Once acquitted, as I think he will be, numerous proofs of interest will be shown him, I assure you. But listen, my neighbour, I know from experience that I can count on your discretion."

"Oh! yes, Monsieur Rodolphe. I have never been a babbler."

"Well! no one must know, even Germain himself must be ignorant, that he has friends who are watching over him, for he has friends." "Really?" "Very powerful, and very devoted." "It would give him so much courage to know it!" "Doubtless; but perhaps he could not keep the secret. Then, Mr. Ferrand, alarmed, would be on his guard, his suspicions aroused; and as he is very cunning, he would make it difficult to get at him; which would be lamentable, for not only must the innocence of Germain be proved, but his calumniator unmasked."

"I understand you, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"Just so with Louise; I bring you this permission to see her, so that you can tell her not to speak to any one of what she has revealed to me. She will know what this means." "That is sufficient, M. Rodolphe." "In a word, that

Louise be careful not to complain in her prison of the conduct of her master, it is very important. But she must conceal nothing from the lawyer who will be sent by me to prepare for her defence; recommend all this to her."

"Be quite easy, my neighbour—I will forget nothing. I have a good memory. But I speak of kindness! it is you who are good and generous! Any one in trouble, you are there at once!"

"I have told you, my neighbour, I am only a poor clerk; when, in roving about, I find good people who deserve protection, I inform a benevolent person who has all confidence in me, and they are assisted. And where do you lodge, now that you have given up your room to the Morels?" "I lodge—in furnished lodgings." "Oh! how I detest that. To be where everybody else has been—it is as if everybody had been in your own room." "I am only there at night, and then—" "I conceive—it is less disagreeable. *My home*, Monsieur Rodolphe, rendered me so happy; I had arranged a life so tranquil, that I should not have believed it possible to have a sorrow. Yet you see! No, I cannot tell you what a blow the misfortunes of Germain have caused me. I have seen the Morels and others—much to be pitied, it is true; but misery is misery; among poor folks they expect it; it does not surprise them, and they help one another as they can. But to see a poor young man, honest and good, who has been your friend for a long time, to see him accused of theft, and imprisoned pell-mell with rogues and cut-throats! Ah! damé, Monsieur Rodolphe, it is true, I have no strength against this; it is a misfortune I have never thought of; it upsets me."

And the large eyes of Rigolette filled with tears.

"Courage, courage! your gayety will return when your friend is acquitted." "Oh! he must be acquitted. They will only have to read to the judges the letter which he has written me—that will be enough, will it not, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "In reality, this simple and touching letter has all the marks of truth; you must let me take a copy; it will be useful in his defence."

"Certainly, Monsieur Rodolphe. If I did not write like a real cat, in spite of the lessons Germain gave me, I should propose to copy it for you; but my writing is so coarse, so crooked, and, besides, there are so many—so many faults!"

"I only ask you to lend me this letter until to-morrow."

"There it is, my neighbour; but you will take good care of it? I have burned all the billets-doux which M. Cabrion and M. Girandeau wrote me at the commencement of our acquaintance, with bleeding hearts and doves on the top of the paper; but this poor letter of Germain, I will take good care of it, and the others also, if he writes them. For, in truth, Monsieur Rodolphe, it is a proof in my favour that he asks these little services."

"Without doubt it proves that you are the best little friend that one can have. But, I reflect—instead of going by-and-by alone to M. Germain's, shall I accompany you?" "With pleasure, my neighbour. The night approaches, and I prefer not to be alone in the streets after dark, especially as I have to go near the Palais Royal. But, to go so far, it will be tiresome and fatiguing to you, perhaps?" "Not at all; we will take a hack." "Really! oh! how it will amuse me to go in a carriage, if I had not so much sorrow. And I must have sorrow, for this is the first day since I lived here that I have not sung. My birds are all astonished. Poor little things! they do not know what it means; two or three times *Papa Crêtu* has sung a little to entice me; I wished to amuse him—ah, well, yes! after a moment I began to weep; *Ramonette* then tried, but I could answer no more."

"What singular names you have given your birds! Papa Crêtu? Ramonette?" "'Dame!' Monsieur Rodolphe, my birds are the joy of my solitude; they are my best friends; I have given them the name of the good people who were the joy of my childhood, and who have been also my best friends; without reckoning, to finish the resemblance, that *Papa Crêtu* and *Ramonette* were as gay and tuneful as the birds of heaven."

"Ah, now! yes, I recollect—your adopted parents were thus called." "Yes, my neighbour, these are ridiculous names for birds—I know it, but it only concerns me. Now, it was on this very subject that I saw Germain had a good heart." "He had then?" "Certainly: M. Girondeau and M. Cabrion, M. Cabrion above all, were forever making jokes on the names of my birds: 'To call a canary *Papa Crêtu*, did you ever! M. Cabrion never finished, and then he would laugh—such laughs!! 'If it were a cock,' said he, 'very well, you might call it *Crêtu* (comb). It is the same with the other one; Ramonette sounds too much like Ramonew (chimney-sweep).' At length he made me so angry that I would not go out with him for two Sundays, just to teach him; and I told him, very seriously, that if he recommenced his jokes, which were unpleasant to me, we should never go out together again." "What a courageous resolution!"

"It cost me a good deal—allez, Monsieur Rodolphe—I, who looked for my Sunday excursions like—I had a sorrowful heart, I tell you—to remain home all alone of a fine day; but never mind, I preferred rather to sacrifice my Sunday than to continue to hear M. Cabrion make fun of what I respected. Except for this, and the ideas attached to it, I would have preferred to give other names to my birds. There is, above all, one name I should have loved to adoration—that of *Colibri* (humming-bird). Well! I cannot do it, because that never shall I call my birds otherwise than Crêtu and Ramonette: it would seem to me that I sacrificed them, that I forgot my kind adopted parents; is it not so, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "You are right—a thousand times right—and Germain did not make fun of these names?"

"On the contrary, only the first time, it appeared droll to him, as to every one else—it is very simple; but when I explained my reasons, as I had explained them to M. Cabrion, the tears came into his eyes. From that day I said, 'M. Germain has a kind heart; he has nothing against him but his sadness.' And do you see, Monsieur Rodolphe, that he has brought me misfortune to reproach him for his sadness. Then I did not comprehend how one could be sad.

Now I comprehend it but too well. But now my work is finished, will you give me my shawl, my neighbour? it is not cold enough for a cloak, is it?"

"We shall go in a carriage, and I will bring you back."

"It is true, we shall go and return quicker; it will be so much time gained." "But, on reflection, how are you going to manage? your work will suffer from your visit to the prisons?" "Oh no! no! I have laid my plans. In the first place, I have my Sundays; I will go and see Louise and Germain on these days—it will serve me for a walk and recreation; then, in the week, I shall go to the prison once or twice; each time will cost me three good hours, will it not? Well, to make up for this, I will work one hour more each day, and I will go to bed at twelve o'clock instead of eleven; that will give me a clear gain of seven or eight hours each week, which I can use in going to see Louise and Germain. You see, I am richer than I appear to be," added Rigolette, smiling. "And do you not fear this will fatigue you?" "Bah! I can do it; one can do anything; and, besides, it will not last forever." "Here is your shawl, my neighbour. I shall not be so indiscreet as yesterday—I shall not bring my lips too close to this charming neck." "Ah, my neighbour! yesterday was yesterday—one could laugh; but to-day is different—take care, you prick me!" "Come! the pin is crooked." "Well, take another; there, on the pincushion. Ah! I forget; will you do me a favour, my neighbour?"

"Command, my neighbour." "Make me a good pen, very coarse, so that I can, on my return, write to this poor Germain that his commissions are executed. He shall have my letter to-morrow morning early." "And where are your pens?" "There, on the table; the knife is in the drawer. Stop, I am going to light my candle, for it grows quite dark."

"I shall want it to mend the pen." "And, besides, I can't see to tie my bonnet." Rigolette took a match and lit an end of candle which was in a very shining candlestick.

"Diable! wax candle, my neighbour—what luxury!"

"For all I burn, it cost me a trifle more than a tallow candle, and it is so much neater." "Not much dearer?"

"Mon Dieu! no. I buy these ends of candles by the pound, and a half pound serves me a month." "But," said Rodolphe, mending the pen carefully, while the grisette tied her bonnet before the glass, "I see no preparations for your dinner?"

"I haven't a shadow of hunger. I took a cup of milk this morning: I will take another to-night, with a little bread; I shall have enough." "Will you not come and eat dinner with me, when we come away from Germain's?"

"I thank you, my neighbour, I have the heart too full; another time, with pleasure. What do you say to the evening of the day that poor Germain comes out of prison? I invite myself, and afterward we will go to the play. Is it said?"

"It is said, my neighbour; I assure you that I shall not forget this engagement. But to-day—you refuse me?" "Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe, I should be too stupid to-day; besides, it would take up too much time. Only think—it is now, if ever, that I must not be lazy." "Come, I give up this pleasure, for to-day."

"Here, take my bundle, my neighbour; go before, I will shut the door."

"Here is an excellent pen—now, your bundle."

"Take care you don't tumble it—it is 'poult de soie'—it shows the folds—hold it in your hand—in this way—lightly—well, pass on, I will light you." And Rodolphe descended, preceded by Rigolette. As they passed the lodge, they saw M. Pipelet, who, with his arms hanging down, advanced towards them from the bottom of the allée; in one hand he held the sign, which announced to the public that he would make "commerce d'amitié" with Cabrion; and in the other, the portrait of the infernal painter.

The despair of Alfred was so overwhelming, that his chin rested on his breast, and nothing could be seen but the top of his "chapeau tromblon." On seeing him approach thus, with his head down, towards Rodolphe and Rigolette, one would have said it was a goat, or a brave "breton champion" preparing for combat. Anastasia soon appeared on the threshold, and cried, at the sight of her husband, "Well! old darling! here you are, hey! what did the commissary say to you? Alfred! but pay attention, now, you are going to poke yourself against my prince of lodgers — who has stolen your eyes? Pardon! Monsieur Rodolphe, it is this beggar of a Cabrion who stupifies him more and more—he certainly will make him turn to a jackass—the 'vieuse cheri!' Alfred! but, answer, then?" At this voice, so dear to his heart, M. Pipelet raised his head: his features were imprinted with a melancholy bitterness. "What did the commissary say to you?" repeated Anastasia. "Anastasia, you must collect the little that we possess, clasp our friends in our arms, pack our trunks, and expatriate ourselves from France—from my 'belle France!' for, sure now of impunity, the monster is capable of pursuing me everywhere." "How! the commissary?"

"The commissary!" cried M. Pipelet, with savage indignation; "the commissary! he laughed in my face."

"Your face! an aged man, who has so respectable an air, that you'd look as stupid as a goose, if one did not know your virtues!"

"Well! notwithstanding that, when I had respectfully deposed before him my heap of complaints and griefs against this infernal Cabrion, this magistrate, after having looked at, laughing—yes, laughing—and I dare to say it—laughing indecently—the sign and the portrait, which I produced as justificatory of my complaint, this magistrate replied, 'My good man, this Cabrion is a funny fellow; he is a "farceur;" pay no attention to his jokes. I advise you, now, in a friendly manner, to laugh at them, for really there is cause!' 'To laugh! *mossieur*,' cried I, 'to laugh! but grief is devouring one — they imbitter my existence, those scoundrels—they pester me—they will cause me to lose my reason—I demand that they be locked up, that they be exiled, at least, from my street.' At these words the commissary smiled, and obligingly showed me the door. I

understood this gesture of the magistrate, and here I am." "Magistrate of nothing at all!" cried Madame Pipelet. "All is finished! Anastasia, all is finished! No more hope! There is no longer any justice in France! I am atrociously sacrificed!" and, by way of peroration, M. Pipelet threw, with all his strength, the portrait and sign to the end of the alley. Rodolphe and Rigolette had, in the obscurity, slightly smiled at the despair of M. Pipelet. After having addressed some words of consolation to Alfred, whom Anastasia was calming in the best way she could, the prince of lodgers left the house of the Rue du Temple with Rigolette, and got into a carriage to go to the residence of François Germain.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WILL.

Francois Germain lived on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11. We will recall to the reader that which he has doubtless forgotten, that Madame Mathieu, the diamond broker of whom we have spoken, lived in the same house as Germain. During the long ride from the Rue du Temple to the Rue Saint Honoré, where the woman lived who furnished Rigolette with work, Rodolphe was able to appreciate still more the excellent feelings of the young girl. Like all characters instinctively good and devoted, she was not conscious of the delicacy, the generosity of her conduct, which seemed to her quite natural.

Nothing had been easier for Rodolphe than to have made a liberal provision for Rigolette, as well for her present wants as the future, so that she could have gone charitably to console Louise and Germain, without counting the time she lost in these visits from her work, her only resource; but the prince feared to weaken the merit of the grisette's devotion in rendering it too easy; quite decided to recompense the rare and charming qualities which he had discovered in her, he wished to follow her to the end of this new and interesting trial. At the end of an hour, the carriage, on its return from the Rue Saint Honoré, stopped on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11, before a house of modest appearance.

Rodolphe assisted Rigolette to alight: she entered the porter's lodge, and communicated to him the intentions of Germain, without forgetting the promised gratuity. From his amenity of disposition, the son of the Maître d'Ecole was everywhere loved. The *confrere* of M. Pipelet was much concerned to learn that the house should lose so honest and quiet a lodger: such were his expressions. The grisette, furnished with a light, rejoined her companion; the porter was to follow, after a little while, to receive instructions. The chamber of Germain was on the fourth story. On arriving at the door, Rigolette said to Rodolphe, giving him the key, "Here, my neighbour, open—my hand trembles too much. You will laugh at me; but, in thinking that poor Germain will never return here, it seems to me I am about to enter in the chamber of the dead." "Come, be reasonable, now, my neighbour—have no such ideas!" "I was wrong, but it was stronger than I," and she wiped away a tear. Without being as much moved as his companion, Rodolphe, nevertheless, experienced a painful impression on entering this modest apartment.

Knowing how he had been pursued, and, perhaps, still pursued by the accomplices of the Maître d'Ecole, he knew that this unfortunate young man must have passed many sad hours in this solitude. Rigolette placed the light on a table. Nothing could be more plain than the furniture of this sleeping-room, composed of a bed, a commode, a secretary of black walnut, four straw-bottomed chairs, and a table; white cotton curtains covered the windows and the alcove; the only ornaments on the mantelpiece were a decanter and a glass. From the appearance of the bed, which was made, it could be seen that Germain had thrown himself upon it without taking off his clothes the night preceding his arrest.

"Poor fellow!" said Rigolette, sadly, examining, with interest, the interior of the chamber; "it is easily to be seen that he no longer has me for a neighbour. It is in order, but not neat; there is dust everywhere, the curtains are smoked, the windows are dirty, the floor is not washed. Ah! what a difference! Rue du Temple, it was not handsome, but it was more gay, because everything shone with neatness, like in my own room." "It was because you were there, to give your advice." "But see, now," cried Rigolette, showing the beds, "he did not go to rest the other night, so much was he disturbed. Look here! this handkerchief, which he has left, has been steeped in tears. That is plain to be seen;" and she took it, adding, "Germain has kept a little orange-silk cravat of mine, which I gave him when we were happy; I am sure he will not be angry." "On the contrary, he will be very happy at this proof of your affection." "Now let us think of serious matters: I will make a package of linen, which I shall find in the commode, to take to him in prison; La Mère Bouvard, who I shall send here to-morrow, will manage the rest. First, however, I'll open the secretary and take out the papers and money which M. Germain begged me keep for him." "But, while I think of it," said Rodolphe, "Louise Morel gave me, yesterday, the 1300 francs in gold, which Germain had given her to pay the debt of her father, but which I had already done; I have this money; it belongs to Germain, since he has paid back the notary; I will give it to you; you can add it to the rest." "As you please, Monsieur Rodolphe; yet, I would rather not have so large a sum with me at home, there are so many robbers nowadays. Papers are very well—there is nothing to fear; but money—it is dangerous." "Perhaps you are right, my neighbour; shall I take charge of this sum? If Germain has need of anything, you must let me know at once. I will leave you my address, and I will send you what he wants."

"I should not have dared to ask this service from you; it will be much better, my neighbour. I will give you also the money I shall receive from the sale of his effects. Let us see these papers," said the young girl, opening the secretary and several drawers. "Ah! it is probably this. Here is a large envelope. Ah!

mon Dieu! look here, Monsieur Rodolphe, how sad it is what is written on this." And she read, in a faltering tone,

"'In the case I should die of a violent death, or otherwise, I beg the person who should open this secretary to carry these papers to Mademoiselle Rigolette, sempstress, Rue du Temple, No. 17.'

"Can I break the seal, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "Doubtless; does he not say that among these papers there is one particularly addressed to you?" The young girl broke the seal. Several papers were enclosed; one of them, bearing the superscription, "*To Mademoiselle Rigolette*," contained these words: "Mademoiselle—When you read this letter, I shall no longer exist. If, as I fear, I die a violent death, in falling a victim to a wilful murder, some information, under the title of *Notes on my Life*, may give a clew to my assassins." "Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe," said Rigolette, "I am no longer astonished that he was so sad. Poor Germain! always to be pursued by such ideas!"

"Yes; he must have been much afflicted. But his worst days are over, believe me." "Alas! I hope so, Monsieur Rodolphe. But, however, to be in prison—accused of robbery." "Be comforted. Once his innocence recognised, instead of falling into an isolated state, he will find friends. You, in the first place; then a beloved mother, from whom he has been separated since his childhood." "His mother! He has still a mother?" "Yes. She thinks him lost to her. Judge of her joy when she will see him again. Do not speak to him of his mother. I confide this secret to you, because you interest yourself so generously in his favour." "I thank you, Monsieur Rodolphe; you may be assured I will keep your secret," And Rigolette continued the reading of his letter:

"'If you will, mademoiselle, look over these notes, you will see that I have been all my life very unhappy, except during the time I passed with you. That which I should never have dared to tell you, you will find written in a kind of *memento*, entitled "*My sole days of happiness.*"

"'Almost every evening, on leaving you, I thus poured out the consoling thoughts that your affection inspired, and which alone tempered the bitterness of my life. That which was friendship when with you, became love when absent from you. I have concealed this until this moment when I shall be no more for you than perhaps a "triste souvenir." My destiny was so unhappy, that I should never have spoken to you of this sentiment; although sincere and profound, it would only have made you unhappy.

"'One wish alone remains to be fulfilled, and I hope that you will accomplish it. I have seen with what admirable courage you work, and how much method and economy was necessary for you to live on the small amount you earn so industriously. Often, without telling you, I have trembled in thinking that a malady, caused, perhaps, by excess of labour, might reduce you to a situation so frightful that I could not even think of it without alarm. It is very grateful to me to think that I can at least spare you the horrors, and, perhaps, in a great degree, the miseries, which you, in the thoughtlessness of youth, do not foresee, happily.'

"What does he mean, Monsieur Rodolphe" said Rigolette, astonished. "Continue; we shall see." "'I know on how little you can live, and what a resource the smallest sum would be to you in a time of difficulty. I am very poor, but, by economy, I have set aside 1500 francs, deposited at a banker's; it is all that I possess. By my will, which you will find here, I bequeath it to you; accept it from a friend, a good brother, who is no more.' Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe," said Rigolette, bursting into tears, and giving the letter to the prince, "this gives me too much pain. Good Germain, thus to think of me! Ah! what a heart! mon Dieu! what an excellent heart!" "Worthy and good young man!" replied Rodolphe, with emotion. "But calm yourself, my child. 'Dieu merci,' Germain is not dead; this anticipated, will at least serve as a witness of his love for you.''

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"It is true. To be beloved by so good a young man, is very flattering, is it not, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"And some day, perhaps, you will participate in this love?"

"Dame! Monsieur Rodolphe, it is very trying; this poor Germain is so much to be pitied! I'll put myself in his place—if at the moment when I thought myself abandoned, despised by all the world, a person, a good friend, came to me, still more kind than I could hope for—I should be so happy!" After a moment's pause, Rigolette resumed with a sigh, "On the other hand, we are both so poor, that perhaps it would not be reasonable. Look here, Monsieur Rodolphe, I do not wish to think of that; perhaps I am mistaken; what is sure is, that I will do all I can for Germain, as long as he remains in prison. Once free, it will always be time enough to see if it is love or friendship I feel for him; then if it is love—what would you, my neighbour? it will be love. But it grows late, Monsieur Rodolphe; will you collect these papers, while I make up a bundle of linen? Ah! I forget the 'sachet' enclosing the little orange cravat, which I have given him. It is in this drawer, without a doubt. Oh! see how pretty it is, this 'sachet,' and all embroidered! Poor Germain! he has guarded it like a relic! I well remember the last time I wore it, and when I gave it to him. He was so happy, so happy."

At this moment some one knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" demanded Rodolphe.

"I want to speak to Madame Mathieu," answered a hoarse and husky voice, with an accent which denoted the speaker to be one of the lowest order. (Madame Mathieu was the diamond broker of whom we have spoken.)

This voice, singularly accented, awakened some vague recollections in the mind of Rodolphe. Wishing to enlighten them, he went and opened the door. He found himself face to face with one of the "habitués" of the tapis-franc of the Ogresse, whom he recognised at once, so fully and plainly was the stamp of crime, marked on this youthful and besotted face—it was *Barbillon*.

Barbillon, the mock coachman of the hack, which had conveyed the Maître d'Ecole and La

Chouette to the "chemin creux" of Bouqueval; Barbillon, the murderer of the husband of the milkwoman, who committed such an outrage on the Goualeuse at the farm of Arnouville.

Either this wretch had forgotten the features of Rodolphe, whom he had seen only once at the tapis-franc of the Ogresse, or the change of dress prevented him from recognising the conqueror of the Chourineur; he manifested no astonishment at his appearance. "What do you want?" said Rodolphe. "Here is a letter for Madame Mathieu. I must give it into her own hands," answered Barbillon.

"She does not live here: inquire opposite," said Rodolphe.

"Thank you, bourgeois; they told me it was the door to the left; I am mistaken." Rodolphe did not recollect the name of the diamond broker; he had therefore no motive to interest himself about the woman to whom Barbillon came as a messenger. Nevertheless, although he was ignorant of the crimes of this bandit, his face had such a guilty look of perversity, that he remained on the threshold of the door, curious to see the person to whom Barbillon brought this letter. Hardly had Barbillon knocked at the opposite door when it was opened, and the broker, a large woman of about fifty years of age, appeared, holding a candle in her hand.

"Madame Mathieu?" said Barbillon.

"That's my name."

"Here is a letter; I want an answer," and Barbillon made a step in advance, as if to enter the room; but she made a motion for him not to advance, unsealed the letter, read it, and answered with a satisfied air, "You will say it is good, mon garçon; I will bring what they wish; I will go to-morrow at the same time as before. Give my compliments to this lady."

"Yes, my bourgeoise. Don't forget the messenger."

"Go ask those who sent you; they are richer than I am;" and she closed her door. Rodolphe re-entered Germain's room, seeing Barbillon rapidly descending the staircase.

The brigand met on the boulevard a man of a villanous and ferocious appearance, who waited for him before a shop. Although several persons might have heard him, but not understood him, it is true, Barbillon appeared so much pleased that he could not restrain from saying to his companion, "Come, '*pitancher l'eau d'aff*' (drink some brandy), Nicholas; '*la birbasse fauche dans le point*' (the old woman falls into the snare); she *aboulera* (will come) to La Chouette's; the mère Martial will help us *pesciller d'esbrouffe ses durailles d'orphelin* (to take her diamonds away by force), and afterward '*trimballerons le refroidi dans ton passelance*' (we will carry the body off in your boat). '*Esbignons-nous*' (let us make haste), then; I must be at Asnière early; I am afraid my brother Martial will suspect something." And the bandits, after having held this conversation, quite unintelligible to those who might have heard it, directed their steps towards the Rue Saint Dénis.

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A few moments after, Rigolette and Rodolphe left the abode of Germain, got into the carriage, and drove to the Rue du Temple. When the carriage stopped, and the portière came to open the door, Rodolphe saw by the light from the "rogomisté's," his faithful Murphy, who was waiting for him at the door of the "allée."

The presence of the squire announced some great event, or, at least, something unexpected, for he alone knew where to find the prince.

"What is the matter?" said Rodolphe, quickly, while Rigolette collected the papers in the vehicle.

"A great misfortune, monseigneur!"

"Speak, for Heaven's sake!"

"The Marquis d'Harville—" "You alarm me!"

"He gave a breakfast this morning to several of his friends. Everything was going off well; he, above all, had never been more gay, when a fatal imprudence—" "Go on, go on!"

"In playing with a pistol which he did not know was loaded—"

"He has wounded himself? Monseigneur!"

"Well?" "Something very terrible!"

"What do you say?" "He is dead!"

"D'Harville! ah! it is frightful!" cried Rodolphe, in such a heart-rending tone, that Rigolette, who had just descended from the carriage with her bundles, said,

"Mon Dieu! what is the matter, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"Some very bad news that I have just told my friend, mademoiselle," said Murphy to the young girl, for the prince was so much affected that he could not answer.

"It is, then, some great misfortune?" asked Rigolette, tremblingly. "A very great misfortune," answered the squire.

"Ah! this is frightful!" said Rodolphe, after a silence of some moments; then, recollecting Rigolette, he said to her, "Pardon me, my child, if I do not go with you to your room; to-morrow I will send you my address and a permit to go to Germain's prison. I will soon see you again."

"Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, I assure you I am very sorry for the bad news you have heard. I thank you for having accompanied me to-night. Adieu."

The prince and Murphy got into the carriage, which took them to the Rue Plumet.

Immediately, Rodolphe wrote to Clémence the following note:

"Madame,

"I learn this moment the unexpected blow which has overwhelmed you, and which takes from me one of my best friends: I shall not endeavour to describe my sorrow.

"Yet I must inform you of things foreign to this cruel event. I have just learned that your stepmother, who has been for some days in Paris, without doubt, leaves to-night for Normandy, taking with her Polodori. This will tell you of the dangers your father is threatened with, and allow me to give you some advice. After the frightful affair of this morning, your desire to leave Paris will be nothing extraordinary. Thus, believe me, set off at once for Aubiers, to arrive there, if not before, at least as soon as your stepmother. Be assured, madame, far or near, I shall still watch over you; the abominable projects of your stepmother shall be baffled.

"Adieu, madame; I write this in haste. My heart is almost broken when I think of last

evening; when I left him, more tranquil, more happy than he had been for a long time.

"Believe, madame, my profound and sincere devotion.

"RODOLPHE."

Following this advice, Madame d'Harville, three hours after the receipt of this letter, was on the road to Normandy. A post-chaise, which left the hotel of Rodolphe, followed the same route.

Unfortunately, from the trouble into which she was plunged by this complication of events, and the precipitation of her departure, Clémence forgot to acquaint the prince that she had met Fleur de Marie at Saint Lazare.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that the evening previous, La Chouette had threatened Madame Séraphin to disclose the fact of the existence of La Goualeuse, affirming that she knew (and she told the truth) where the young girl then was. It will also be remembered that after this conversation, Jacques Ferrand, fearing the revelation of his criminal misdeeds, had determined that it was for his interest to put the Goualeuse out of the way, whose existence, once known, might compromise him dangerously. He had, therefore, caused to be written to Bradamanti a note, to summon him to come and hatch some new schemes, of which Fleur de Marie was to be the victim.

Bradamanti, occupied with the interests, not less pressing, of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, who had her own reasons for conducting the quack to the bedside of M. d'Orbigny, Bradamanti, doubtless, finding it more to his advantage to serve his old friend, paid no attention to the invitation of the notary, and set out for Normandy without seeing Madame Séraphin.

The storm gathered around Jacques Ferrand; in the course of the day, La Chouette had returned to reiterate her threats, and, to prove that they were not in vain, she had declared to the notary that the little girl, formerly abandoned by Madame Séraphin, was then a prisoner at Saint Lazare, under the name of La Goualeuse, and that if they did not give her 10,000 francs in three days, this young girl should receive some papers which would inform her that she had been in her infancy confided to the care of Jacques Ferrand.

According to his custom, the notary denied all this with audacity, and drove off La Chouette as an impudent liar, although he was convinced and frightened by her threats.

In the course of the day the notary found means to assure himself that the Goualeuse was a prisoner at Saint Lazare, and so noted for her good conduct, that her release was expected from one moment to another.

Furnished with this information, Jacques Ferrand, having arranged a most diabolical scheme, felt that, to execute it, the assistance of Bradamanti was more and more indispensable; hence the frequent attempts of Madame Séraphin to see the quack. Learning the same evening of his departure, forced to act by the imminence of his fears and danger, he remembered the Martial family, those fresh-water pirates established near the bridge of Asnières, to whom Bradamanti had proposed to send Louise Morel, in order to get rid of her with impunity.

Having absolutely need of an accomplice to carry out his wicked designs against Fleur de Marie, the notary took every precaution in the case a new crime should be committed, and the next morning, after the departure of Bradamanti for Normandy, Madame Séraphin went in great haste to see the Martials.

PART VI.

CHAPTER I.

THE ISLAND OF THE RAVAGEUR.

THE following scenes took place on the evening of the day that Madame Séraphin had, according to the orders of the notary, paid a visit to the Martials, fresh-water pirates, established on the point of a small island, not far from the Pont d'Asnières. Martial, the father, who had died on the scaffold like his own father, left a widow, four sons, and two daughters. The second of these sons was already condemned to the galleys for life. Of this numerous family, there remained on the island of the ravageur, Martial, the mother: three sons; the eldest (the lover of La Louve) was twenty-five, the other twenty, the youngest twelve: two daughters; the one eighteen, the second nine. The instances of such families, where is perpetuated a kind of frightful inheritance in crime, are but too frequent. This must be so, because society thinks only of punishing, never to prevent the evil.

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The gloomy picture which follows, the *fresh-water pirates*, has for its object to show what, in a family, the inheritance of evil may be when society either legally or kindly does not interfere to preserve the unfortunate orphans of the law from the terrible consequences of the judgment visited on their father.

The reader will excuse us for preceding this new episode by an introduction. * *

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This being said, let us resume.

We return to the fresh-water pirates, and the isle of the ravageur. The head of the Martial family, who first established himself in this little island, was a ravageur.

The *ravageurs*, as well as the *débardeurs* and the *déchireurs* of boats, remain almost the entire day plunged in the water to their waists to follow their trade.

The *débardeurs* bring to land the floating wood.

The *déchireurs* knock to pieces the rafts which bring down the wood. Quite as aquatic as the preceding operatives, the labour of the *ravageurs* has a very different object. Advancing in the water as far as they can, the ravageur is enabled, by means of a long rake, to drag the mud and sand from the bed of the river; then, collecting this in large wooden bowls, he washes it, and thus collects a large quantity of pieces of metal of all kinds, iron, copper, lead, and brass.

Often they find in the sand fragments of gold or silver jewels, carried into the Seine either by the gutters or from the masses of snow and ice collected in the streets in winter, and thrown

into the river. We do not know by virtue of what tradition or by what usage these industrious people, generally honest, peaceable, and laborious, are so formidably named.

The Père Martial, first inhabitant of the island, being a *ravageur* (a sorry exception), the people living on the banks of the river called it the Island of the Ravageur.

The dwelling of the river pirates is situated at the south end of the isle. On a sign which hangs near the door can be seen:

"Aux-Rendezvous des Ravageurs.
"Bon vin, Bonne matelotte et fixture,
On lou des bachots pour la promenade."

It will be seen, that to his other business the head of this family had added that of an innkeeper, fisherman, and the keeping of boats for hire. The widow of this executed criminal continued to keep the house. Vagabonds, wandering quacks, and itinerant keepers of animals came to pass Sundays and other non-working days in parties of pleasure.

Martial (the lover of La Louve), the eldest son of the family, the least vicious of all, fished by stealth, and, when occasion required, took the part of the weak against the strong.

One of his other brothers, Nicolas, the future accomplice of Barbillon in the murder of the diamond broker, was apparently a ravageur, but, in fact, a fresh-water pirate on the Seine and its banks. Finally, François, the youngest son, took care of those who wished to go boating. We will just mention Ambroise Martial, who was condemned for life for robbery and attempt at murder. The eldest girl, surnamed Calebasse, assisted her mother in the kitchen and to wait upon the guests; her sister Amandine, aged nine years, gave what aid she could to Calebasse and her mother.

On this night, thick and heavy clouds, driven by the winds, obscured the sky; hardly a star could be seen through the increasing gloom. The house, with its irregular gables, was completely buried in darkness, except the two windows of the ground floor, from which streamed a red light, which was reflected like two long trains of fire on the troubled waters near the landing-place, which was close to the house. The chains of the boat moored there mingled their rattlings with the mournful sighings of the wind through the poplars, and the heavy splashing of the water on the shore. A part of the family was assembled in the kitchen of the house, a large and low room; opposite the door were two windows, under which was a large furnace; on the left, a high fireplace; to the right, a staircase which led to the upper story; at the side of this, the entrance to a large room, furnished with several tables, destined for the guests of the inn. The light of a lamp, joined to the flames of the hearth, shone on a number of saucepans, and other cooking utensils of copper, hung on the walls, or arranged on shelves with various kinds of crockery; a large table stood in the centre of this kitchen. The widow was seated by the fire with her three children. This woman, tall and thin, appeared to be about forty-five years of age. She was dressed in black; a mourning kerchief, tied round her head, concealed her hair, and almost covered her pale and wrinkled forehead; her nose was long, straight, and pointed; her cheek bones prominent, and cheeks fallen in; her yellow, sickly-looking skin was deeply marked with the smallpox; the corners of her mouth always drawn down, rendered still harsher the expression of this cold, stern, sinister-looking face, immovable as a mask of marble. Her dull, blue eyes were surmounted by gray eyebrows She and her two daughters were occupied with some sewing.

The eldest resembled her mother—the same cold, calm, and wicked look; her thin nose, her mouth, her pale look. Only her earthy skin, yellow as saffron, gave her the nickname of Calebasse. She wore no mourning: her dress was brown; her black lace cap displayed two bands of uncommon hair, light flaxen, with no lustre. François, the youngest son, was seated on a bench mending an *aldret*, a very destructive sort of fishing net, strictly forbidden to be used on the Seine. Notwithstanding his sunburnt appearance, the skin of this child was fair; a forest of red hair covers his head; his features are well turned, his lips thick, his forehead projecting, his eyes sharp and piercing: there was no resemblance to his mother nor eldest sister. His expression was timid and cunning; from time to time, through the kind of mane which fell over his face, he cast obliquely on his mother a look of defiance, or exchanged with his sister Amadine a glance of intelligence and affection.

She, seated at the side of her brother, was occupied, not in marking, but in *unmarking* some linen stolen the night previous. She was nine years old, and resembled her brother as much as her sister did her mother; her features, without being any more regular, are less coarse than those of François; although covered with freckles, her skin was of dazzling purity; her lips were thick, but vermilion; her hair red, but fine, silky, and brilliant; her eyes small, but soft and expressive.

When they exchanged looks, Amadine pointed to the door; at this sign François answered by a sigh; then, calling the attention of his sister by a rapid gesture, he counted distinctly from the end of his netting-needle ten threads of the net. This meant, in their symbolical language, that their brother Martial would not return before ten o'clock.

On seeing these two quiet, wicked-looking women, and these two poor, little, restless, mute, trembling children, one would easily guess there were two executioners and two victims.

Calebasse, perceiving that Amadine had ceased a moment from work, said to her, in a harsh voice,

"Will you soon have done with that chemise?"

The child held down her head without replying; with her fingers and scissors, she quickly finished picking out the marks made with red cotton, and then, handing the work to her mother, said, timidly,

"Mamma, I have finished it." Without making any reply, the widow threw her another piece of linen. The child could not catch it in time, and let it fall. Her sister gave her, with her iron hand, a heavy blow on the arm, saying, "Little stupid fool!" Amadine resumed her

work after having exchanged a hasty glance with her brother: a tear glistened in her eye. The same silence continued to reign in the kitchen. The wind howled without, and the sign creaked mournfully on its hinges. The only sounds within were the bubbling of a saucepan placed before the fire. The two children observed with secret alarm that their mother did not speak. Although she was habitually very quiet, this complete taciturnity and certain contractions of her lips announced that the widow was in that which they called her *white rage*, that is to say, a prey to some concentrated irritation.

The fire appeared to be going out from the want of fuel.

"François, a stick of wood!" said Calebasse. The young mender of unlawful nets looked behind the chimneypiece, and answered, "There is no more there."

"Go to the wood-pile," said Calebasse.

François murmured some unintelligible words, but did not stir.

"Ah! François, did you hear me?" said Calebasse, sharply. The widow placed on her knees a napkin, which she also was *un*marking, and looked at her son.

He had his head down, but he thought he felt the terrible look of his mother was upon him. Fearing to meet this formidable face, the child remained immovable.

"Ah! now are you deaf, François?" resumed Calebasse, much irritated. "Mother—you see."

Amandine, without being perceived, pushed gently the arm of her brother to urge him tacitly to obey Calibasse. François did not stir. The eldest sister looked at her mother, as if to demand the punishment of the offender. The widow understood her; pointed with her long, bony finger to a long willow switch, which stood in the corner.

Calebasse leaned back, took this instrument of correction, and handed it to her mother.

François had perfectly understood the gesture of his mother; he jumped up quickly, and with one bound was out of his mother's reach.

"You wish, then, that mother should beat you soundly?" cried Calebasse.

The widow, holding the rod in her hand, bit her lips, and looked at François with a steady eye, without pronouncing a word. From the slight agitation of Amandine's hands, who sat with her head down, while her neck was suffused with red, it could be seen that the child, although accustomed to such scenes, was alarmed at the fate which awaited her brother, who, having taken refuge in a corner of the kitchen, seemed alarmed and irritated.

"Take care of yourself; mother will get up, and then it will be too late," said Calebasse.

"All the same to me," answered François, turning pale. "I prefer to be beaten as I was yesterday, than to go to the wood-pile at night."

"And why?" said Calebasse, impatiently.

"I am afraid at the wood pile, I am," answered François, shuddering in spite of himself.

"You are afraid, fool! and of what?"

François hung his head without answering.

"Will you speak? What are you afraid of?"

"I don't know; but I'm afraid."

"You have been there a hundred times, and even last night."

"I don't want to go there any more."

"There's mother; she's getting up!"

"So much the worse," cried the child. "Let her beat me; let her kill me; I will not go to the wood-pile—at night, above all."

"But, once more I ask you, why not?" said Calebasse.

"Well, because." "Because what?"

"Because there's some one—" "Some one?"

"Buried there," murmured the trembling boy.

The widow, notwithstanding her impassibility, could not repress a slight shudder; her daughter imitated her; one would have said that these two women had received an electric shock.

"There's some one buried in the woodhouse?" said Calebasse, shrugging her shoulders.

"Yes," said François, in a voice so low that he could hardly be heard. "Liar!" cried Calebasse.

"I tell you that not long ago, in piling the wood, I saw, in a dark corner of the woodhouse, a dead man's bone; it stuck out of the ground, which was damp round about," replied François.

"Do you hear him, mother? Is he not a fool?" said Calebasse, making a significant sign to the widow. "They are some mutton bones I threw there."

"It is not a mutton bone," answered the child; "it was bones buried—dead man's bones; a foot which stuck out of the ground. I saw it."

"And right away you told this to your brother; to your good friend Martial, did you not?" said Calebasse. François did not answer.

"Wicked little '*raille*'" (spy), cried Calebasse, furiously; "because he is as cowardly as a cow, he will be capable to have us *faucher* (guillotined), as our father was."

"Since you call me a '*raille*,'" cried François, exasperated, "I shall tell everything to Martial. I have not told him yet, for I have not seen him since; but when he returns to-night, I—"

The child dared not finish. His mother advanced toward him, calm but inexorable.

Although she habitually held herself much bent over, her size was very large for a woman; holding the switch in one hand, with the other the widow took her son by the arm, and, in spite of the alarm, the resistance, the prayers, the tears of the child, dragging him after her, she compelled him to mount the stairs. In a moment was heard the sound of heavy blows, mingled with cries and sobs. When this noise ceased a door was shut violently, and the widow descended. She placed the whip in its place, seated herself alongside of the fire, and resumed her work without saying a word.

CHAPTER II.

THE RIVER PIRATES.

After a few moments silence, the widow said to her daughter,

"Go and get some wood; we will *arrange* the woodhouse to-night, at the return of Nicolas and Martial." "Martial? You will also then

tell him that?" "Some wood!" repeated the widow, interrupting her daughter. She, accustomed to this iron will, lighted a lantern and went out. At the moment she opened the door, it could be seen that the night was very dark, and one could hear the whistling of the wind through the poplars, the clanging of the chains which held the boats, the waving of the river. These noises were profoundly sad.

During the preceding scene, Amandine, painfully affected at the fate of François, whom she loved tenderly, had dared neither to raise her eyes nor wipe her tears, which fell drop by drop on her knees. The tears obscured her sight. In her haste to finish the work which was given her, she had wounded her hand with the scissors; the blood flowed freely, but the poor child thought less of the pain than the punishment which she might expect for having stained this linen with her blood. Happily, the widow, absorbed in profound thought, perceived nothing. Calebasse returned, bringing a basket filled with wood. At a look from her mother, she answered by a sign in the affirmative. This was intended to say that the dead man's foot did appear above the earth.

The widow bit her lips and continued to work, only she appeared to handle the needle more quickly. Calebasse replenished the fire, and resumed her seat alongside of her mother.

"Nicolas does not come," said she; "I hope that the old woman who was here this morning, in giving him a rendezvous with a 'bourgeois,' on the part of Bradamanti, has not got him into some bad scrape. She had such an air! she would not explain, nor tell her name, nor where she came from."

The widow shrugged her shoulders.

"You think there is no danger for Nicolas, mother? after all, perhaps you are right." "The old woman said he must be on the 'Quai de Billy' at seven o'clock in the evening, opposite the dock, and that he would find a man there who wished to speak to him, and who would say Bradamanti for pass-word. Really, that does not seem so very dangerous. If Nicolas is late, it is, perhaps because, he has found something on the route, as he did yesterday; this linen, which he has '*grinchi*' (stolen) from a washing-boat," and she showed one of the pieces of linen which Amadine was *un*marking; then speaking to the child, she said, "What does that mean, '*grinchir*?'" "That means to take," answered the child, without raising her eyes. "It means to steal, little fool; do you hear? to steal." "Yes, sister." "And when one knows how to '*grinchir*' like Nicolas, there is always something to gain; the linen he stole yesterday has only cost us the trouble of picking out the marks: is it not so, mother?" said Calebasse, with a burst of laughter which displayed her decayed teeth, as yellow as her skin. The widow did not laugh. "Apropos, speaking of getting things gratis," continued Calebasse, "we can, perhaps, furnish ourselves from another shop. You know that an old man, two or three days since, came to live in the country-house of M. Griffon, the physician of the Paris hospital; that lonely house, a few steps from the river, opposite the plaster quarry?" The widow bowed her head.

"Nicolas said yesterday that now there was, perhaps, something to be done there. And I know, since this morning, that there is some booty there for certain; I must send Amadine to wander around the house: they will pay no attention to her; she will pretend to be playing, will look well about her, and then come and let us know what she has seen. Do you hear what I say?"

"Yes, sister, I will go," answered the trembling child.

"You always say 'I will,' but you never do it, 'sournoisé!' The time when I told you to take the five francs from the counter of the grocer at 'Asnières,' while I kept him busy at the other end of his shop—it was very easy; no one suspects a child—why didn't you obey?"

"Sister, my heart failed me; I did not dare."

"The other day you dared to steal a handkerchief from the pack of the pedler while he was selling at the tavern. Did he find it out, fool?" "Sister, you forced me—it was for you; and, besides, it was not money." "What of that?" "Dame! to take a handkerchief is not so bad as to take money." "On your word? it is Martial who teaches you these whims, is it not?" said Calebasse, in an ironical manner; "you'll go and tell him everything, little spy! do you think we are afraid that he'll eat us?" Then, addressing the widow, Calebasse added: "Do you see, mother, this will end badly for him? he wishes to make the law here. Nicolas is furious against him, so am I. He sets Amandine and François against us, against you. Can it be borne!"

"No," said the mother, in a short, harsh voice.

"It is, above all, since his Louise is at Saint Lazare, that he acts like a madman. Is it our fault that she is in prison? When she is once out, let her come here, and I will serve her—good measure—although she is strong." The widow, after a moment's pause, said to her daughter, "You think there is something to be done with the old man who lives in doctor's house?" "Yes, mother." "He looks like a beggar." "That doesn't prevent his being a noble." "A noble?" "Yes, and that he should have gold in his purse, although he goes to Paris on foot every day, and returns in the same manner, with his heavy stick for his carriage." "How do you know that there is gold?" "The other day I was at the postoffice, to see if there were any letters from Toulon." At these words, which brought to her mind her son at the galleys, the widow knit her brows, and suppressed a sigh. Calebasse continued: "I awaited my turn, when the old man we speak of came in. I knew him at once by his beard, as white as his hair, and his black eyebrows. In spite of his age, he must be a determined old man; he said, 'Have you any letters from Angers for the Curate of Saint Démy?' 'Yes,' was the answer, 'here is one.' 'It is for me,' said he; 'here is my passport.' While the postmaster examined it, the old man drew out his purse to pay the postage. At one end I saw the gold glittering through the meshes, at least forty or fifty Louis!' cried Calebasse, her eyes twinkling, 'and yet he is dressed like a beggar. It is one of these old misers stuffed with gold. Come, mother! we know his name; it may serve us to get into the house

when Amadine finds out if he has any servants."

A violent barking of the dogs interrupted Calebasse. "Ah! the dogs bark," said she; "they hear a boat. It is either Martial or Nicolas."

After a few moments, the door opened, and Nicolas Martial, the future accomplice of Borbillon, made his appearance. The face of Nicolas was at once ignoble and ferocious; small, thin, pitiful, it could hardly be imagined that he followed so dangerous a calling; but an indomitable energy supplied the place of the physical strength which was wanting. Over his blue "bourgeron" he wore a kind of greatcoat, without sleeves, made of goat-skin covered with long hair. On entering, he threw on the ground a pig of copper which he had on his shoulder. "Good-night, and good booty, mother!" cried he, in a cracked voice; "there are three more pigs in my boat, a bundle of clothes, and a box filled with I don't know what, for I have not amused myself by opening it. Perhaps I am 'vole'—we shall see." "And what about the man at the *Quai de Billy*?" asked Calebasse, while the widow looked at her son without saying a word. He, for sole answer, put his hand in his pocket and jingled together a number of pieces of silver.

"You took all that from him?" cried Calebasse.

"No, he shelled out himself two hundred francs, and he will shell out eight hundred more when I shall have—but enough; let us unload the boat; we can jaw afterward. Isn't Martial here?" "No," said the sister. "So much the better; we will lock up the booty without him; just as well he shouldn't know."

"You are afraid of him, coward!" said Calabasse, crossly.

"Afraid of him? me!" He shrugged his shoulders. "I am afraid he'll sell us, that's all. As to the fear, '*coupe sifflet*' (my knife) has too sharp a tongue!" "Oh! when he is not here, you brag; let him but come, that shuts your bill." Nicolas appeared insensible to this reproach, and said, "Come, quick! quick! to the boat. Where, then, is François, mother? he could help us."

"Mother has shut him up stairs, after having 'rinsed' him nicely; he shall go to bed without supper," said Calebasse.

"Good! but let him come and help us unload the boat, all the same; hey, mother? Calebasse, him, and me, in a twist, will have all housed." The widow pointed towards the ceiling. Calebasse understood, and went to look for François.

The gloomy visage of the mother Martial had become slightly relaxed since the arrival of Nicolas; she liked him better than Calebasse, but not as well as she did her Toulon son, as she called him; for the maternal love of this ferocious creature increased in proportion to the criminality of her offspring. This perverse preference sufficiently explains the dislike of the widow to her youngest children, who displayed no bad tendencies, and her profound hatred for Martial, her eldest son, who, without leading a blameless life, might have passed for a very honest man, if he had been compared to Nicolas, Calebasse, or his brother, the galley-slave at Toulon. "Where have you been plundering to-night," asked the widow. "On returning from the 'Quai de Billy,' I cast a sheep's eye upon a galley fastened to the 'quai,' near the 'Point des Invalides.' It was dark; I said, no light in the cabin—the sailors are on shore—I'll go on board; if I meet any one, I'll ask for a piece of twine to mend my oar. I went into the cabin—nobody; then I took what I could, some clothes, a large box, and, on the deck, four pigs of copper; for I returned twice; the galley was loaded with copper and iron. But here come François and Calebasse: quick to the boat! Come, be moving, you too! eh! Amadine. You can carry the clothes. *Avaunt de chasser—faut rapporter.*"

Left alone, the widow busied herself in preparing the supper for the family, placing on the table glasses, bottles, plates, and silver forks and spoons. Just as she finished her preparation, her children returned heavily laden. The weight of the two pigs, which he carried on his shoulders, seemed almost to crush François. Amadine was hardly visible under the bundle of clothes which she carried on her head. Nicholas and Calebasse carried between them a box of white wood, on the top of which was placed the fourth pig of copper. "The box, the box!" cried Calebasse, with impatience; "let us air the case!"

The copper was thrown on the ground. Nichalas, armed with a hatchet, endeavoured to get it under the cover, so as to force it. The red and flickering light from the hearth illuminated this scene of pillage; without the wind howled with renewed violence. Nicolas, kneeling before the box, tried to break it, and uttered the most horrible oaths on seeing his efforts were useless. Her eyes glistened with cupidity, her cheeks flushed, Calebasse kneeled on the box, and assisted Nicolas with all her strength. The widow, separated from the group by the table, where she stood at full length, also had her eager gaze fixed on the stolen object.

Finally, a thing alas! too *human*, the two children, whose good natural instincts had so often triumphed over the cursed influence of this abominable domestic corruption, forgetting their scruples and their fears, gave way to the attractions of a fatal curiosity. Leaning one against the other, their eyes sparkling, the breathing oppressed, François and Amandine were not less anxious to know the contents of the box than their brother or sister. At length the top was forced off.

"Ah!" cried the family, in a joyful tone. And all, from the mother to the little girl, crowded around the stolen case. Sent, without doubt, by some Paris merchant to some of his country customers, it contained a large quantity of articles for women's use.

"Nicolas n'est pas volé!" cried Calebasse, unrolling a piece of 'mousseline de laine.' "No," answered the brigand, shaking out a package of 'foulards;' "no, I have paid my expenses." "Levantine! that will sell like bread," said the widow, putting her hand in the box. "The receiver of Bras-Rouge, who lives in the Rue du Temple, will buy the stuffs, and the Père Micou, who keeps furnished lodgings in the 'quartier Saint Honoré,' will arrange for the '*rouget*' (copper)."

"Amadine," whispered François to his little

sister, "what a pretty cravat this would make." "Yes, and it would make a very fine 'marmotte,'" answered the child with admiration. "I must say you had some luck, getting on board this galley," said Calebasse: "look here, famous! now, some shawls. There are three, real bourre-de-soie; do look, mother!" "La Mère Burette will give at least five hundred francs for the whole," said the widow, after a close examination.

"Then it must be worth at least one thousand and five hundred francs," said Nicolas; "but, as we say, 'tout receleur—tout voleur.' Bah! so much the worse; I do not know how to cheat. I shall be soft enough this time, again, to do just as La Mère Burette wishes, and the Père Micou also; but as for him, he is a friend." "Never mind, he is a robber, just like the rest; the seller of old iron; but these rascally receivers know one has need of them," said Calebasse, trying on one of the shawls, "and they abuse it!" "There's nothing more," said Nicolas, reaching the bottom of the box. "Now, all must be repacked," said the widow. "I'll keep this shawl," said Calebasse. "You'll keep—you'll keep," cried Nicolas, brutally,—"you'll keep it—if I give it to you. You are always taking—you—Madame *Make-easy*."

"Ah! And you, then, you refrain from taking?"

"I? I *grinche* at the risk of my skin. It's not you who'd have been jugged if they'd caught me in the galley."

"Well, there's your shawl; I don't care about it," said Calebasse, sharply, throwing it back into the case.

"It is not on account of the shawl that I speak; I am not mean enough to value a shawl; one more or less, La Mère Burette will not change her price; she'll buy in a lump," said Nicolas. "But, instead of saying that you'd take the shawl, you might ask if I would give it to you. Come, let us see, keep it—keep it, I tell you, or, if you won't, I'll pitch it into the fire to make the pot boil." These words soothed the bad temper of Calebasse, and she took the shawl. Nicolas was, doubtless, in a generous mood; for, tearing off with his teeth two of the handsomest foulards, he threw them to François and Amandine.

"That's for you, 'gamins!' this mouthful will put you in the notion to 'grinchir.' Appetite comes with eating. Now go to bed; I want to talk with mother. Your supper shall be brought up stairs." The two children clapped their hands, and waved triumphantly the stolen "foulards" which had just been given them. "Well! little blockheads," said Calebasse, "will you listen any more to Martial? Has he ever given you such handsome foulards as these?" François and Amandine looked at each other, then hung their heads without replying.

"Speak, then!" said Calebasse, harshly; "has he ever made you presents?" "Dame, no; he never has," said François, looking at his red handkerchief with delight. Amandine said, in a very low tone, "Our brother Martial does not make us presents, because he hasn't the means."

"If he would steal he'd have them," said Nicolas; "is it not so, François?" "Yes, brother," answered François. Then he added, "Oh! the beautiful 'foulard!' What a fine cravat for Sunday!" "And me, what a fine marmotte!" said Amandine. "Not to say a word how mad the children of the lime-burner will be when they see you pass," said Calebasse, looking at the children to see if they comprehended the bearing of the words. The abominable creature thus called vanity to her assistance to stifle the last scruples of conscience. "The beggars! they will burst with envy; while you, with your fine silk foulards, will look like little 'bourgeoise!'"

"That's true," answered François. "Then I am much more content with my fine cravat, since the little lime-burners will be so mad and jealous; ain't you, Amandine?" "I am content with my fine 'marmotte'—there." "You'll never be anything but a 'colasse!'" said Calebasse, disdainfully. Then, taking from the table a piece of bread and cheese, she gave it to the children, and said, "Go up-stairs to bed. Here is a lantern. Take care of the fire, and put out the light before you go to sleep." "Ah now," added Nicolas, "remember well, if you say a word to Martial about the box, or the pigs of copper, or the clothes, you shall have a dance, so that you'll take fire; not to say a word about taking away the foulards."

After the departure of the children, Nicolas and his sister hid the stolen articles in a little cellar under the kitchen.

"Ah ça! mother! some drink, and let it be choice," cried the bandit; "I have well earned my day. Serve the supper, Calebasse; Martial shall gnaw our bones—good for him. Now let us talk of the 'bourgeois' of the 'Quai Billy,' for to-morrow or next day that must come off, if I wish to pocket the money which he promised. I am going to tell you this, mother; but some drink, thunder! some drink. It is I who treats!"

And Nicolas rattled the money which he had in his pocket anew; then, throwing off his goatskin jacket and his black woollen cap, he seated himself at the table before a large ragout of mutton, a piece of cold veal, and a salad.

When Calebasse had brought some wine and brandy, the widow seated herself at the table, having Nicolas on her right and Calebasse on her left; opposite were the unoccupied places of Martial and the two children. The bandit drew from his pocket a long and broad catalan knife, with a horn handle and sharp blade. Looking at this murderous weapon with a kind of ferocious satisfaction, he said to the widow, "'*Coupe-sifflet*' still cuts well! Pass me the bread, mother!" "Speaking of knives," said Calebasse, "François saw something in the woodhouse." "What?" said Nicolas, not understanding her. "He saw one of the feet—" "Of the man?" cried Nicolas. "Yes," said the widow, putting a slice of meat on the plate of her son. "That's droll! the hole was very deep," said the brigand; "but since that time should have been heaped up." "We must throw everything into the river to-night," said the widow. "It is more sure," answered Nicolas.

"We can tie a stone to it with a piece of old chain," added Calebasse. "Not so foolish!" said Nicolas, pouring out a drink; "come, drink

with us, mother; it will make you more lively." The widow shook her head, drew back her glass, and said to her son, "And the man at the 'Quai de Billy?'" "This is it," said Nicolas, continuing to eat and drink. "On arriving at the wharf, I tied my boat, and mounted on the 'quai;' seven o'clock struck at the military bakehouse of Chaillot; could hardly see your hand before your face. I walked up and down for about fifteen minutes, when I heard some one walk softly behind me: I stopped; a man wrapped in a cloak approached, coughing; he halted. All that I know of his face is, that his cloak hid his nose, and his hat covered his eyes." (We will recall to the reader that this mysterious personage was Jacques Ferrand, who, wishing to make away with Fleur de Marie, had that morning despatched Madame Séraphin to the Martials', whom he hoped to make his instruments in this new crime.) "'*Bradamanti*,' said the 'bourgeois,'" continued Nicolas; "this was the password agreed upon with the old woman. 'Ravageur,' I replied.

"'Is your name Martial?' said he to me.

"'Yes, bourgeois.' 'A woman came to your island this morning; what did she say?' 'That you had something to say to me on the part of M. Bradamenti.' 'Do you wish to gain some money?' 'Yes, "Bourgeois"—much.'

"'Have you a boat?' 'We have four, bourgeois; it is our business; boatmen and "ravageurs" from father to son, at your service.' 'This is what is to be done—if you are not afraid—' 'Afraid—of what, bourgeois?' 'To see some one *drowned by accident;* only it is necessary to assist the *accident.* Do you comprehend?' 'Ah çà, bourgeois, you want to make an individual drink some of the Seine by chance! that suits me; but, as it is rather a delicate "fricot," the seasoning will cost rather dear.' 'How much for two?' 'For two! will there be two persons to make soup of in the river?' 'Yes.'

"'Five hundred francs a head, bourgeois, and it's not dear!' 'Agreed for a thousand francs.' 'Pay in advance, bourgeois?' 'Two hundred in advance, the remainder afterward.'

"'You are afraid to trust me, Bourgeois?' 'No, you can pocket my two hundred francs without fulfilling our agreement.' 'And you, bourgeois, once the affair finished, when I ask you for the remainder, you can answer me, go to the devil!'

"'You must run your chance; does this suit you, yes or no? two hundred francs down, and the night after to-morrow, here, at nine o'clock, I will give you eight hundred francs.' 'And who shall tell you that I have made these two persons drink?'

"'I shall know it, that's my affair; is it a bargain?'

"'It is, bourgeois.' 'Here's your money. Now listen to me: you will know the old woman again who came to see you this morning?' 'Yes, bourgeois.' 'To-morrow, or the day after at farthest, you will see her arrive towards four o'clock in the afternoon on the shore opposite your island with a young girl; the old woman will make you a signal by waving her handkerchief.' 'Yes, bourgeois.' 'How long does it take to go from the shore to your island?' 'Twenty good minutes.' 'Your boats have flat bottoms?' 'Flat as your hand, bourgeois.' 'You must make adroitly a kind of large "soupape" (a bung hole) in the bottom of one of your boats, so as to be able, by opening this "soupape," to make it sink in a twinkling; do you comprehend?' 'Very well, bourgeois; you are the devil! I have exactly an old boat that I was about to break up; it will just answer for this last voyage.'

"'You set out, then, from your island with this boat; a good boat follows you, conducted by some one of your family. You land; you take the old woman and the young girl on board your boat, and you set off for the island; but, at a reasonable distance from the shore, you feign to stoop to fix something; you open the "soupape," and you jump lightly into the other boat, while the old woman and the young girl—' 'Drink out of the same cup—that's it—hey, bourgeois?' 'But are you sure of not being disturbed? if there should be any guests at your tavern?' 'No fear, bourgeois; at this time, and in winter above all, no one comes; it is our dead season; and if any one should come, they would not be in the way; on the contrary,—all tried friends.' 'Very well! Besides, you will not be at all compromised; the boat will sink through age, and the old woman with it. In fine, to be well assured that both of them are drowned (remember, by accident), you should, if they appear again, or if they cling to the boat, appear to do all in your power to assist them, and—' 'Aid them—to dive again! Good, bourgeois!' 'It is better that the execution take place after sunset, so that it be dark when they fall into the water.' 'No, bourgeois, for if one cannot see clear, how can they know whether the two women have drunk their fill, or want some more?' 'That is true; then the accident must happen before dark.' 'Very good, bourgeois; but does the old woman suspect anything?' 'No. On arriving she will whisper in your ear, *We must drown the girl; a short time before you sink the boat, make me a sign, so that I can escape with you.* You must answer in such a manner as to calm any suspicions.' 'So that she thinks to lead the little blonde to drink!' 'And she will drink with the little blonde.' 'It is wisely arranged, bourgeois.' 'And, above all, let the old woman suspect nothing.' 'Be easy, bourgeois; she shall swallow it like honey.' 'Well, good luck, mon garçon! If I am pleased, perhaps I shall employ you again!' 'At your service, bourgeois!' Thereupon," said the brigand, ending his story, "I left the man in the cloak, got into my boat, and, passing by the galley, I picked up the booty you have seen."

It will be seen, from the recital of Nicolas, that the notary wished, by means of a double crime, to get rid of Fleur de Marie and of Madame Séraphin at the same time, by making the latter fall into the snare she believed only opened for La Goualeuse. The reasons for putting the latter out of the way are known to the reader; and as to Madame Séraphin, in sacrificing her he silenced one of his accomplices (Bradamanti was the other), who could at any time ruin him by ruining themselves, it is true; but Jacques Ferrand thought his secrets better guarded by the tomb than by personal interest. The widow and Calebasse had attentively list-

ened to Nicolas, who had only interrupted himself to drink to excess. For this reason he began to talk with singular warmth. "That's not all; I have managed another affair with La Chouette and Barbillon, of the Rue aux Fèves. It is a famous affair, knowingly got up, and if we don't fail, there'll be something to fry, I tell you. It is in contemplation to rob a diamond broker, who has sometimes as much as 50,000 francs value in her box." "Fifty thousand francs!" cried the mother and daughter, their eyes sparkling with cupidity. "Yes, that's all! Bras-Rouge is of the party. Yesterday he decoyed the broker by a letter which Barbillon and I took to her on the Boulevard Saint Denis. Bras-Rouge is a famous fellow! As there is something to be gained, we do not suspect him. To make her bite, he has already sold her a diamond for 400 francs. She will not fail to come, at dusk, to his tavern in the Champs-Elysées. We will be there concealed. Calebasse shall come also: she will take care of my boat. If it is necessary to pack up the broker, dead or alive, this will be a nice carriage, and leave no traces behind. There's a plan for you! Rogue of a Bras-Rouge, what a 'Sorbonne!'

"I am always suspicious of Bras-Rouge," said the widow. "After the affair of the Rue Montmartre, your brother Ambrose was sent to Toulon, and Bras-Rouge was released."

"Because there was no proofs against him, he is so cunning! But to betray others—never!" The widow shook her head, as if she had been only half convinced of the *probity* of Bras-Rouge. "I prefer," said she, "the affair of the Quai Billy—the 'noyade' of the two women. But Martial will be in the way, as he always is." "The devil's thunder will not rid us of him then!" cried Nicolas, half drunk, sticking his long knife with fury in the table. "I told mother that we had had enough of him; that it could not last," said Calebasse; "as long as he is here, we can make nothing out of the children." "I tell you he is capable of denouncing us from one day to another, the brigand!" said Nicolas. "Do you see, mother; if you'd have believed," added he, in a ferocious manner, looking at the widow, "all would have been said." "There are other means." "This is the best." "At present, no," answered the widow, with a tone so absolute that Nicolas was quiet, ruled by the influence of his mother. She added: "To-morrow morning he shall leave the island forever." "How?" said Calebasse and Nicolas in a breath. "He will soon come in; seek a quarrel—boldly—as you have never dared to do. Come to blows, if needs be. He is strong, but you will be two, and I will help you. Above all, no knives—no blood; let him be beaten, not wounded." "And what then?" asked Nicolas. "We'll have an explanation; we will tell him to leave the island to-morrow, otherwise we'll repeat this again to-morrow night; these continual quarrels will disgust him, I know it; we have let him be too quiet." "But he is stubborn as a mule; he'll just remain on account of the children," said Calebasse. "He is a 'gueux fini,' and an attack will not scare him," added Nicolas. "A—yes," said the widow; "but every day, every day; it is hell; he will give up." "And if he will not?" "Then I have another plan to force him to leave to-night, or to-morrow morning at latest," answered the widow, with a strange smile. "Truly, mother?" "Yes; but I would rather frighten him by quarrelling and fighting; if I do not then succeed, I'll try the other way." "And if the other way don't answer, mother?" said Nicolas. "There is still another, which always does," replied the widow. Suddenly the door opened and Martial entered. It blew so hard outside that they had not heard the barking of the dogs announcing the arrival of the eldest son of the widow.

CHAPTER III.

THE MOTHER AND THE SON.

Ignorant of the evil designs of his family, Martial entered slowly into the kitchen. Some words of La Louve, in her conversation with Fleur de Marie, have already informed us of the singular life of this man. Endowed with good natural instincts, incapable of an action positively bad or wicked, Martial did not conduct himself as he should have done. He fished contrary to law, and his strength, his audacity, inspired so much terror in the guardians of the fisheries, that they shut their eyes on his proceedings.

The lover of La Louve resembled François and Amandine very much; he was of middling stature, but robust and with broad shoulders; his thick, red hair, cut short, laid in points on his open forehead; his thick, heavy beard, his large cheeks, his square nose, his blue and bold eyes, gave to him a singularly resolute expression.

He wore an old waxed hat; and, notwithstanding the cold, he had nothing on but a wretched blouse over his well-worn vest and pantaloons of coarse velveteen. He held in his hand an enormous knotty stick, which he placed alongside of him on the table.

A fat terrier dog, with crooked legs, came in with Martial; but he remained near the door, not daring to approach the fire, nor the people at the table; experience had proved to old *Mirant*, that he was, as well as his master, not in very good odour with the family. "Where are the children?" Such were the first words of Martial when he took his seat at the table.

"They are where they are," answered Calebasse, sharply.

"Where are the children, mother?" repeated Martial, without paying any attention to his sister. "They are gone to bed," answered the widow, dryly. "Have they supped, mother?" "What's that to you?" cried Nicolas, brutally, after having swallowed a large glass of wine, to augment his audacity.

Martial, as indifferent to the attacks of Nicolas as he was to those of Calebasse, said again to his mother,

"I am sorry the children have already gone to bed."

"So much the worse," replied the widow.

"Yes, so much the worse; for I like to have them alongside of me when I sup."

"And we, as they trouble us, we sent them off," cried Nicolas; "if it don't please you, go and look for them!"

Martial, much surprised, looked fixedly at his brother. Then, as if reflecting on the folly of a

quarrel, he shrugged his shoulders, cut a piece of bread with his knife, and helped himself to a slice of meat. The terrier had drawn nearer to Nicolas, although still at a very respectful distance; the bandit, irritated at the contemptuous indifference of his brother, and hoping to make him lose his patience by striking the dog, gave Mirant a furious kick, which made him howl piteously. Martial became purple, pressed in his contracted hands the knife which he held, and struck violently on the table; but, still containing himself, he called his dog, and said gently, "Here, Mirant." The terrier came and laid down at his master's feet. This moderation defeated the projects of Nicolas; he wished to push his brother to extremities to bring about a rupture. So he added, "I don't like dogs—I won't have your dog here!" For answer, Martial poured out a glass of wine, and drank it slowly.

Exchanging a rapid glance with Nicolas, the widow encouraged him by a sign to continue his hostilities, hoping that a violent quarrel would bring about a rupture and a complete separation.

Nicolas went and took the willow switch which stood in the corner, and, approaching the terrier, he struck him, crying, "Go out from this, he, Mirant!" Up to this time, Nicolas had often shown his animosity towards Martial, but never before had he dared to provoke him with so much audacity and perseverance. At the cry from his dog, Martial arose, opened the door of the kitchen, put the terrier outside, and returned to continue his supper. This incredible patience, so little in harmony with the ordinary character of Martial, confounded his aggressors. They looked at each other, very much surprised. He, appearing completely a stranger to what was passing, ate heartily, and kept a profound silence. "Calebasse, take away the wine," said the widow to her daughter. She hastened to obey, when Martial said, "Stop! I have not finished my supper." "So much the worse!" said the widow, taking away the bottle. "Ah! that is different!" answered he, and pouring out a large glass of water, he drank it, and smacking his lips, cried, "That's famous water!" This imperturbable "sang froid" still more irritated Nicolas, already much excited by his frequent libations; nevertheless, he recoiled before a direct attack, knowing the superior strength of his brother; suddenly he cried,

"You have done well to knock under with your dog, Martial: it is a good habit to get into; for you must expect to see La Louve kicked out, just as we have kicked out your dog."

"Oh, yes—for if she has the misfortune to come to the island when she comes out of prison," said Calebasse, comprehending the intention of Nicolas, "I it is who will box her soundly!"

"And I'll give her a ducking in the mud, near the hovel at the other end of the island," added Nicolas; "and if she comes up again, I'll put her under again, with blows from my shoe—the hussey." This insult, addressed to La Louve, whom he loved with unqualified passion, triumphed over the pacific resolutions of Martial; he knit his brows, his blood rushed to his face, the veins on his forehead and neck swelled like ropes; yet he still had command over himself to say to Nicolas, in a voice altered by suppressed rage, "Take care of yourself—you seek a quarrel, and you will find a turn that you do not look for." "A turn—to me?" "Yes, better than the last." "How? Nicolas," said Calebasse, with well-feigned attachment, "has Martial beat you? I say, mother, do you hear? I am no more astonished that Nicolas is afraid of him." "He whipped me, because he took me unawares," cried Nicolas, becoming pale with rage.

"You lie! you attacked me slyly, I kicked you, and I took pity on you; but if you undertake to speak again of La Louve—understand well, of my Louve—then I'll have no mercy—you shall carry my marks for a long time."

"And if I wish to speak of La Louve, I?" said Calebasse, "I will give you a couple of boxes just to warm you; and if you go on, I'll go on to warm you." "And if I speak of her?" said the widow, slowly. "You?" "Yes, me!" "You?" said Martial, making a violent effort to contain himself; "you?" "You will beat me, also, is it not so?"

"No! but if you speak of La Louve, I'll thrash Nicolas; now go on: it is your affair, and his also."

"You," cried the enraged bandit, raising his dangerous knife; "you thrash me!" "Nicolas, no knife!" cried the widow, endeavouring to seize the arm of her son; but he, drunk with wine and anger, pushed his mother rudely on one side, and rushed at his brother. Martial fell back quickly, seized his heavy knotted stick, and put himself on the defensive. "Nicolas, no knife!" repeated the widow. "Let him alone!" cried Calebasse, arming herself with a hatchet. Nicolas, brandishing his formidable knife, watched a favourable moment to throw himself on his brother. "I tell you," cried he, "that you and your 'canaille' of a Louve, I'll crush you both; and I commence. Now, mother—now, Calebasse! let us cool him; this has lasted too long!" And, believing the time favourable for his attack, the brigand rushed toward his brother with his knife raised.

Martial, very expert with a club, retreated quickly, lifted his stick, made a quick turn with it in the air, describing the figure eight, and let it fall heavily on the arm of Nicolas, who, hurt severely, dropped his knife. "Brigand, you have broken my arm!" cried he, taking hold of his arm with his left hand.

"No, I felt my club rebound," answered Martial, kicking the knife under the table. Then, profiting by the situation of Nicolas, he took him by the collar, pushed him roughly backward towards the door of the little cellar, opened it with one hand, and with the other threw him in and shut the door.

Returning afterward to the two women, he took Calebasse by the shoulders, and, in spite of her resistance, her cries, and a blow from the hatchet which wounded him slightly in the hand, he locked her in the lower room of the tavern which was adjoining the kitchen; then, addressing the widow, still stupified at this manœuvre, as skilful as it was unexpected, he said, coldly, "Now, mother, for us two." "Well! yes; for us two," cried the widow, and her stoical face became animated, her wan complexion became suffused, her eyes sparkled, anger and hatred gave a terrible character to her features. "Yes; now for us two!" said she, in a threatening tone; "I expected this moment—you shall know at last what I have in my heart." "And I also—I will tell you." "If you live a hundred years, you shall recollect this night." "I shall remember it! My brother and sister wished to murder me; you did nothing to prevent it. But come—speak: what have you against me?"

"What have I?" "Yes." "Since the death of your father, you have done nothing but cowardly acts!" "I?" "Yes, coward! Instead of staying with us to sustain us, you fled to Rombouillet, to poach in the woods with the game pedler you knew at Bercy." "If I had remained here, I should now have been at the galleys, like Ambroise, or ready to go, like Nicolas; I did not wish to be a robber like the others—thence your hatred." "And what was your trade? You stole game; you stole fish; no danger in that, coward?" "Fish, as well as game, belong to no one; to-day in one place, to-morrow in another; it is for who can get it. I do not steal; as for being a coward—" "You fight, for money, men who are weaker than you are!" "Because they have beaten those who are weaker than they are." "Trade of a coward! trade of a coward!" "There are none honest, it is true; it is not for you to tell me of it!" "Why have you not followed these honest callings, instead of lounging here and living at my expense?" "I give you the first fish I take, and what money I have—it is not much, but it is enough. I cost you nothing. I have tried to be a locksmith, to gain more; but when one from his infancy has idled on the river and in the woods, one can't do anything else; it is done for life. And, besides, I have always preferred to live alone, on the river or in the woods; there no one questions me. Instead of that, in other places, if any one should ask me of my father, must I not answer—guillotined! of my brother—galley-slave! of my sister—thief!" "And of your mother, what would you say?"

"I'd say she was dead." "And you would do well; it is all as—I disown you, coward! Your brother is at the galleys! Your grandfather and father have bravely finished on the scaffold, in defying the priest and the executioner! Instead of avenging them, you tremble!" "Avenge them?" "Yes, to show yourself a *real Martial*, spit on the knife of Charlot and his red cap, and finish like father and mother, brother and sister."

As habituated as Martial was to the ferocious bombast of his mother, he could not refrain from shuddering.

She resumed, with increasing fury, "Oh! coward, still more 'crétur' than coward! You wish to be honest!! Honest? is it that you shall not always be despised, as the son of a murderer, brother of a galley-slave; but you, instead of hugging vengeance, you are afraid! instead of biting, you fly; when they cut off your father's head, you left us, coward! And you knew we could not leave the island without being hunted and howled after like mad dogs—oh! they, shall pay for it, they shall pay for it!"

"One man—ten men can't make me afraid! but to be pointed at by everybody as the son and brother of condemned criminals—well, no! I could not stand it. I prefered to go and poach with Pierre, the game-seller." "Why did you not remain in your woods?" "I came back on account of my affair with the guard, and, above all, on account of the children; because they were of an age to be ruined by bad example!" "What is that to you?" "To me? because I do not wish to see them become like Ambroise, Nicolas, and Calebasse."

"Not possible!" "And alone, with you all, they would not have failed. I made myself an apprentice to try to earn something, to take them with me, and leave the island; bu at Paris every one knew it; it was always, son of the 'guillotined'—brother of the galley-slave. I had continual fights. It tired me."

"And that did not tire you to be honest; that succeeded so well, instead of having the heart to return to us, to do as we do—as the children shall do in spite of you—yes, in spite of you. You think you will stuff them with your preachings; but we are there. François already belongs to us—nearly—the first occasion, and he shall be of the band."

"I tell you no." "You will see. I know it. There is vice at the bottom; but you restrain him. As to Amandine, when she is once fifteen, she will go alone. Ah! they have thrown stones at us. Ah! they have hunted us like mad dogs! They shall see what our family is—except you, coward; for here you alone make us blush!"

"It is a pity." "And as you may be spoiled here with us, to-morrow you will go from this never to return."

Martial looked at his mother with surprise; after a moment's pause he said, "You tried to get up a quarrel at supper to arrive at this." "Yes, to show you what you may expect if you will stay here in spite of us—a hell—do you understand?—a hell upon earth! Every day disputes, blows, fights; and we shall not be alone like to-night; we will have friends to help us; you'll not hold on a week."

"You think to frighten me?" "I tell you what will happen to you." "No matter. I remain."

"You will remain here?" "Yes." "In spite of us?" "In spite of you, and Calebasse, and Nicolas, and all others of the same kidney!" "Stop; you make me laugh."

"I tell you I'll remain here until I find the means to earn my living elsewhere with the children; alone, I should not be embarrassed. I should return to the woods; but, on their account, I want more time to find out what I want. Until then I remain."

"Ah! you remain until you can take away the children?" "As you say!" "Take away the children?" "When I say to them come, they will come, and running too, I answer for it."

The widow shrugged her shoulders, and replied,

"Listen to me. I told you just now, if you were to live a thousand years, you would remember this night. I am going to explain to you why; but once more, have you well decided not to go?" "Yes! yes! a thousand times, yes!" "Directly you will say no! a thousand times, no! Listen to me well. Do you know what trade your brother follows?"

"I suspect, but I don't want to know." "You shall know. He steals." "So much the worse for him." "And for you." "For me?" "He is a burglar, a galley affair; we receive his plunder; if it is discovered, we shall be condemned to the same punishment as receivers, and you also; the family will be carried off, and the children will be turned into the streets, where they will learn the trade of your father and grandfather quite as well as here."

"I arrested as a receiver, as your accomplice! On what proof?"

"No one knows how you live; you are a vagrant on the water—you have the reputation of a bad man—you live with us. Who will you make believe that you are ignorant of our doings?"

"I will prove to the contrary. We will accuse you as our accomplice." "Accuse me! why?" "To reward you for remaining here in spite of us." "Just now you wished to alarm me in one way; now it is in another: that don't take. I shall prove that I have never stolen. I remain." "Ah! you remain? Listen, then, once more: do you remember what happened last Christmas night?" "Christmas night?" said Martial, endeavouring to collect his thoughts. "Recollect well." "I do not recollect." "You do not remember that Bras-Rouge brought here at night a man well dressed, who wished to be concealed?" "Yes, now I remember; I went up stairs to bed, and I left him at supper with you. He passed the night here; before daylight Nicolas took him to Saint Ouen."

"You are sure Nicolas took him to Saint Ouen"

"You told me so the next morning." "Christmas night you were then here?" "Yes. Well?" "On that night, that man, who had much money with him, was killed in this house" "He! Here? And robbed, and buried in the little woodhouse. It is not true," cried Martial, becoming pale with alarm, and not willing to believe in this new crime of his kindred. "You wish to alarm me. Once more I say it is not true?" "Ask your protegé, François, what he saw this morning in the woodhouse?" "François! and what did he see?" "One of the feet of the man sticking out of the ground. Take the lantern; go there and satisfy yourself." "No," said Martial, wiping the cold sweat from his brow. "No, I do not believe you. You tell me that to—" "To prove to you that, if you live here in spite of us, you run the risk every moment to be arrested as an accomplice in murder and robbery. You were here Christmas night; we will say how you gave us your aid: how can you prove the contrary?" "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" said Martial, hiding his face in his hands. "Now will you go?" said the widow, with a sarcastic smile.

Martial was thunderstruck; he did not doubt the truth of what his mother had said; the roving life he led; his residence with a family so criminal, might cause heavy suspicions to fall upon him, and these might be changed into certainties in the eyes of justice, if his mother, his brother, his sister pointed to him as their accomplice. The widow enjoyed the situation of her son.

"You have the means to escape from this; denounce us!"

"I ought to do it, but I shall not; you know it well!"

"It is for this I have told you all. Now will you go?"

Martial tried to soften his mother; with a mellowed voice he said, "Mother, I do not believe you capable of this murder." "As you like, but go away." "I will go on one condition." "No conditions." "You will place the children as apprentices far from this, in the provinces." "They shall remain here." "Come now, mother; when you have made them like Nicolas, Amboise, father—what good will it answer you?"

"To do some good business with their aid. We are not yet too many. Calebasse remains here with me to keep the tavern. Nicolas is alone; once taught, François and Amandine will help him; they threw stones at them also, children as they were: they must revenge themselves!"

"Mother, you love Calebasse and Nicolas, don't you?"

"What then?" "They go to the scaffold like father."

"What then, what then?" "And does not their fate make you tremble?" "Their fate shall be mine—neither better nor worse. I steal, they steal; I kill, they kill. Who takes the mother will take the children. We will not be separated. If our heads fall, they shall fall in the same basket, where they will say adieu! We will not turn back; you are the only coward in the family; we drive you away. Get out!"

"But the children? the children?"

"The children will grow up; I tell you, except for you, they would have been already formed. François is almost ready; when you are gone, Amandine shall make up for lost time."

"Mother, I entreat you, consent to send the children away as apprentices far from here." "How many times must I tell you that they are in *apprenticeship here?*"

The widow articulated these words in such a stern manner, that Martial lost all hope of softening this heart of bronze.

"Since it is thus," said he, in a resolute and brief tone, "listen to me in your turn, mother: I remain."

"Ah! ah!" "Not in this house. I should be murdered by Nicolas, or poisoned by Calebasse; but, as I have not the means to lodge elsewhere, the children and I will live in the hovel at the other end of the island: the door is strong; I will make it stronger. Once there, well barricaded, with my gun, my dog, and my club, I fear no one. To-morrow morning I will take away the children; they will come with me, sometimes in my boat, sometimes on the mainland. At night they shall sleep near me in the cabin: we will live on my fishing. This shall continue until I find a place for them; and I will find one." "Ah! is it so?" "Neither you, nor my brother, nor Calebasse can prevent it. If your thefts and your murders are discovered while I am still on the island, so much the worse; I must run my chance! I shall explain that I returned; that I remained on account of the children, to prevent their becoming rogues. They can judge. But may the thunder crush me if I leave this island, and if the children remain one day more in this house! Yes, and I defy you—defy you and yours to drive me from the island!" The widow knew the resolution of Martial; the children loved their eldest brother as much as they feared him; they would follow him then without hesitation when he wished it. As to him, well armed, resolute, always on his guard; in his boat during the day; barricaded during the night in his cabin, he had nothing to fear from any evil designs of his family. The project of Martial could then, on all points, be realized. But the widow had many reasons to prevent the execution.

In the first place, like as honest artisans consider sometimes the number of their children as riches, on account of their services, so the widow counted on Amandine and François to assist her in her crimes. Then, what she had said of her desire to avenge her husband and her son was true. Certain beings, nursed, become aged, hardened in crime, enter into open revolt, into a murderous warfare against society, and believe by new acts of guilt to avenge themselves for

the just punishment which has overtaken them and theirs. And then, in fine, the wicked designs of Nicolas against Fleur de Marie, and still later against the diamond broker, might be defeated by the presence of Martial. The widow had hoped to bring about an immediate separation between herself and Martial, either by fomenting the quarrel with Nicolas, or by revealing to him what risk he ran by remaining on the island. As cunning as she was acute, the widow, perceiving that she was mistaken, felt that it was necessary to have recourse to perfidy to entrap her son in a bloody snare. She resumed then, after a long silence, and with affected bitterness: "I see your plan; you do not wish to denounce us yourself—you wish to do it through the children." "I?" "They know now that there is a man buried here; they know that Nicolas has stolen: once in apprenticeship, they will speak; we shall be taken, and we shall all be executed—you as well as we; that's what will happen if I listen to you—if I allow you to place the children elsewhere. And yet you say you don't wish us any harm! I do not ask you to love me; but do not hasten the moment when we shall be taken." The softened tone of the widow made Martial believe that his threats had produced a salutary effect: he fell into a frightful snare.

"I know the children," replied he. "I am sure, if I tell them to say nothing, they will be quiet; besides, I shall always be with them, and will answer for their silence."

"Can any one answer for the words of a child? at Paris, above all, where people are so curious and talkative? It is as much to keep them silent as to aid us that I wish to keep them here." "Do they not go to the village and to Paris now? Who prevents them from speaking, if they wish to speak? If they were far away from here, so much the better: what they might say would be of no consequence." "Far from here! and where is that?" said the widow, looking steadily at her son.

"Let me take them away; no consequence to you."

"How would you live?" "My old 'bourgeois' locksmith is a good man. I will tell him what is necessary, and perhaps he will lend me something on account of the children; with that I'll go and bind them out far away from this. We set out in two days, and you will never hear more of us."

"No; I prefer to have them with me. I shall be more sure of them." "Then I establish myself to-morrow at the hovel, waiting for something better. I have a head also, and you know it." "Yes, I know it. Oh, how I wish to see you far away from this! Why did you not stay in your woods?"

"I offer to rid you both of myself and the children."

"You would leave La Louve, then—she whom you love so well?"

"That's my business: I know what I have to do; I have a plan."

"If I let you take them away, will you never return to Paris?"

"In three days we will be off, and like the dead for you."

"I prefer to have it so rather than you should always be here, and be suspicious of them. Come, since it must be so, take them away, and clear out as soon as possible, that I may never see you again." "Is this settled?" "It is. Give me the key of the cellar, so that I can release Nicolas."

"No; he can sleep off his wine there." "And Calebasse?" "It is different. You can open the door after I have gone to bed; it makes me feel bad to see her." "Go; and may the devil confound you!" "It is your good-night, mother." "Yes." "Happily, it will be the last," said Martial.

"The last," replied the widow. Her son lighted a candle, and, opening the kitchen door, whistled to his dog, which came bounding in, and followed his master to the upper story of the mansion. "Go! your account is finished," muttered the mother, shaking her fist at her son, who had just gone up stairs: "you have brought it upon yourself." Then, assisted by Calebasse, who went to look for a bunch of false keys, the widow picked the lock of the cellar where Nicolas was confined, and set him at liberty.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRANCOIS AND AMANDINE.

Francois and Amandine slept in a room situated immediately over the kitchen, at the extremity of a corridor, into which opened several other rooms, serving as "cabinets de societé" to the frequenters of the tavern. After having partaken of their frugal supper, instead of extinguishing their lantern, according to the orders of the widow, the two children had watched, leaving their door open, to see Martial when he should come to his room. Placed on a rickety stool, the lantern shed a sickly light through the miserable room. Walls of plaster, a cot for François, a child's bedstead, very old and much too short for Amandine, a heap of broken chairs and benches, the result of some of the drunken brawls and turbulent conduct which had taken place at the tavern of the "Ile du Ravageur," such was the interior of this den.

Amandine, seated on the edge of the cot, tried to dress her head à la marmotte, with the stolen foulard, the gift of her brother Nicolas. François, kneeling, presented a fragment of looking-glass to his sister, who, with her head half turned round, was occupied in tying the ends of the foulard into a large rosette. Very attentive, and very much struck with this coiffure, François neglected for a moment to hold the glass in such a position that his sister could see. "Raise the glass higher, now—I cannot see; there—so—good. Wait a little; now I have finished. Look! how do you think it looks?" "Oh, very well! very well! Dieu! what a fine rosette! You'll make one just like it with my cravat, won't you?"

"Yes, directly; but let me walk a little. You go before—backward; hold the glass up, so that I can see myself as I walk." François executed this difficult manœuvre very well, to the great satisfaction of Amandine, who strutted up and down triumphantly, under the rosette and horns of her foulard. Very innocent and "naïvé" under any other circumstances, this conduct became culpable, as François and Amandine both knew the foulard was stolen: another proof of the frightful facility with which children, even well endowed, are corrupted almost without knowing it, when they are continually plunged in a criminal atmosphere.

And, besides, the sole Mentor of these little

unfortunates, their brother Martial, was not himself irreproachable, as we have said: incapable of committing a theft or murder, he did not the less lead an irregular and wandering life. * * * They refused to commit certain bad actions, not from honesty, but to obey Martial, whom they tenderly loved, and to disobey their mother, whom they feared and hated. * * * * It is hard to say how much the perceptions of morality with these children were doubtful, vacillating, precarious; with François particularly, arrived at that dangerous period where the mind, hesitating, undecided, between good and evil, perhaps in one moment may be lost or saved. * * * "How this red foulard suits you, sister!" said François. "How pretty it is! When we shall go to play on the shore in front of the plaster-kilns, you must dress yourself so, to make the children mad, who are always throwing stones at us, and calling us little *guillotinés*. I'll put on my fine red cravat, and we will tell them, 'Never mind, you haven't such handsome handkerchiefs as these!'"

"But, I say, François," said Amandine, after a pause, "if they knew that these foulards were stolen, they would call us little thieves." "Who cares if they do!"

"When it is not true, it's all the same; but now—"

"Since Nicolas has given us these, we have not stolen them."

"Yes, but he did; he took them from a boat; and our brother Martial says we must not steal."

"But since it is Nicolas who has stolen them, it is none of our business." "You think so, François?" "Yes I do." "Yet it seems to me that I should have preferred that the person to whom they belonged should have given them to us. Don't you think so, François?" "Oh, it's all the same to me. They have been given to us, and that's enough." "You are very sure?" "Why, yes, yes; do be quiet!" "Then, so much the better; we have not done what brother Martial forbids, and we have fine handkerchiefs." "I say, Amandine, if he knew that, the other day, Calebasse made you take that 'fichu' from the pedler's pack, when his back was turned." "Oh, François, do not speak of that!" said the poor child, whose eyes were filled with tears: "my brother Martial would love me no more. Do you see, he would leave us all alone here." "Don't be afraid, I will not tell him," he siad, laughing. "Oh, don't laugh at that, François; I am sorry enough; but I had to do it. My sister pinched me till the blood came, and then she looked at me so—so; and yet twice my heart failed me; I thought I could never do it. Finally, the pedler saw nothing, and my sister kept the fichu. If he had seen me, François, they would have put me in prison." "They did not see you; it is just the same as if you had not stolen." "You think so?" "Pardi!" "And in prison how unhappy one must be!" "Ah, well, yes; on the contrary—" "How, François, on the contrary?" "Look here! you know the big lame man who lives at Paris with the Père Micou; the man who sells for Nicolas; who keeps furnished lodgings, Passage de la Brasserie?" "A big lame man?" "Why, yes; who came here at the end of the autumn, on the part of the Père Micou, with a man with monkeys, and two women." "Ah, yes, yes; the lame man who spent so much money?" "I think so; he paid for everybody." "Do you recollect the excursion on the water?" "I went with them, and the man with the monkeys took his organ on board to have some music in the boat." "And then, at night, what fine fireworks they had, François!" "Yes; and he was no miser; he gave me ten sous! He drank nothing but sealed wine; they had chickens at all their meals; they had at least eighty francs' worth." "As much as that, François?" "Oh, yes." "He was very rich, then?" "Not at all; what he spent was the money which he earned in prison, from whence he just came."

"He gained all that money in prison?" "Yes; he said he had seven hundred francs left; that when all was gone, he would do some good job, and if they took him, he didn't care, because he would return to the prison and join his good friends there." "He wasn't afraid of the prison, then, François?" "Just the contrary; he told Calebasse that they were all jovial together; that he never had a better bed or better food than in prison; good meat four times a week, fire all winter, and a good sum when he came out, while there are so many stupid fools of honest workmen who were starving for want of work." "Did the lame man say that?" "I heard him; for I was rowing in the boat while he told this to Calebasse and the two women, who said it was the same thing in the prison for women; they had just come out." "But, then, François, it can't be so wicked to steal, if one is so well off in prison?" "Dame! I don't know; here, there is no one but brother Martial who says it is wrong to steal; perhaps he is mistaken." "Never mind, we must believe him, François; he loves us so much!" "He loves us, it is true; when he is here, no one dares to beat us. If he had been here to-night, mother wouldn't have whipped me. Old beast! ain't she wicked? Oh! I hate her—hate her. How I wish I was a man to pay her back all the blows she has given me, and to you, who can't bear it as well as I can." "Oh! François, hush; you make me afraid, to hear you say that you would like to strike our mother!" cried the poor little thing, weeping, and throwing her arms around the neck of her brother, whom she embraced tenderly. "No, it is true," answered François, repulsing his sister gently: "why are my mother and Calebasse always so severe and cross to us?" "I do not know," said Amandine, wiping her eyes: "it is, perhaps, because they have guillotined our father, and sent Ambroise to the galleys." "Is that our fault?" "Mon Dieu, no; but what do you want?" "Ma foi, if I am always, always to receive such blows, in the end I would rather steal, as they wish me to; what good does it do me not to steal?"

"And Martial, what would he say?" "Oh! except for him I should have said 'yes' long ago, for I am tired of being flogged; now to-night, mother never was so wicked—she was like a fury—it was very dark, dark; she said not a word. I only felt her cold hand, which held me by the neck, while with the other she beat me, and I thought I saw her eyes glisten." "Poor François! because you said you saw a dead man's bones in the woodhouse?" "Yes, a foot which stuck out of the earth," said François, shuddering with affright: "I am sure of it." "Perhaps formerly there was a burying-ground here?" "Must think so; but then, why did our mother say she would whip me again if I spoke of it to Martial? I tell you what, it is, likely, some one who has been killed in a dispute, and who has been buried there so it should not be known."

"You are right; for, do you remember, such a thing once liked to have happened?" "When was that?" "You know the time that M. Barbillon struck the man with the knife—the tall man, who is so thin, so thin that he shows himself for money?" "Ah! yes, the *walking skeleton*, as they called him; mother came and separated them, otherwise Barbillon would, perhaps, have killed the great skeleton! did you see how he foamed, and how his eyes stuck out of his head?" "Oh. he is not afraid to stick a knife into you for nothing." "He is a mad-cap." "Oh! yes, so young, and so wicked, François!"

"Tortillard is much younger, and he would be quite as bad, if he had the strength." "Oh! yes, he is very bad. The other day he struck me because I would not play with him." "He struck you? good—the first time he comes—" "No, no, François, it was only in fun." "You are sure?" "Yes, very sure." "Very well—or—but I do not know where he gets so much money from; when he came here with La Chouette, he showed us some gold pieces of twenty francs." "How impudent he looked when he told us, 'You could have the just same if you were not little *sinves*.'"

"Sinves?" "Yes, in 'Argot' that means stupid fools."

"Ah, yes! true." "Forty francs—in gold—how many fine things I would buy with that! And you, Amandine?"

"Oh! I likewise." "And what would you buy?"

"Let me see," said the child, in a meditative manner; "in the first place I would get a warm coat for my brother Martial, so that he should not be cold in his boat."

"But for yourself—for yourself?" "I would like a little 'Jésus,' in wax, with his lamb and his cross, like the plaster man had on Sunday, you know, at the door of the Church of Asnières?" "I hope no one will tell mother and Calebasse that they saw us at church."

"True, she has so often forbidden us to enter one. It is a pity, for a church is very nice inside, is it not François?"

"Yes, what fine candlesticks!" "And the picture of the Holy Virgin—how good she looks."

"And the fine lamps—did you see? and the fine cloth on the table at the end, where the priest said mass, with his two friends dressed like himself, and who gave him water and wine?"

"Say, François, do you recollect last year, at the Fête-Dieu, when we saw from here all the little communicants, with their white veils, pass over the bridge?"

"What handsome flowers they had?" "How they sang, and held the ribands of their banners?" "And how the silver fringes of the banners glistened in the sun? That must have cost a deal of money!" "Mon Dieu—how handsome it was, 'heiu' François?" "I think so, and the communicants with their badges of white satin on the arm, and their wax candles with velvet and gold handles?"

"The little boys had their banners also, did they not, François?"

"Ah! mon Dieu! was I not whipped that day because I asked my mother why we did not walk in the procession like other children?" "Then it was that she told us never to enter a church, unless it was to steal the money-box for the poor, or from the pockets of people listening to mass," added Calebasse, laughing and showing her old, yellow teeth. "Bad creature—get out!" "Oh, as for that, to steal in a church, they should kill me first—don't you say so, François?" "There, or elsewhere, what is the difference when one once has decided?" "Dame! I do not know—I should have more fear; I never could."

"On account of the priests?" "No; perhaps on account of the picture of the Holy Virgin who looks so good and kind." "What of that—the picture can't eat you, little fool!" "True, but I could not. It is not my fault." "Speaking of priests, Amandine, do you remember the day when Nicolas struck me so hard, because he saw me bow to the curé who was passing on the shore? I had seen him saluted—I did the same; I did not think there was any harm." "Yes, but this time Martial said just the same as Nicolas, that we had no need to make a salute to a priest."

At this moment François and Amandine heard some one walk in the corridor.

Martial reached his chamber without any farther trouble, after his conversation with the widow, believing Nicolas locked up until the next morning. Seeing a ray of light issuing from the door of the children's room, he went in. They both ran to him and embraced him tenderly. "How, have you not yet gone to bed, little chatterers?"

"No, brother—we waited for you to come and say good-night," said Amandine. "And, besides, some one talking very loud, down stairs, as if it was a quarrel," added François.

"Yes," said Martial, "I had a dispute with Nicolas, but it is nothing; besides, I am glad to find you up. I have some good news to tell you." "Us, brother?" "Would you like to go with me away from here—far away?" "Oh yes, brother!" "Well! in two or three days, we will, all three of us, leave the island."

"How glad I am!" cried Amandine, clapping her hands.

"But where shall we go to?" asked François.

"You shall see, inquisitive; but never mind, wherever we go, you shall learn a good trade, which will make you able to earn your living—that is sure." "Shall I not go any more fishing with you, brother?" "No, my boy; you shall go as an apprentice to a cabinetmaker or locksmith; you are strong, active; with courage and in working hard, at the end of a year you will be able to earn something; oh, come, now, what is the matter—you do not appear to be pleased?"

"It is, brother, that—I—" "Well, go on."

"Would rather remain with you, and fish, mend your nets, than to learn a trade." "Really?" "Dame! to be shut up in a shop all day, so gloomy; and then to be an apprentice, it is so tiresome." Martial shrugged his shoulders.

"You would rather be idle, a vagabond, a rover, is it not so?" said he, severely, "while waiting to become a robber."

"No, brother, but I would rather live here with you, as we live here; that's all." "Yes, that's it—to eat, drink, sleep, and amuse yourself with fishing, like a bourgeois?"

"I like that better." "It is very probable; but you must like something else. Look here, my poor François, it is high time that I take you from this place; without knowing it, you will become as bad as the others. Mother was right—I am afraid you are rather vicious. And you, Amandine, don't you wish to learn a trade?"

"Oh! yes, brother. I would rather learn one than to stay here. I shall be so glad to go away with you and François."

"But what have you got on your head?" said Martial, remarking the triumphant head-dress of Amandine.

"A foulard which Nicolas gave me."

"He gave me one, also," said François, proudly.

"And where did they come from? It would surprise me if Nicolas should have bought them for you." The two children hung their heads, without replying. After a moment's pause, François said, resolutely, "Nicolas gave them to us; we don't know where they came from; is it not so, Amandine?" "No, no, brother!" answered she, stammering and blushing, and not daring to raise her eyes.

"Do not tell a lie!" said Martial, severely.

"We do not lie!" added François, boldly.

"Amandine, my child, tell the truth," said Martial, gently. "Well! to tell the whole truth," answered Amandine, timidly, "they came from a box of goods which Nicolas brought to-night in his boat." "And which he has stolen?" "I think so, brother, from a galley." "Do you see, François! you told a lie," said Martial. The boy held down his head, without answering. "Give me the foulard, Amandine; give me yours also, François!" The little girl took off her head-dress, took a last look at the enormous rosette, and gave it to Martial, stifling a sigh of regret. François drew his slowly from his pocket, and, like his sister, returned it to Martial. "To-morrow morning," said he, "I will give these to Nicolas; you should not have taken them, my children; to profit by a theft is the same as if one were the thief."

"It's a pity—they are so handsome!" said François.

"When you have learned a trade, and you earn some money, you can buy some quite as handsome. Come, go to bed, it is late, my children." "You are not angry, brother?" said Amandine, timidly. "No, no, my girl, it is not your fault. You live with rogues—you do as they do without knowing it. When you are with honest people, you will do as they do; and you soon shall be there—or the 'diable m'emportera.' Good-night!"

"Good-night, brother!" and, embracing them both, Martial departed. "What is the matter, then, François? you look so sad!" said Amandine.

"Brother has taken my foulard, and, besides, did you not hear?" "What?" "He wants to make us apprentices." "Are you not glad?" "Ma foi, no." "You would rather remain here and be beaten every day?" "I am beaten; but I don't have to work. I am all day in the boat, or fishing, or playing, or serving the company, who sometimes give me something for drink, as the lame man did; it is much more amusing than to be shut up from morning to night in a shop, to work like a dog." "But did you not hear? brother said if we remained here any longer we would become bad!" "Ah, bah! all the same to me, since the other children call us already little thieves, little guillotines. And, then, to work—it is too tiresome." "But here they always beat us! They beat us, because we listen more to Martial than to them." "He is so good to us!" "He is good, he is good, I do not deny; so I love him well. They do not dare to harm us before him; he takes us out to walk, it is true, but that is all; he never gives us anything." "Dame! he has nothing; what he earns he gives to our mother for board." "Nicolas has something; I am sure that if we were to listen to him and mother, he would not treat us so; he would give us fine things like to-day; he would no longer suspect us; we should have money like Tortillard." "But, mon Dieu, for that we should have to steal! and that would cause our brother Martial so much sorrow!" "Well! so much the worse!"

"Oh! François—and besides, if they caught us, we should go to prison." "To be in prison, or to be shut up all day in a shop, is the same thing. Besides, the lame man said they amused themselves so much in prison." "But the sorrow we would cause to Martial—don't you think of that? It is on our account he came back here, and now remains; for himself alone, he could easily get along; he could return and poach in the woods he likes so well." "Well! let him take us in the woods with him," said François: "that would be best of all; I would be with him I love so much, and I should not have to work at a trade I cannot bear." The conversation of François and Amandine was interrupted. Their door was locked on the outside with a double turn.

"We are shut up!" cried François. "Ah! mon Dieu, what for, brother? What are they going to do with us?" "Perhaps it is Martial." "Listen, listen, his dog barks!" said Amandine. "It sounds to me as if they were hammering something," said François; "perhaps they are trying to break open Martial's door!" "Yes, yes, his dog barks all the time." "Listen, François! now it sounds like driving nails. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! I am afraid. What could our brother have done? now hear how his dog howls!" "Amandine, I hear nothing now," said François, approaching the door. The two children, holding their breath, listened with anxiety.

"Now they return," said Francois, in a low tone, "I hear them walking in the corridor." "Let us jump into bed, mother would kill us if she found us up," said Amandine. "No!" answered François, still listening: "they have just passed our door; they are running down stairs; now they open the kitchen door." "You think so?" "Yes, yes; I know the noise it makes." "Martial's dog keeps on howling," said Amandine; then, suddenly, she cried, "François! my brother calls us." "Martial?" "Yes; don't you hear him?" And, notwithstanding the thickness of the two closed doors, the stentorian voice of Martial, calling to the children, could be heard. "Mon Dieu! we cannot go to him—we are locked up," said Amandine: "they wish to do him some harm, since he calls to us."

"Oh! as for that—if I could prevent them," cried François, resolutely, "I would prevent them, if they were to cut me to pieces! But our brother does not know that we are locked up; he will think that we will not help him; call to him, François, that we are shut up!"

He was about to follow the advice of his sister, when a violent blow shook the blind on the outside of the little window of their room. "They are coming that way to kill us!" cried Amandine, and, in her fright, she threw herself on the bed, and covered her face with her hands.

François remained immovable, although he partook of the alarm of his sister. Yet, after the violent blow of which we have spoken, the blind was not opened; the most profound silence reigned throughout the house.

Martial had ceased to call the children.

Somewhat recovered, and excited by a lively curiosity, François ventured to half open the

window, and tried to see without, through the slats of the blinds.

"Take care, brother," whispered Amandine, who, on hearing François open the window, had partly raised herself up. "Do you see anything?" "No; the night is too dark." "Do you hear nothing?" "No; the wind blows too hard." "Come back, come back, then!" "Ah! now I see something." "What then?" "The light of a lantern; it comes and goes." "Who carries it?" "I only see the light. Ah! now it comes nearer; some one speaks." "Who is that?" "Listen, listen! it is Calebasse." "What does she say?" "She tells them to hold firm the foot of the ladder."

"Ah! do you see, it was in taking away the large ladder which was against our window, that they made such a noise just now." "I hear nothing more."

"What are they doing with the ladder now?"

"I can't see anything more." "Do you hear nothing?" "No." "Mon Dieu, François, it is, perhaps, to get into our brother Martial's room by the window that they have taken the ladder!" "That may be."

"If you would open the shutter a little to see—"

"I dare not." "Only a little." "Oh! no, no. If my mother should see it—" "It is so dark there is no danger." François, yielding to the entreaties of his sister, opened the blinds, and looked out. "Well, brother?" said Amandine, overcoming her fears, and approaching François on tiptoe. "By the light of the lantern," said he, "I see Calebasse, who is holding the foot of the ladder; it is placed against Martial's window." "What then?"

"Nicolas goes up the ladder; he has his hatchet in his hands; I see it shine." "Ah! you are not gone to bed! and you are spying us!" cried the widow suddenly, calling to François and his sister. Just as she was going into the kitchen, she saw the light from the half opened window. The unfortunate children had neglected to extinguish their light. "I am coming up," added the widow in a terrible voice: "I am coming to you, little spies!"

Such are the events which took place at the Island of the Ravageurs the evening of the day previous to that on which Madame Séraphin was to conduct thither Fleur de Marie.

CHAPTER V.

FURNISHED LODGINGS.

THE "*Passage de la Brasserie*," a dark and gloomy passage, and but little known, although situated in the centre of Paris, extended on one side from the "Rue Traversiere Saint Honoré" to the "Cour Saint Guillaume" on the other. Towards the middle of this wet, muddy, dark, and gloomy street, where the sun scarcely ever penetrates, stood a furnished house (vulgarly called a "*garni*," on account of the cheapness of its lodgings).

On a rascally-looking sign was to be seen, "*Furnished rooms*;" on the right of an obscure alley opened the door of a shop not less obscure, where the proprietor of the "*garni*" was generally to be found. This man, whose name has been several times mentioned at the "*Ile du Ravageur*," was named Micou; openly he was a seller of old iron; but secretly he bought and sold stolen metals, such as iron, lead, copper, and tin. To say that the Père Micou was in business and friendly relations with the Martials is sufficiently to appreciate his morality. * * * *

The Père Micou was a fat man of about fifty years of age, with a low, cunning look, a pimply nose, and bloated cheeks; he wore an otter-skin cap, and was wrapped up in an old green "carrik." Over the little iron stove near which he was warming himself, a board with numbers painted on it, was nailed against the wall; there were suspended the keys of the rooms whose proprietors were absent. The window looking into the street was painted in such a manner that those without could not see what was going on within the shop; this window was heavily barred with iron. Throughout this large shop reigned great obscurity: to the damp and blackish walls were suspended rusty chains of all sorts and sizes; the floor was nearly covered with fragments and clippings of iron and lead. Three peculiar knocks at the door attracted the attention of the Père Micou.

"Come in!" cried he; and Nicolas appeared, the son of the widow of the condemned. He was very pale; his face seemed still more sinister-looking than the evening previous, and yet it will be seen he feigned a kind of noisy gayety during the evening conversation. This scene took place the morning after his quarrel with his brother Martial.

"Ah! here you are, good fellow!" said the "logeur," cordially. "Yes, Père Micou; I come to have some business with you." "Shut the door, then; shut the door, then."

"My dog and my little cart are there—with the thing." "What do you bring me? du *gras double* (stolen sheet lead)?" "No, Père Micou." "It is not '*ravage?*' you are too cunning now; you are no longer a '*ravageur*;' perhaps it is '*dur*' (iron)?" "No, Père Micou; it is '*rouget*' (copper)—four pigs. There must be at least 150 pounds; my dog has as much as he can draw." "Go and bring the '*rouget*;' we will weigh it." "You must help me, Père Micou; I have a lame arm." "What is the matter with your arm?" "Nothing—a bruise." "You must make some iron red hot, put it into some water, and bathe your arm in this almost boiling water; it is a dealer in old iron's remedy, but it is excellent." "Thank you, Père Micou." "Come, let us bring in the rouget; I will help you, lazy bones!" The pigs of copper were then brought in from a little cart drawn by an enormous dog, and placed in the shop. "That little cart is a good idea!" said the Père Micou, adjusting the scales.

"Yes; when I have anything to bring, I put my dog and cart into my boat, and I harness him when I land. A carriage might blab; my dog can't blab." "All well at home?" demanded the receiver, weighing the copper: "your mother and sister, are they in good health?"

"Yes, Père Micou." "The children also?"

"The children also." "And your nephew André, where is he?" "Don't speak of it! he was 'en ribotte' yesterday; Barbillon and the big lame man took him away; he only came back this morning; he is already gone on an errand to the postoffice, Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau." "And your brother Martial, always savage?" "Ma foi, I do not know anything about him." "How! you don't know anything about him?" "No," said Nicolas, affecting an indifferent manner; "for two days we have not seen him; perhaps he has returned to his old trade of a poach-

er—unless his boat, which was very old, has not sunk in the river, and he with—" "That don't give you much concern, good for nothing, for you can't feel it much!" "It is true, one has their own ideas. How many pounds of copper are there?" "You made a good guess—148 pounds, my boy." "And you will owe me—"

"Exactly thirty francs." "Thirty francs, when copper is twenty sous a pound? Thirty francs!"

"We will say thirty-five, and don't blow, or I will send you to the devil—you, your copper, your dog, and your cart." "But, Père Micou, you cheat me too much! there's no sense in it." "Will you prove to me how this copper belongs to you, and I will give you fifteen sous a pound for it." "Always the same song. You are all alike: get out, you nest of brigands! Can one gouge a friend in such style? But this is not all. If I take your merchandise in exchange, you should give me good measure at least!" "Just so! What do you want? chains or cramp-irons for your boat?" "No; I want four or five iron plates, very strong, such as would answer to line window-shutters with." "I have just what you want—the third of an inch thick: a pistol-ball could not go through." "Just the thing!" "And of what size?"

"In all, seven or eight feet square."

"Good! what else do you want?" "Three iron bars, three to four feet long, and two inches square."

"I tore down the other day some grating from a window; that will suit you like a glove. What next?"

"Two strong hinges and a latch; to fix and shut at will, a *soupape* of two feet square." "A trap, you mean to say?" "No; a *soupape*." "I cannot comprehend what you can want with a soupape?" "That is possible, but I can." "Very well, you have only to choose; there are the hinges. What else do you need?" "That's all." "It is not much." "Get my goods ready at once, Père Micou, I will take them as I pass; I have some more errands to do." "With your cart? I say, farceur, I say a bale of goods in the bottom; is it something more that you have taken from everybody's cupboard, little glutton?" "As you say, Père Micou; but you don't eat this; don't make me wait for my iron, for I must be back to the island by twelve o'clock."

"Don't be uneasy, it is eight o'clock; if you are not going far, in an hour you can return; all will be ready. Will you take a drop?" "To be sure; you can well afford to pay it!" The Père Micou took out of an old chest a bottle of brandy, a cracked glass, a cup without a handle, and poured out the liquor.

"Your health, Père Micou!" "Yours, my boy, and the ladies at home!" "Thank you; and your *garni* comes on well?" "So so. I have always some lodgers for whom I fear the visits of the 'Commissaire;' but they pay more in consequence." "Why?" "How stupid you are! Sometimes I lodge as I buy; to such I no more ask for their passports than I ask you for an invoice." "Understood! but to those you let as dear as you buy of me cheap." "Must take care of one's self. I have a cousin who keeps a fine 'hôtel garnie' in the Rue Saint Honoré, while his wife is a mantuamaker, who employs as many as twenty assistants, either at her shop, or at their own homes." "Say now, old obstinacy, there must be some pretty ones there?" "I guess so! there are two or three that I have seen sometimes bringing in their work. Crimini! a'n't they nice! One little puss, who works at home, always laughing, and who is called Rigolette. Dieu de Dieu, my lark! what a pity I a'n't twenty!"

"Come, come, papa, put yourself out, or I'll cry fire!" "But she is virtuous, my boy; she is virtuous." "*Colasse*—get out! and you say that your cousin—" "Keeps a very good house, and, as she is of the same number as this little Rigolette—" "Virtuous!" "Exactly." "Colas!" "She will not have lodgers without passports or papers; but if any present themselves, knowing I am not very particular, she sends them to me." "And they pay in consequence?" "Always." "But are they all friends of '*la pégre*' (thieving), those who have no papers?" "No; ah! now, speaking of that, my cousin sent me, a few days ago, a customer; may the devil burn me if I can understand it! Come, another turn?" "Agreed; the liquor is good; your health, Père Micou!" "Yours! garçon! I say, then, that the other day my cousin sent me a customer who I cannot comprehend. Just imagine a mother and her daughter, who had a very seedy look, it is true; they carried the baggage in a handkerchief; well! although they must, of course, be nobody, since they had no papers, and they lodge by the fortnight. Since they have been here they do not stir out; no one comes to see them, my '*fistou*'—no one; and yet, if they were not so thin and so pale, they'd be two fine women, the little one above all! she is not more than fifteen or sixteen, at least; she is as white as a white rabbit, with large black eyes large as that—Nom de nom, what eyes! what eyes!"

"You'll get on fire again; I'll call the engines; and what do these women for a living?" "I tell you I comprehend nothing about it; they must be virtuous, and yet, no papers: without counting that they receive letters without address, their name must be bad to write." "How is that?" "They sent, this morning, my nephew André to the office of the letters to be called for, to reclaim a letter addressed to Madame X. Z. The letter was to come from Normandy, from a place called the *Aubiers*. They wrote that on a piece of paper, so that André might get the letter. You see they can be no great things, women who take the name of an X and a Z." "They will never pay you."

"It is not for an old ape like me to learn to make faces. They have taken a room without a fireplace, for which I make them pay twenty francs a fortnight, and in advance. They are, perhaps, sick; for two days they have not come down. It certainly is not from indigestion, for I do not think they have cooked anything since they have been here."

"If you only had such lodgers as the Père Micou—"

"That comes and goes; if I lodge people without passports, I lodge great folks also; I have, at this moment, two travelling clerks, a postoffice carrier, the leader of the orchestra of the 'Café des Aveugles,' and a 'reutière' (living on her income), all very genteel people; it is they who save the reputation of the house, if the 'Commissaire' wishes to examine too closely; they are not lodgers by night, not they; they are lodgers by the full light of the sun." "Whenever it shines in your passage, Père Micou—" "Farceur, one more turn." "And the last, for

I must clear out. Apropos, Robin, the big lame man, does he lodge here yet?" "Up stairs, the next door to the mother and daughter. He has consumed all his prison money, and I believe he has none left." "I say, look out! he is in '*rupture* de bau!" "I know it well; but I can't get rid of him. I believe he is after something: little Tortillard, the son of Bras-Rouge, came here the other night with Barbillon to look for him. I am afraid he will do some harm to my good lodgers, this damnable Robin; as soon as his term is up, I shall put him out, telling him his room is engaged by an ambassador, or by the husband of Madame de Saint Ildefonso, my rentière." "A rentière?"

"I should think so! three rooms and a cabinet on the front, that is all, nearly furnished, without counting a garret for her 'bonne' (female servant), eighty francs a month, and paid in advance by her uncle, to whom she gives one of her rooms as a stopping-place when he comes from the country. After all, I believe his country house is in the 'Rue Vivienne,' 'Rue Saint Honoré,' or in the environs of those places." "Understood! she is a rentière, because the old one pays her rents."

"Hush! here is her bonne!"

A woman rather advanced in life, wearing a white apron of doubtful purity, entered the shop of the "revendeur." "What can I do for you, Madame Charles?"

"Père Micou, your nephew is not here?" "He has gone on an errand to the postoffice; he will soon return."

"M. Badinot wishes that he would take this letter to its address; there is no answer, but it is very urgent."

"In a quarter of an hour it shall be on the way."

"Let him hurry." "Be easy." The "bonne" retired.

"This is the 'bonne' of one of your lodgers, Père Micou?" "Eh! no! 'colas,' it is the bonne of my 'rentière,' Mádame Saint Ildefonso. But M. Badinot is her uncle; he came yesterday from the country," answered M. Micou; "but, see now, what fine acquaintances they have! I told you they were people of style: he writes to a vicomte."

"Ah, bah!" "Well, look: *A. M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy, Rue de Chaillot. Très pressé, a lui-même.* I hope that when one lodges 'rentières' who have uncles who write to vicomtes, one can very well overlook a poor devil in the fourth story, who has no passport, heiu?" "I think so. Well, good-by for the present, Père Micou; I am going to fasten my dog and cart to your door; I will carry what I have to carry myself. Have my goods and money ready on my return." "All shall be ready. But, I say, before you go I must tell you, since you have been here, I have watched you." "Well!" "I don't know, but you seem to have something the matter with you." "I?" "Yes." "You are a fool. If I have something—it is—that I am hungry."

"You are hungry! it is possible, but I should say that you wish to appear lively, and at the bottom there is something that bites and pinches you—*une puce à la muette* (conscience), as they say; and to trouble you, it must bite hard, for you are no prude."

"I tell you you are crazy, Père Micou," said Nicolas, shuddering in spite of himself. "One would say that you tremble." "It is my arm which pains me." "Then don't forget my recipe, it will cure you." "Thank you, Père Micou — good-by," said Nicolas, taking his departure. The receiver, after having concealed the pigs of copper, busied himself in collecting the different articles for Nicolas, when a new personage entered the shop. It was a man of about fifty years of age, with a fine and knowing face, with heavy gray whiskers and gold spectacles; he was dressed with some degree of recherché; the large sleeves of his brown paletot, with velvet cuffs, displayed his straw-coloured gloves; his boots undoubtedly the evening previous had been brilliantly polished.

Such was M. Badinot, the uncle of the "rentière," this Madame de Saint Ildefonso, whose social position was the pride and security of the Père Micou.

The reader will, perhaps, recollect that M. Badinot, formerly a lawyer, but driven from the bar, and now a "chevalier d'industrie," and agent of equivocal affairs, served as a spy for the Baron de Graün, and had given to this "diplomate" a great deal of information concerning several characters of this narration.

"Madame Charles has just given you a letter?" said M. Badinot to the "receiver." "Yes, monsieur; my nephew will soon return; in a moment he will be off again." "No, give me the letter. I have changed my mind: I will go myself to the Vicomte de Saint Rémy," said Monsieur Badinot, emphasizing purposely this aristocratic address.

"Here is the letter, monsieur, have you no other commission?" "No, Père Micou," said M. Badinot, with a patronising air; "but I have reproaches to make to you." "To me, monsieur?" "Very grave reproaches." "How, monsieur?"

"Certainly Madame de Saint Ildefonso pays very dear for your first floor; my niece is one of those lodgers to whom one should pay the greatest respect; she came with confidence to this house, disliking the noises of the large streets: she hoped she would be here as in the country."

"And she is; just like a village. You ought to find it so—you, monsieur, who live in the country—it is just like a real village here!" "A village? Very fine—always the most infernal noise." "Yet it is impossible to find a more quiet house; over madame, there is the leader of the orchestra of the Café des Areugles and a travelling clerk; over them another clerk; over him, again, there is—" "It is not of these persons I complain; they are very quiet; my niece finds no inconvenience from them; but in the fourth story there is a lame man whom Madame de Saint Ildefonso met yesterday drunk on the staircase; he uttered horrible, savage cries; she almost fainted, she was so much alarmed. If you think with such occupants your house resembles a village—" "Monsieur, I swear to you that I only wait an opportunity to put this lame man out of doors: he has paid me his term in advance, otherwise he would have been already shown how to get out." "You should not have taken him for a lodger."

"But I hope madame has no other cause of complaint? there is a penny-postman, who is the very cream of honest people; and, over him, along side of the lame man, a woman and her daughter, who keep as close as mice."

"I repeat, Madame de Saint Ildefonso only complains of the lame man; he is the nightmare of the whole house, that knave! and I warn you, if you keep him, he will cause all the re-

spectable people to leave." "I will send him off, be assured—I do not hold to him." "And you will do well, for they will not remain."

"Which would not answer my purpose. So, monsieur, you may regard the lame man as off, for he only has four days to remain here." "That is too many; however, it is your business. At the very first insult my niece leaves the house." "Be assured, monsieur—"

"All this is for your interest, mon cher; profit by it, for I only speak once," said M. Badinot, in a patronising manner, as he left the shop. Is it not needless for us to say that this woman and this young girl who lived so solitary, were the two victims of the cupidity of the notary? We will conduct the reader into the miserable room they occupied.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VICTIMS OF AN ABUSE OF CONFIDENCE.

Let the reader imagine a closet situated on the fourth story of the house in the *Passage de la Brasserie*.

A pale and gloomy light hardly penetrated this narrow apartment, through a little window of cracked, dirty glass, and a single shutter; a yellowish dilapidated paper covered the walls; from the broken ceiling hung long spider-webs. The floor, broken in several places, showed the beams and laths of the room below. A table of white wood, a chair, an old trunk without a lock, and a flock bed with coarse sheets and an old woollen covering, such was the furniture of this "*garni*." On the chair was seated Madame la Baronne de Fermont. In the bed reposed Mademoiselle Claire de Fermont (such were the names of the two victims of Jacques Ferrand).

Possessing but one narrow bed, the mother and daughter slept by turns, dividing thus the hours of the night. The mother had too much anguish, too many inquietudes, to get much repose; but the daughter found some moments of rest and forgetfulness.

She was now asleep. Nothing could be more touching, more sorrowful, than the sight of this misery imposed by the cupidity of the notary on two women, until then accustomed to the sweet enjoyments of a life of ease, and surrounded in their native town with that consideration which an honourable and honoured family always inspire.

Madame de Fermont was about thirty-six years of age; her countenance at once expresses mildness and excellence; her features, formerly of remarkable beauty, are now sadly changed; her black hair, divided on her forehead and confined behind her head, already shows some tresses of silver. Clothed in a dress of mourning, pierced in several places, Madame de Fermont, with her hand supporting her head, leaned against the wretched bed of her child, and regarded her with inexpressible anguish.

Claire was only sixteen; her complexion had lost its dazzling purity; her beautiful dark eyelashes reached to her hollow cheeks. Once humid and rosy, but now dry and pale, her lips, half opened, displayed the enamel of her teeth: the rude contact of the bedclothes had given a red appearance in several places to the delicate neck, arms, and shoulders of the young girl. From time to time a slight shudder passed over her, as if she had some painful dream. For a long period Madame de Fermont had not wept; she looked on her daughter with a dry and inflamed eye, consumed by a slow fever, which was undermining her. Each day she found herself weaker; but fearing to alarm Claire, and not willing, we may say, to alarm herself, she struggled with all her strength against the first symptoms of her sickness. Through motives of similar generosity, the daughter endeavoured to conceal her sufferings. These two unhappy creatures, afflicted with the same griefs, were yet to be afflicted with the same disease. In misfortunes there are often moments when the future prospect is so frightful, that the most energetic minds dare not look it in the face, but shut their eyes, and endeavour to deceive themselves by mad illusions. Such was the position of Madame and Mademoiselle de Fermont. To express the tortures of this woman, during the long hours when she was thus contemplating her sleeping child, thinking of the past, the present, and the future, would be to describe what, in the holy and sacred griefs of a mother, there is the most poignant, the most desperate, the most insane; enchanting recollections, sinister fears, terrible foresights, bitter regrets, extreme dejectedness, ejaculations of powerless rage against the author of so much misery, vain supplications, violent prayers, and, finally, frightful doubts of the all-powerful justice of him who remains inexorable to this cry, dragged from the bottom of the maternal heart—to this sacred cry of which the echo ought to reach Heaven: *Pity for my child!*

"How cold she is now!" said the poor mother, touching lightly the icy hand and arm of her daughter: "she is very cold; one hour ago she was burning; it is fever; happily, she does not know she has it. Mon Dieu, how cold she is! this covering is so thin! I would put my old shawl on the bed; but if I take it from the door, where I have hung it, some of those drunken men will come and look through the cracks, as they did yesterday. What a horrible house, mon Dieu! If I had known what kind of place it was before I paid in advance, we should not have staid here; but I did not know—when one has no papers—could I think that I should ever have need of a passport? When I left Angers in my own carriage—could I have thought—but this is infamous—because the notary has pleased to rob me, I am reduced to the most frightful extremity, and against him I can do nothing."

* * * * *

"Oh! this notary; he does not know the frightful consequences of his robbery * * Alas! yes, I never dare tell my child my fears—not to grieve her; but I suffer; I have a fever; I can hardly sustain myself; I feel within me the germes of a malady—dangerous, perhaps—my bosom is on fire; my heart throbs; mon Dieu! if I should fall sick—if I should die! No, no! I will not—I cannot die—leave Claire—alone, abandoned in Paris—can it be possible? No! I am not sick, after all—what do I feel? a little heat, a heaviness about the head, caused, no doubt, from my uneasiness—from cold—oh! it is nothing serious.

"Come, come, no more of such weakness. Mon Dieu! it is by cherishing such ideas, it is in listening thus, that one falls really sick—and I have the time truly! must I not occupy myself in finding some work for Claire and myself, since this man, who gave us engravings to colour—" Then, after a pause, she added, with indignation,

"Oh! this is abominable! to give this work at the price of Claire's—to take from us this miserable means of existence, because I would not allow my child to go and work at his rooms! Perhaps we may find work elsewhere; but when one knows nobody, it is so difficult! When one is so miserably lodged they inspire no confidence; and yet, the small sum that remains once gone, what shall we do? what will become of us?

* * * * *

"If the laws leave this crime unpunished, I will not—for, if fate pushes me to the end—if I do not find the means to emerge from the atrocious position in which this wretch has placed me and my child, I do not know what I shall do—I shall be capable of killing him—I—this man—then they can do what they will with me.

"Yes—but my child? my child?

"To leave her alone, abandoned—ah! no, I do not wish to die; for this, I cannot kill this man. What would become of her? she, at sixteen—she is young, and pure as an angel; but she is handsome—but misery, hunger, abandonment—what may they not cause? and then—and then—into what abyss may she not fall?

"Oh! it is frightful—poverty! frightful enough for any one; but, perhaps, more so for those who have always lived in opulence. I cannot beg—I must absolutely see my child starve before I can beg! What a coward—yet—"

* * * * *

Two or three violent knocks at the door made her tremble, and awoke her daughter with a start.

"Mon Dieu! mamma, what is that?" cried Claire, sitting up in bed; then throwing her arms around her mother's neck, who, very much alarmed, pressed her child to her bosom,

"Mamma, what is it, then?" repeated Claire.

"I do not know, my child; but do not be afraid, it is nothing; some one knocked; it is, perhaps, the letter we expect." At this moment the worm-eaten door shook again, under repeated blows with the fist.

"Who is there?" said Madame de Fermont in a trembling voice. A coarse, rough, rowdy voice answered, "Ah! ça, are you deaf, neighbours? ohé, neighbours! ohé!!" "What do you want? monsieur, I do not know you," said Madame de Fermont, trying to conceal the agitation of her voice.

"I am Robin, your neighbour; give me some fire to light my pipe: come, houp! and make haste!"

"Mon Dieu! it is that lame man, who is always drunk," said the mother to her child. "Ah! ça, are you going to give me any fire? or I'll break all open, in the name of thunder!" "Monsieur, I have no fire." "You must have some matches, then; everybody has them; do you open—come?" "Monsieur, go away." "You won't open—once—twice?"

"I beg you to go away, or I will call." "Once—twice—three times—no, you won't? Then I'll break all down! hu! then." And the wretch gave such a furious kick against the door, he burst it in, the miserable lock breaking at the first assault. The two women screamed with alarm. Madame de Fermont, nothwithstanding her weakness, threw herself before the bandit and barred his entrance. "Monsieur, this is outrageous: you shall not come in," cried the unhappy mother; "I shall cry for help." "For what—for what?" answered he: "mustn't we be neighbourly? If you had opened, I should not have broken in." Then, with the stupid obstinacy of drunkenness, he added, staggering, "I wish to come in; I will come in, and I will not go out until I light my pipe." "I have neither fire nor matches. In the name of Heaven, monsieur, retire." "It's not true; you say that so I shan't see the little one in bed. Yesterday you stopped up all the holes in the door. She is pretty; I want to see her. Take care of your self, I'll scratch your face if you don't let me come in. I tell you that I will see the little one in bed, and I will light my pipe, or I'll smash everything, and you along with it!" "Help! mon Dieu! help!" cried Madame de Fermont, who felt the door giving way under a violent push of the lame man. Intimidated by these cries, the man stepped backward and shook his fist at Madame de Fermont, saying, "You shall pay me for this; I will return to-night—I'll catch hold of your tongue, and you cannot cry."

And the *gros boiteaux* (big lame man), as they called him at the island of the Ravageurs, descended the stairs, uttering horrible oaths. Madame de Fermont, fearing that he might return, and seeing the lock broken, drew the table against the door to barricade it. Claire had been so alarmed at this horrible scene, that she had fallen on her cot almost without motion, with a violent attack of the nerves. Madame de Fermont, forgetting her own alarm, ran to her daughter, pressed her in her arms, made her drink a little water, and, with the most tender caresses, succeeded in calming her. "Be composed, my poor child—this bad man has gone away." Then the wretched mother cried, with a touching accent, "Yet it is this notary who is the cause of all our troubles. Compose yourself, my child," resumed she, tenderly embracing her daughter: "this wretch is gone." "Mon Dieu, mamma, if he should come back again? You see you have called for help, and no one has come. Oh! I entreat you; let us leave this house, I shall die here with fear." "How you tremble! you have a fever?" "No, no," said the young girl, to pacify her mother; "it is nothing; it is fright; it will pass over; and you, how are you? Give me your hands. Mon Dieu, how burning hot they are! Ah! you are suffering; you wish to conceal it from me."

"Do not think so; I am better than ever; it is the emotion which this man has caused me which makes me thus; I slept on the chair very soundly; I only awoke when you did."

"Yet, mamma, your poor eyes are very red, much inflamed!" "Ah! well, my child, on a chair, sleep is not so refreshing, you know!" "Really, do you not suffer?" "No, no, I assure you; and you?"

"Nor I; only I tremble still from fear. I entreat you, mamma, let us leave this house." "And where shall we go to? You know with how much trouble we found this wretched place; and, besides, we have paid two weeks in advance; they will not return us our money; and we have so little left—so little, that we should manage as closely as possible." "Perhaps some day M. de Saint Rémy will answer your letter." "I no longer hope it; it is so long since I have written." "He might not have received your letter; why do you not write him again? From hence to Angers is not so far; we shall soon have an answer."

"My poor child, you know how much this has cost me already." "What do you risk? he is so good, notwithstanding his roughness! Was he not one of my father's old friends? and, be-

sides, he is our relation. But he is poor himself; his fortune is very small. Perhaps he does not reply to avoid the mortification of being obliged to refuse us." "But if he has not received your letter, mamma?"

"And if he has received it, my child; of two things choose one: either he is in such a situation that he cannot come to our aid, or he feels no interest for us; then why expose ourselves to a refusal or a humiliation?"

"Come, courage, mamma, we have one hope left. Perhaps this morning will bring us a happy answer."

"From M. d'Orbigny? Without doubt. This letter of which you formerly made a draught, was so simple, so touching—exposed so naturally our misfortunes, that he will have pity on us. Really, I do not know what tells me you are wrung to a despair of ruin."

"He has so little reason to interest himself about us: he had, it is true, formerly known your father, and I had often heard my brother speak of M. d'Orbigny, as of a man with whom he had been on friendly terms before he left Paris with his young wife." "It is just on that account that I have hopes; he has a young wife, she will be compassionate; and, besides, in the country, one can do so much good. He will take you, I suppose, for housekeeper; I will take care of the linen. Since M. d'Orbigny is very rich, in a large house there is always employment."

"Yes; but we have so little right to his interest. We are so unfortunate."

"That is frequently a title in the eyes of charitable people. Let us hope that M. d'Orbigny and his wife are so." "Well, in the case that we need expect nothing from him, I will overcome my false shame, and will write to Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay—this lady, of whom M. de Saint Rémy spoke so often, whose generosity and good heart he so often praised? Yes, the daughter of the Prince du Noirmont. He knew her when she was very small, and he treated her almost as his child, for he was intimately connected with the prince. Madame de Lucenay must have many acquaintances; she could, perhaps, find us a place."

"Doubtless, mamma, but I understand your reserve; you do not know her at all, while my poor father and uncle knew M. d'Orbigny a little."

"Finally, in the case that Madame d'Orbigny can do nothing for us, I will have recourse to a last resource." "What is it, mamma?" "It is a very weak one--a very foolish hope perhaps; but why not try it? the son of M. de Saint Rémy is—"

"M. de Saint Rémy has a son," cried Claire, with astonishment. "Yes, my child, he has a son." "He never spoke of him—he never came to Angers." "True, and for reasons you cannot know. M. de Saint Rémy having left Paris fifteen years ago, has not seen his son since." "Fifteen years without seeing his father! can it be possible? mon Dieu." "Alas! yes, you see it. I tell you that the son of M. de Saint Rémy, being well known in the fashionable world, and very rich—" "Very rich! and his father is poor?" "All the fortune of M. de Saint Rémy, the son, came from his mother." "But no matter; how can he leave his father?" "His father would accept nothing from him." "Why is that?" "This is once more a question to which I cannot reply, my dear child; but I heard my poor brother say that the generosity of this young man was generally praised. Young and generous, he ought to be good Thus, learning from me that my husband was the intimate friend of his father, perhaps he might interest himself in procuring us some work or employment; he has so many brilliant and numerous relations, that this would be easy." "And then we could find out from him, perhaps, if M. de Saint Rémy, his father, should have left Angers before you wrote to him; that would explain his silence." "I believe that M. de Saint Rémy, my child, has no intercourse with his father. In fine, it is only to try." "Unless M. d'Orbigny should answer you in a favourable manner; and I repeat it, I do not know why, but, in spite of myself, I have hope." "But already many days have elapsed, my child, since I have written, and nothing—nothing yet. A letter put in the office before four o'clock in the afternoon, arrives the next morning at Aubiers; five days have now passed since we might have received an answer." "Perhaps he is thinking before he writes, in what way he can be useful to us." "God hear you, my child!" "It appears very plain to me, mamma, if he could do nothing for us, he would have informed you at once." "Unless he will do nothing at all." "Ah, mamma! can it be possible? not deign to answer us, and leave us to hope four days, eight days perhaps—for when one is unfortunate, they hope always." "Alas! my child, there is sometimes so much indifference for the woes which one does not know!" "But your letter." "My letter cannot give him an idea of our troubles, of our sufferings of each moment; can my letter picture to him our unfortunate life, our humiliations of every description, our existence in this frightful house, the alarm we have experienced even just now? Can my letter describe to him the horrible future which awaits us, if—but stop, my child, do not let us speak of this. Mon Dieu! you tremble—you are cold." "No, mamma; pay no attention to it; but, tell me, suppose everything fails; that the little money which remains in that trunk is spent, can it be possible that in a rich place like Paris, we should both die of hunger and misery, for want of work, and because a bad man has taken what you had?" "Hush, poor child." "But, mamma, could it be?" "Alas!" "But God, who knows all, who can do all, how could he abandon us, he whom we have not offended?" "I entreat you, my child, do not have such gloomy ideas; I would rather see you hope, even against hope." "Come, rouse me up with your dear illusions; I am but too apt to be discouraged, you know well." "Yes, yes! let us hope; it is better. The nephew of the porter will soon return from the post-office with a letter. One more errand to pay from your little treasure, and through my fault. If I had not been so feeble to-day and yesterday, we could have gone ourselves as we did before, but you would not leave me alone here to go yourself." "Could I, my child? Judge then, just now, this wretch who broke in the door, if you had been alone." "Oh! mamma, hush; only to think of it makes me shudder."

At this moment some one knocked sharply at the door. "Heavens, it is he," cried Madame de Fermont, and she pushed with all her strength the table against the door. Her fears, however, ceased when she heard the voice of the Père Micou. "Madame, my nephew, André, has come from the postoffice. It is a letter with an X and a Z for address; it comes from

a distance. There are eight sous postage and the commission—it is twenty sous." "Mamma, a letter from the country: we are saved; it is from M. de Saint Rémy or M. d'Orbigny! Poor mother, you shall suffer no more, no longer be uneasy about me; you shall be happy. God is is just—God is good!" cried the young girl, and a ray of hope lighted up her sweet and charming face. "Oh! monsieur, thank you, give—give me quickly," said Madame de Fermont, pushing back the table and half opening the door. "It is twenty sous, madame," said the receiver, showing the letter so impatiently desired. "I am going to pay you, monsieur." "Ah! madame, par exemple—there is no hurry; I am going to the roof; in ten minutes I will descend, and take the money as I pass." The Père Micou handed the letter to Madame Fermont, and disappeared.

"The letter is from Normandy. On the stamp is *les Aubiers;* it is from M. d'Orbigny!" cried Madame de Fermont, examining the address. "Well, mamma, was I right?" "Mon Dieu, how my heart beats! Our good or bad fortune is, however, there," said Madame de Fermont, in a faltering voice, showing the letter. Twice her trembling hand approached the seal to break it. She had not the courage. Can one hope to paint the terrible anguish suffered by those who, like Madame de Fermont, await from a letter hope or despair?

The burning and feverish emotion of a player whose last pieces of gold are staked on a single card, and who, breathless, the eye inflamed, awaits the decisive throw which saves or ruins him forever; this emotion, so violent, would hardly give an idea of the terrible anguish of which we speak. In an instant the soul is lifted up with the most radiant hopes, or plunged into the blackest despair. The unfortunate being passes in turn through the most contrary emotions; ineffable feelings of happiness and gratitude towards the generous heart which had pity on his sorrows—a sad and bitter resentment against the selfish or indifferent. "What weakness," said Madame de Fermont, with a sad smile, seating herself on the bed of her daughter; "once more, my poor Claire, our fate is there. I burn to know it, and I dare not. If it is a refusal, alas! it will be always soon enough." "And if it should be a promise of succour? say, mamma! if this poor little letter contains good and consoling words, which will assure us as to the future, in promising us a modest employ in the house of M. d'Orbigny, each minute we lose, is it not a moment of happiness lost?" "Yes, my child; but if, on the contrary—" "No, mamma; you are mistaken, I am sure of it—when I told you that M. d'Orbigny would not have waited so long to answer your letter, except to give you a favourable answer. Let me look at the letter, mamma; I am sure to guess, only from the writing, if the news is good or bad. Hold, I am sure of it now," said Claire, taking the letter; "you have only to look at the bold, good, and strong hand, to see that the writer must be accustomed to give to those who suffer." "I entreat you, Claire, no more of these foolish hopes, or I can never open the letter." "Mon Dieu! good little mamma, without opening it I can tell you what it contains; listen: Madame, your condition, and that of your daughter, is so worthy of interest, that I beg you will have the goodness to come immediately to me in case you would like to take charge of my house."

"My child, once more I entreat you—no insane hopes; the reverse will be frightful. Come, courage," said Madame de Fermont, taking the letter from her daughter, and preparing to break the seal. "Courage for you—very well!" said Claire, smiling, and carried away by a feeling of confidence so natural at her age. "As for me, I have no need of it; I am so sure of what I advance. Stop, do you wish me to open the letter? shall I read it? give it me, timid mamma."

"Yes—I would rather—here. But no, no; it is better that I should." And Madame de Fermont broke the seal with indescribable emotion. Her daughter, also, in spite of her apparent confidence, could hardly breathe.

"Read it aloud, mamma," said she.

"The letter is not long; it is from the Comtesse d'Orbigny," said Madame de Fermont, looking at the signature.

"So much the better; it is good. Do you see, mamma, this excellent young lady has been pleased to answer you herself."

"We shall see."

"Madame:

"M. le Comte d'Orbigny, very much indisposed for some time past, could not reply to you during my absence."—"Do you see, mamma, it was not his fault." "Listen, listen."—"Having arrived this morning from Paris, I hasten to write you, madame, after having conferred on the subject of your letter with M. d'Orbigny. He has but a faint recollection of the relations which you suppose to have existed between him and your brother. As to the name of your husband, madame, it is not unknown to M. d'Orbigny; but he cannot recollect under what circumstances he heard it mentioned. The pretended spoliation, of which so lightly you accuse M. Jacques Ferrand, whom we have the good fortune to have for a notary, is, in the eyes of M. d'Orbigny, a cruel calumny, of which, doubtless, you have not counted the bearing. My husband, as well as myself, madame, know and admire the well-known probity of the respectable and pious man you attack so blindly. It is to inform you, madame, that M. d'Orbigny, feeling, doubtless, for the unfortunate position in which you are placed, and of which it is not his province to find out the real cause, finds it out of his power to assist you.

"Be pleased to receive, madame, with this expression of the regrets of M. d'Orbigny, the assurance of my most distinguished sentiments.

"Comtesse d'Orbigny."

The mother and daughter looked at each other, incapable of uttering a word.

The Père Micou knocked at the door and said, "Madame, can I come in for the postage and commission? It is twenty sous." "Ah! it is right! such good news! it is well worth what we spend in two days for our living," said Madame de Fermont, with a bitter smile; and leaving the letter on the bed, she went towards an old trunk without a lock, stooped down, and opened it. "We are robbed!" cried the unhappy woman, with horror. "Nothing—no more!" added she, in a mournful tone. And, powerless, she leaned on the trunk.

"What do you say, mamma? The bag of money?"

But Madame de Fermont arose quickly, went out of the chamber, and, addressing the receiver, she said, with a sparkling eye, and cheeks coloured with indignation and alarm, "Monsieur, I had a bag of money in this trunk; some one

has robbed me—yesterday, doubtless, for I went out for an hour with my daughter. This money must be found. Do you hear? You are responsible." "Some one robbed you! It is not true; my house is honest," said the receiver, harshly and insolently. "You say that, so as not to pay me the twenty sous." "I tell you, monsieur, that this money, all that I possessed in the world, some one has stolen; it must be found, or I'll make a complaint. Oh! I shall spare nothing, respect nothing—do you see—I notify you!" "That would be very fine, you who have no papers; go and make your complaint! go at once! I defy you!" The unhappy woman was overcome. She could not go out and leave her daughter alone in bed, since the fright she had received in the morning, and, above all, after the threats addressed to her by the receiver. He continued: "It is a cheat; you had no more a bag of silver than a bag of gold; you don't want to pay me the postage, hey? Good! all the same; when you pass before my door, I will tear off your old black shawl from your shoulders; it is very threadbare, but it is worth at least twenty sous." "Ah! monsieur," cried Madame de Fermont, bursting into tears, "have pity on us. This small sum is all we had—my daughter and I; that stolen, we have nothing left—nothing, do you understand?—nothing—but to starve!" "What would you have me to do? If it is true that you are robbed, and silver, too, it has been spent long since; the money—"

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" "The 'gaillard' who has stolen them would not have been simple enough to mark the money and keep it here, so that he might be caught—if it is some one in this house, which I do believe—for, as I said only this morning to the uncle of the lady on the first floor, here is a real place for plunder; if you are robbed, it is your misfortune. For should you make a hundred thousand complaints, you would not recover a sous—you would gain nothing by it, I tell you—believe me." "Well," cried the receiver, arousing himself, and seeing Madame de Fermont stagger, "what's the matter? You turn pale? Take care of her, Mademoiselle—your mother is sick," added he, advancing in time to save her from falling. The factitious energy which had so long sustained her gave way under this new affliction. "Mother—mon Dieu!—what is the matter?" cried Claire, still in bed. The receiver, yet active and strong for his age, seized with a transitory feeling of pity, took Madame de Fermont in his arms, pushed open the door, and entered, saying, "Mademoiselle, pardon me for coming in while you are in bed, but I must bring in your mother; she has fainted; it can't last." On seeing this man enter, Claire uttered a cry of alarm, and concealed herself, as well as she could, under the bedclothes. The receiver seated Madame de Fermont on the chair near the bed, and retired, leaving the door half open, the "gros boiteaux" having broken the lock. * * * * * * *

One hour after this, the violent malady, which for so long a time had threatened Madame de Fermont, showed itself. Attacked by a violent fever and frightful delirium, the unfortunate woman was laid in the bed of her child, who, alone, alarmed, and almost as ill as her mother, had neither money nor resources, and feared at each moment to see the bandit enter who lived upon the same floor.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RUE DE CHAILLOT.

We will precede, by some hours, M. Badinot, who, from the "passage de la Brasseire," had gone in haste to the Vicomte de Saint Rémy. This last-mentioned person, as we have before said, lived in the Rue de Chaillot, and occupied a charming little house, built between a court and garden, in this solitary "quartier," although very near the Champs Elysées, the most fashionable "promenade" in Paris. It is useless to enumerate the advantages which M. de Saint Rémy derived from a position so wisely chosen. We will only say, a person could enter his house very secretly, through a little garden door, which opened on a small and very lonesome street.

In fine, by a miraculous chance, one of the finest horticultural establishments in Paris had also, in this out-of-the-way passage, an exit not much used. The mysterious visiters of M. de Saint Rémy, in case of a surprise or unlooked-for rencounter, were armed with a pretext perfectly plausible and rural for having adventured in the "ruelle fatalle." They went (they might say) to choose rare flowers at a celebrated florist's, renowned for the beauty of his conservatories. These visiters, besides, would only have told half a falsehood; the vicomte, with distinguished taste, had a charming green-house, which extended, in part, along the little street we have spoken of; the little door opened into this delicious winter garden, which reached to a boudoir situated on the ground floor of the house.

Madame de Lucenay had demanded a key of this little door. The interior of the mansion of M. de Saint Rémy presented a singular appearance; it was divided into two establishments—the ground floor, where he received "les dames," the first story, where he received "les hommes," to dinner and play; in fine, those he called his *friends*.

Thus, on the ground floor was a "chamber à coucher," which shone with gold, mirrors, flowers, silks, and lace; a small music-room, where were a harp and pianos (M. de Saint Rémy was an excellent musician), a cabinet of pictures and curiosities, the boudoir communicating with the green-house, a dining-room, a bathing-room, and a small library. It is useless to say that all these rooms, furnished with exquisite taste, had for ornaments some "*Watteaus*"* but little known, some Bouchers unheard of, groups of statuary in "biscuit," and on their stands of jasper, or "brèche antique," a few valuable copies, in white marble, of some of the finest groups of the "Musée." Joined to this, in summer, for perspective, the deep shade of a verdant garden; quiet, loaded with flowers, peopled with birds, watered by a little brook of living water, which, before it spreads itself over the short grass, falls from a black and rustic rock, shining like a ribband of silver gauze, and is lost in a pearly wave, in a limpid basin, where two fine swans show their graceful forms.

And when night came, calm and serene, how much shade, how much perfume, what silence in sweet-scented groves, whose thick foliage served as a canopy to the rustic sofas made of reeds and Indian mats!

In winter, on the contrary, except the glass which opened into the conservatory, all was closed: the transparent silk of the blinds, the

* A painter.

heavy mass of lace and muslin curtains, rendered the light still more mysterious; on every disposable place large masses of exotics seemed to spring out of vases glittering with gold and enamel. * * * * *

Such was the vicomte. At Athens he had been, doubtless, admired, exalted, deified, as the equal of Alcibiades; at the time of which we speak, the vicomte was nothing more than an unworthy forger, a miserable cheat.

The first story had an entirely different appearance, altogether masculine. There nothing coquettish, nothing feminine; the furniture was of a style simple and serene; for ornaments, fire-arms, pictures of race-horses, which had earned for the vicomte a good number of gold and silver vases, placed on the tables; the "tabagie" (smoking-room) and the saloon for play joined a lively-looking dining-room, where eight persons (the number always strictly limited when it was a question of a *diner savant*) had often appreciated the excellence of the cook, and the not less excellent merit of the vicomte's cellar, before commencing with him some *nervous* parties of whist of five or six hundred Louis, or to rattle the noisy dice-box.

The apartments of M. de Saint Rémy being thus thrown open to the reader, he will now please to follow us to more familiar regions, to enter the carriage court, and mount the little staircase which leads to the very comfortable room of Edwards Patterson, chief of the stables to M. de Saint Rémy.

This illustrious coachman had invited to breakfast M. Boyer, confidential valet de chambre of the vicomte. A very pretty English servant girl having retired after having brought in a silver teapot, our two gentlemen were left alone.

Edwards was about forty years of age; never did a more skilful or fatter coachman cause his seat to groan under a rotundity more imposing, nor to ornament with a powdered wig a face more rubicund, nor to collect more elegantly, in his left hand, the quadruple ribands of a four-in-hand; as good a judge of horses as Tattersall of London, having been, in his youth, as good a trainer as the old and celebrated Chifney, the vicomte had found in Edwards a rare thing, an excellent coachman and a man very capable of directing the training of some race-horses, which he had had for "tenir des Paris." Edwards, when he did not display his sumptuous brown and silver livery on the emblazoned hammer-cloth of his seat, looked very much like an honest English farmer; it is under this guise we now shall present him to our readers, adding, that in his broad and red face one could easily perceive the diabolical and unmerciful cunning of a horse-jockey.

M. Boyer, his guest, the confidential valet, was a tall, slender man, with gray hair, rather bald, and with a sly, cool, discreet, and reserved expression; he used very choice language, had polite, easy manners, rather literary, political opinions of the conservative stamp, and could creditably play his part of first violin in a quartette of amateurs; at short intervals he took, with the best grace in the world, a pinch of snuff from a golden box mounted with fine pearls, after which he brushed negligently, with the back of his hand, the folds of his fine linen shirt, quite as fine as that of his master. "Do you know, my dear Edwards," said Boyer, "that your servant Betty makes quite a supportable cook, 'bourgeoise!'" "Ma foi, it is a good girl," said Edwards, who spoke French perfectly, "and I shall take her with me to my establishment, if I should decide on it; and on this subject, since we are here alone, my dear Boyer, let us talk business; you understand it very well."

"Why yes, a little," said Boyer, modestly, and taking a pinch of snuff. "That is learned so naturally, when one occupies himself with the affairs of others." "I have, then, very important advice to ask of you; it is on this account that I begged the favour of your company to a cup of tea this morning."

"Quite at your service, my dear Edwards."

"You know that besides the race horses, I had a contract with M. le Vicomte for the complete maintenance of his stables, cattle, and people; that is to say, eight horses and five or six grooms and jockeys, for the sum of twenty-four thousand francs a year, my wages included." "It was reasonable."

"During four years, M. le Vicomte punctually paid me; but about the middle of last year he said to me, 'Edwards, I owe you about twenty-four thousand francs; how much do you estimate, at the lowest price, my horses and vehicles?' 'Monsieur le Vicomte, the eight horses would not sell for less than three thousand francs each, one with the other, and then they would be given away (and it is true, Boyer, for the phaeton pair cost five hundred guineas), that would make twenty-four thousand francs for the horses. As to the carriages, there are four, say twelve thousand francs, which, in all, would make thirty-six thousand francs.'

'Well!' answered the vicomte, 'buy them all from me at this price, on condition that, for the twelve thousand francs remaining after your claim is paid, you will keep and leave at my disposition, horses, servants, and carriages for six months.'"

"And you wisely agreed to the bargain, Edwards? It was a golden affair." "Certainly it was; in two weeks the six months will have expired, and I enter into possession."

"Nothing can be plainer. The papers were drawn up by M. Badinot, the vicomte's agent. In what have you need of my advice?" "What ought I to do? Sell the establishment on account of the departure of M. le Vicomte (and it will sell well), or shall I establish myself as a horse-dealer, with my stable, which will make a fine beginning? What do you advise?"

"I advise you to do what I shall do myself."

"How?" "I am in the same position that you are." "How?" "M. le Vicomte detests details. When I came here I had, through economy and by inheritance, some sixty thousand francs. I paid the expenses of the house, as you did the stables. About the same time that you did, I found myself in advance some twenty thousand francs; and for those who furnished the supplies, some sixty thousand. Then the vicomte proposed to me, as he did to you, to reimburse myself by buying of him the furniture of the house, comprising the silver—which is fine—the pictures, and so on; the whole estimated at the very lowest price, 140,000 francs. There were 80,000 francs to pay; with the remainder I engaged, as long as it lasted, to defray the expenses of the table, servants, and so forth, and for nothing else: it was a condition of the bargain."

"Because that on these expenses you would gain something more."

"Necessarily; for I have made arrangeme-

with those who furnish the supplies that I will not pay until after the sale," said Boyer, taking a huge pinch of snuff; "so that at the end of this month—"

"The furniture is yours, as the horses and carriages are mine."

"Evidently. M. le Vicomte has gained by this, to live as he always liked to live, to the last moment—as a grand signior—and that in the very teeth of his creditors; for furniture, silver, horses, vehicles, all had been paid for at his coming of age, and had become my property and yours."

"Then, M. le Vicomte is ruined?" "In five years."

"And how much did he inherit?" "Only a poor little million, cash down," said M. Boyer, quite disdainfully, taking another pinch of snuff. "Add to this million about two hundred thousand francs of debts, it is passable. It is, then, to tell you, my dear Edwards, that I have had an idea of letting this house, admirably furnished as it is, to some English people. Some of your compatriots would have paid well for it."

"Without doubt. Why do you not do it?"

"Yes, but the 'non valeurs! c'est chanceux;' so I have decided to sell. M. le Vicomte is so well known as a connoisseur, that everything would bring a double price, so that I should realize a round sum. Do as I shall, Edwards: realize, realize, and do not adventure your earnings in speculations. You! chief coachman of M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy! It will be, who can get you. Only yesterday some one spoke to me of a minor just emancipated, a cousin of Madame le Duchesse de Lucenay, the young Duc de Montbrison, who has arrived from Italy with his tutor, and who is about establishing himself. Two hundred and fifty thousand livres income, in good land; and, with that, just entering into life—twenty years old. All the illusions of confidence—all the infatuation of expense—prodigal as a prince. I know the intendant. I can tell you this in confidence: he has already nearly agreed with me as first valet de chambre. He countenances me, the niais!" And M. Boyer shrugged his shoulders again, having recourse to his snuff-box.

"You hope to turn him out?" "Parbleu! he is an imbecile or an impertinent. He puts me there as if he had no fear of me! Before two months are over I shall be in his place."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand livres income!" said Edwards, reflecting, "and a young man. It is a good house."

"I will tell you what there is to do. I will speak for you to my protector," said M. Boyer, ironically. "Enter there—it is a fortune which has roots, and to which one can hang on for a long time. It is not this miserable million of M. le Vicomte—a real snowball—one ray of Parisian sun, and all is said. I have seen here that I should only be a bird of passage: it is a pity, for this house does us honour; and, up to the last moment, I will serve M. le Vicomte with the respect and esteem which are his due."

"Ma foi, my dear Boyer, I thank you, and accept your proposition; but suppose I was to propose to this young duke the stable of M. le Vicomte? It is all ready; it is known and admired by all Paris."

"Exactly so; you might make an affair of gold."

"But why do you not propose this house to him, so admirably mounted? What can he find better?"

"Pardieu! Edwards, you are a man of mind, it does not surprise me, but you gave me an excellent idea. We must address ourselves to the vicomte; he is so good a master that he would not refuse to speak for us to the young duke. He can tell him that, leaving for the Legation of Gerolstein, where he is an attaché, he wishes to dispose of his whole establishment. Let us see: 160,000 francs for the house, all furnished, the silver and the pictures; 50,000 francs for the stable and carriages; that makes 230,000 to 240,000 francs. It is an excellent affair for a young man who wants everything. He would spend three times this amount before he could get anything half so elegant and select together as the 'ensemble' of this establishment; for it must be acknowledged, Edwards, there is no one can equal M. le Vicomte in knowing how to live."

"And horses!" "And good cheer! Godefroi, his cook, leaves here a hundred times better than when he came. M. le Vicomte has given him excellent counsels—has enormously refined him."

"Besides, they say M. le Vicomte is such a good player."

"Admirable! Gaining such large sums with even more indifference than he loses; and yet I have never seen any lose more gallantly."

* * * * *

"Ah! ça—what is he going to do now?"

"Set out for Germany, with a good travelling-carriage and seven or eight thousand francs, which he knows how to get. Oh! I feel no embarrassment about the vicomte: he is one of those personages who always fall on their feet, as they say."

"And he has no more money to inherit?"

"None; for his father has only a small competency."

"His father?" "Certainly." "The father of M. le Vicomte is not dead?" "He was not about five or six months since. M. le Vicomte wrote to him for some family papers." "But he never comes here?"

"For a good reason. For fifteen years he has lived in the country, at Angers." "But M. le Vicomte never goes to see him?" "His father?" "Yes."

"Never, never—ah, yes!" "Have they quarrelled?"

"What I am going to tell you is no secret, for I had it from the confidential agent of M. le Prince de Noirmont."

"The father of Madame de Lucenay?" said Edwards, with a cunning and significant look, of which M. Boyer, faithful to his habits of reserve and discretion, took no notice, but resumed, coldly,

"Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay is, in effect, the daughter of M. le Prince de Noirmont; the father of M. le Vicomte was intimately connected with the prince. Madame la Duchesse was then a very young person, and M. de Saint Rémy the elder treated her as familiarly as if she had been his own child. Notwithstanding his sixty years, he is a man of an iron character, courageous as a lion, and of a probity that I shall permit myself to designate as marvelous. He possessed almost nothing, and had married, from love, the mother of M. le Vicomte, a young person, rather rich, who brought the million at the christening of which we have just had the honour to assist," and M. Boyer made a low bow. Edwards did the same.

"The marriage was very happy until the moment when the father of M. le Vicomte found, as was said, by chance, some devilish letters, which proved evidently that, during an absence, some three or four years after his marriage, his wife had had a tender weakness for a certain Polish count."

"That often happens to the Poles. When I lived with M. le Marquis de Senneval, Madame la Marquise—une enragee—"

M. Boyer interrupted his companion. "You should know, my dear Edwards, the alliances of our great families before you speak, otherwise you reserve for yourself cruel mistakes."

"How?" "Madame la Marquise de Senneval is the sister of the Duc de Montbrison, where you desire to engage."

"Oh!—the devil!" "Judge of the effect, if you had spoken of her in this manner before the envious or detractors: you would not have remained twenty-four hours in the house."

"It is true, Boyer. I will try to know the alliances."

"I resume. The father of M. le Vicomte discovered, then, after twelve or fifteen years of a marriage, until then happy, that he had reason to complain of a Polish count. Fortunately or unfortunately, the vicomte was born nine months after that his father, or, rather, that M. le Comte de Saint Rémy had returned from this fatal journey, so that he could not be certain whether it was his child or not. Nevertheless, M. le Comte separated at once from his wife, not wishing to touch a sous of the fortune she had brought him, and retired to the country, with about eighty thousand francs which he possessed; but you shall see the rancour of this diabolical character. Although the outrage was dated back fifteen years when he discovered it, yet he set off, accompanied by M. de Fermont, one of his relations, in pursuit of the Pole, and found him at Venice, after having sought for him in almost all the cities of Europe." "What an obstinate!"

"A devilish rancour, I tell you, my dear Edwards! At Venice a terrible duel was fought, in which the Pole was killed. All was done fairly; but the father of M. le Vicomte showed, they say, such ferocious joy at seeing the Pole mortally wounded, that his relation, M. de Fermont, was obliged to drag him away; the count wishing to see, as he said, his enemy expire under his eyes."

"What a man! what a man!" "The Comte returned to Paris, went to the house of his wife, announced to her that he had just returned from killing the Pole, and left her. Since then, he has never seen her nor her son, but has lived at Angers, like a real 'loup-garow' as they say, with what remains of his 80,000 francs, well curtailed, as you may suppose, by his race after this Pole. At Angers he sees no one, except the wife and daughter of his relation, M. de Fermont, who has been dead for some years. And, besides, it would seem as if this was an unfortunate family, for the brother of Madame de Fermont blew his brains out a few weeks since, it is said."

"And the mother of the vicomte?" "He lost her a long time since. It is on that account that M. le Vicomte, at his coming of age, has enjoyed the fortune of his mother. So you plainly see, my dear Edwards, that as regards inheritance, M. le Vicomte has nothing, or almost nothing, to expect from his father." "Who, besides, must detest him?" "He would never see him after the fatal discovery, persuaded that he is the son of the Pole."

The conversation of the two personages was interrupted by a footman of gigantic size, carefully powdered, although it was hardly eleven o'clock. "Monsieur Boyer, M. le Vicomte has rung twice," said the giant. Boyer appeared distressed at this neglect; he arose precipitately, and followed the servant with as much eagerness and respect as if he had not been the proprietor of the mansion of his master.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNT DE SAINT RÉMY.

"A month—it is very long."
(GOETHE, *the Grand Caphte, Act I., Scene 2.*)

Two hours had passed since Boyer had gone to attend the vicomte, when the father of the last-mentioned knocked at the "porte cochère" of the house in the Rue de Chaillot.

The Comte de Saint Rémy was a man of tall stature, still active and vigorous, notwithstanding his age; the almost copper colour of his skin contrasted strangely with the silvery whiteness of his beard and hair; his heavy and still black eyebrows overshadowed his piercing but sunken eyes. Although, from a kind of misanthropy, he wore clothes quite rusty, and there was in his whole appearance that which commanded respect. The door of his son's house flew open, and he entered. A porter, in a grand livery of brown and silver, profusely powdered, and wearing silk stockings, appeared on the threshold of an elegant lodge, which had as much resemblance to the smoky den of the Pipelets as a cottler's stall could have to the sumptuous shop of a fashionable "lingere." "M. de Saint Rémy?" demanded the comte, in a short tone.

The porter, instead of replying, examined with much contempt the white beard, the threadbare coat, and the old hat of the unknown, who held in his hand a large cane. "M. de Saint Rémy?" repeated the comte, impatiently, shocked at the impertinent examination of the porter.

"M. le Vicomte is not at home." So saying, the "confrère" of M. Pipelet drew the "cord," and, with a significant gesture, invited the unknown to retire. "I will wait," said the comte, and he passed on. "Oh! friend! friend! one does not enter that way into houses!" cried the porter, running after the comte, and taking him by the arm.

"How, scoundrel!" answered the old man, raising his cane; "you dare to touch me!" "I will dare something else, if you do not walk out at once. I have told you that M. le Comte was out, so walk off." At this moment Boyer, attracted by the sound of voices, made his appearance. "What is the matter?" demanded he.

"Monsieur Boyer, it is this man who will absolutely enter, although I have told him that the M. le Vicomte is out."

"Let us put a stop to this," replied the comte, addressing Boyer; "I wish to see my son—if he has gone out, I will wait."

We have said that Boyer was ignorant neither of the existence nor of the misanthrophy of the father, and sufficiently a physiognomist, he did not for a moment doubt the identity of the comte, but bowed low to him, and answered, "If Monsieur le Comte will be so good as to follow me, I am at his orders."

"Go on," said M. de Saint Rémy, who accompanied Boyer, to the profound dismay of the porter.

Preceded by the valet de chambre, the comte arrived on the first story, and still following his guide, was ushered into a little saloon, situated immediately over the boudoir of the "rez-de-chaussée" (ground floor).

"M. le Vicomte has been obliged to go out this morning," said Boyer, "and if Monsieur le Comte will have the kindness to wait, it will not be long before he returns." And the valet de chambre disappeared.

Remaining alone, the comte looked around him with indifference, until suddenly he discovered the picture of his wife, the mother of Florestan de Saint Rémy. He crossed his arms on his heart, held down his head, as if to avoid the sight of this victim, and walked about with rapid steps. * * * * *

"And yet I am not certain—he may be my son—sometimes this doubt is frightful to me."

"If he is my son, then my abandoning him, my refusal ever to see him, are unpardonable * * * * * and then to think my name—my name, of which I have ever been so proud, belongs to the son of a man whose heart I could have torn out! oh! I do not know why I am not bereft of my senses when I think of it!" And M. de Saint Rémy, continuing to walk with agitation, raised mechanically the curtain which separated the saloon from the "cabinet de travail" of Florestan, and entered the apartment.

He had hardly disappeared for a moment, when a small door, concealed by the tapestry, opened softly, and Madame de Lucenay, wrapped in a large shawl of green cashmere, and wearing a very plain black velvet bonnet, entered the saloon which the comte had just left. The duchess, as we have said before, had a key to the little private garden door; not finding Florestan in the apartments of the "rez-de-chaussée," she had supposed that, perhaps, he was in his "cabinet de travail," and without any fear had come up by a small staircase which led from the boudoir to the first story. Unfortunately, a very threatening visit from M. Badinot had obliged him to go out precipitately.

Madame de Lucenay, seeing no one, was about to enter the cabinet, when the curtains were thrown back, and she found herself face to face with the father of Florestan.

She could not restrain a cry of alarm.

"Clothilde!" cried the comte, stupified.

The duchesse remained immovable, contemplating with surprise this old man with a white beard and badly clothed, whose features did not appear altogether strange.

"You, Clothilde!" repeated the compte, in a tone of sorrowful reproach, "you here—at the house of my son?" These last words decided Madame de Lucenay; she at length recognised the father of Florestan, and cried,

"M. de Saint Rémy!" Her position was so plain and significant, that the duchesse disdained to have recourse to a falsehood to explain the motive of her presence in this house; counting on the paternal affection which the comte had formerly shown her, she extended her hand, and said with an air—at once gracious, cordial, and fearless—which belonged only to her, "Come, do not scold! you are my oldest friend! Do you remember, more than twenty years ago, you called me your dear Clothilde?"

"Yes, I called you thus, but—" "I know in advance all that you will say to me; you know my motto: *What is, is; what shall be, shall be.*" "Ah! Clothilde!" "Spare me your reproaches; let me rather speak to you of my joy at seeing you! your presence recalls so many things; my poor father, in the first place; and then my fifteenth year. Ah! fifteenth—sweet fifteenth!"

"It is because your father was my friend, that—"

"Oh, yes!" answered the duchesse, interrupting them, "he loved you so much! Do you remember he called you, laughingly, '*l'homme aux rubans verts?*' You always said to him, 'You will spoil Clothilde; take care!' and he would answer, embracing me, 'I believe I spoil her; and I must hurry and spoil her more, for soon "le monde" will carry her off, and spoil her in its turn.' Excellent father! what a friend I lost!" A tear glistened in the fine eyes of Madame Lucenay, and giving her hand to M. de Saint Rémy, she said to him, in an agitated voice, "True, I am happy, very happy to see you again; you awaken souvenirs so precious, so dear to my heart!"

"If you have been in Paris for any time," continued Madame de Lucenay, "it was very unkind in you not to come to see me; we should have talked so much of the past; for you know I begin to arrive at the age when there is a great charm in talking to old friends."

Perhaps the duchesse could not have spoken with more "nonchalance" if she had been receiving a visit at the Hôtel de Lucenay. M. de Saint Rémy could not refrain from saying earnestly, "Instead of talking of the past, let us talk of the present. My son may come in from one moment to another, and—" "No!" said Clothilde, interrupting him, "I have the key of the private door, and his arrival is always announced by a bell when he comes in by the 'porte-cochère;' at this noise I shall disappear as mysteriously as I came; and I will leave you alone. What a sweet surprise you are going to cause him! you, who have for so long a time abandoned him!" "Hold! it is I who have reproaches to make you." "To me? to me?"

"Certainly! What guide, what assistance had I on entering into society? and, for a thousand things, the counsels of a father are indispensable. Thus, frankly, it has been very wrong in you to—" Here Madame de Lucenay, giving way to the peculiarity of her character, could not prevent herself from laughing heartily, and saying to the comte,

"You must avow that the position is at least singular, and that it is very 'piquant' that I should preach to you!"

"It is rather strange; but I deserve neither your sermons nor your praises. I come to my son; but it is not on account of my son. At his age he can no longer need my counsels. "What do you mean?" "You must know for what reasons I detest society and hold Paris in horror!" said the comte. Nothing but circumstances of the last importance could have induced me to leave Angers, and, above all, to come here—in this house! But I have conquered my repugnance, and have recourse to every one who can aid me in researches of great interest to me." "Oh! then," said Madame de Lucenay, with most affectionate eagerness, "I beg you dispose of me, if I can be of any use to you. Is there need of any applications? M. de Lucenay ought to have a certain influence; for, on the

days when I go to dine with my great aunt De Montbrison, he gives a dinner at home to some deputies; this is not done without some motive; this inconvenience must be paid for by some probable advantage. Once more, if we can serve you, command us. There is my young cousin, the little Duc de Montbrison, who is connected with all the nobility, perhaps he could do something? In this case, I offer him to you. In a word, dispose of me and mine; you know if I can call myself a devoted friend!" "I know it; and I do not refuse your assistance; although, however—"

"Come, my dear *Alceste*, we are people of the world, let us act like such; whether we are here or elsewhere, it is of no import, I suppose, to the affair which interests you, and which now interests me extremely, since it is yours. Let us speak of this, and sincerely; I require it."

Thus saying, the duchesse approached the fireplace, and, leaning against it, she put out the prettiest little foot in the world to warm.

With perfect tact, Madame de Lucenay seized the occasion to speak no more of the vicomte, and to converse with M. de Saint Rémy on a subject to which he attached much importance.

* * * * * * * *

"You are ignorant, perhaps, Clothilde," said the comte, "that for a long time past I have lived at Angers?"

"No—I knew it." "Notwithstanding the isolated state I sought, I had chosen this city, because one of my relations dwelt there, M. de Fermont, who, during my troubles, acted as a brother towards me, having acted as a second in a duel."

"Yes, a terrible duel; my father told me of it," said Madame de Lucenay, sadly; "but, happily, Florestan is ignorant of this duel, and also of the cause that led to it."

"I was willing to let him respect his mother," answered the comte, and, suppressing a sigh, he continued, and related to Madame de Lucenay the history of Madame de Fermont up to the time of her leaving Angers for Paris, after the reception of the news of her brother's suicide; to which he added, "At the end of some time, I learned that the furniture of the house which she occupied at Angers was sold by her orders, and that this sum had been employed to pay some debts left my Madame de Fermont. Uneasy at this circumstance, I inquired, and learned vaguely that this unfortunate woman and her daughter were in distress—the victims, doubtless, of a bankruptcy. If Madame de Fermont could, in such an extremity, count on any one, it was on me. Yet I received no news from her. You cannot imagine my sufferings—my inquietude. It was absolutely necessary that I should find them, to know why they did not apply to me, poor as I was. I set out for Paris, leaving a person at Angers, who, if by chance any information was obtained, was to advise me." "Well?" "Yesterday I had a letter from Angers; nothing was known. On arriving here I commenced my researches. I went at first to the former residence of the brother of Madame de Fermont. Here they told me she lived at the 'quai' of the 'Canal Saint Martin.'"

"And this—" "Had been her lodgings; but she had left, and they were ignorant of her new abode. Since then all my inquiries have been useless; and I have come here, in hopes that she may have applied to the son of her old friend. I am afraid that even this will be in vain."

For some minutes Madame de Lucenay had listened to the comte with redoubled attention; suddenly she said, "Truly, this would be singular, that these should be the same with those Madame d'Harville is so much interested for." "Who?" asked the comte. "The widow of whom you speak is still young? and of a noble figure?" "She is so! but how do you know?" "Her daughter handsome as an angel, and about sixteen?" "Yes! yes!" "And is named Claire?"

"Oh! in mercy, speak! where are they?" "Alas! I know not." "You do not know?" "This is what has happened: a lady of my acquaintance, Madame d'Harville, came to me to ask if I knew a widow who had a daughter named Claire, and whose brother had committed suicide. Madame d'Harville came to me because she had seen these words, '*Write to Madame de Lucenay,*' traced on the fragment of a letter which this unhappy woman had written to a person unknown, whose aid she entreated." "She intended to write to you! and why?" "I am ignorant; I do not know her."

"But she knew you!" cried M. de Saint Rémy, struck with a sudden idea. "What do you say?" "A hundred times she has heard me speak of your father, of you, of your generous and excellent heart. In her trouble, she must have thought of you." "This can be thus explained." "And Madame d'Harville, how did she get possession of this letter?"

"I am ignorant; all I know is, that, without knowing where this poor mother and child had taken refuge, she was, I believe, on their track." "Then I count upon you, Clothilde, to introduce me to Madame d'Harville; I must see her to-day." "Impossible! her husband has just fallen a victim to a frightful accident; a gun, which he did not know was loaded, went off while in his hands, and killed him on the spot." "Ah! this is horrible!" "The marquise departed immediately, to pass her first mourning at her father's in Normandy." "Clothilde, I conjure you to write to her to-day; ask for whatever information she may possess; since she interests herself for these poor women, tell her she cannot have a warmer auxiliary than me; my sole desire is to find the widow of my friend, and to partake with her and her daughter the little I possess. It is now my sole family." "Always the same—always generous and devoted! Count on me, I will write to-day to Madame d'Harville. Where shall I send her answer?" "To Asnières, 'poste restante.'"

"What eccentricity! why do you lodge there and not at Paris?" "I hate Paris, on account of the 'souvenirs' it awakens," answered M. de Saint Rémy, with a gloomy air; "my old physician, Doctor Griffin, has a small country-house on the banks of the Seine, near Asnières; he does not live there in winter, and offered it to me; it is almost a faubourg of Paris; I could, after my researches, find there the solitude which pleases me; I have accepted." "I will write you, then, at Asnières; I can, besides, give you now some information which may perhaps serve you, which I received from Madame d'Harville. The ruin of Madame Fermont has been caused by the roguery of the notary who had the charge of all her fortune. He denies the deposite."

"The scoundrel! and what is his name?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand," said the duchesse, without being able to conceal her desire to laugh.

"What a strange being you are, Clothilde! There is nothing in all this but what is serious and sad, yet you laugh!" said the comte, surprised and vexed.

"Pardon me, my friend," answered the duchesse; "it is that the notary is such a singular man, and they tell such strange things of him. But, seriously, if his reputation as an honest man is no more merited than his reputation as a pious man (and I declare this usurped), he is a wretch! And he lives—"

"Rue du Sentier." "He shall have a visit from me. What you have told me coincides with certain suspicions." "What suspicions?" "From what I can learn respecting the death of the brother of my poor friend, I am almost led to believe that this unfortunate man, instead of committing suicide, has been the victim of an assassination."

"Grand Dieu! and what makes you suppose this?" "Several reasons, which will be too long to tell you; I shall leave you now." "How! you leave, without seeing Florestan?" "This interview would be too painful for me—you must comprehend it. I only braved it in the hopes of obtaining some information about Madame de Fermont, wishing to neglect no means to find her. Now adieu."

"Ah! you are without pity!" "Do you not know?" "I know that your son has never had more need of your counsels."

"How? Is he not rich, happy?"

"Yes, but he does not know mankind. Blindly prodigal, because he is confiding and generous; in everything, everywhere, and always 'grand seigneur.' I fear he is abused. If you knew what a noble heart he has! I have never dared to lecture him on the subject of his expenses and extravagance: in the first place, because I am at least as foolish as he is; and then—for other reasons; but you, on the contrary, you could—" Madame de Lucenay did not finish; suddenly she heard the voice of Florestan de Saint Rémy. He entered precipitately into the cabinet adjoining the saloon; after having quickly shut the door, he said, in an agitated voice, to some one who accompanied him, "But it is impossible!" "But I repeat to you," answered the clear and piercing voice of M. Badinot, "I repeat to you, that, without this, in four hours you will be arrested. For if he has not this money, our man will go and make a complaint to the '*procureur du roi*,' and you know the penalty of a *forgery* like this; the galleys, my poor vicomte!" It is impossible to describe the look which Madame de Lucenay and the father of Florestan exchanged on hearing these terrible words.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONVERSATION.

On hearing these fearful words addressed to his son by M. Badinot, the comte changed colour, and clung to a chair for support. His venerable and respected name dishonoured by a man whom he had reason to doubt was his son! His first feeling overcome, the angry looks of the old man, and a threatening gesture which he made as he advanced towards the cabinet, revealed a resolution so alarming, that Madame de Lucenay caught him by the hand, stopped him, and said, in a low tone, with the most profound conviction, "He is innocent; I swear to you! Listen in silence."

The comte stood still; he wished to believe what the duchesse had said was true.

She, on her part, was persuaded of his honesty. To obtain new sacrifices from this woman, so blindly generous—sacrifices which alone had saved him from the threats of Jacques Ferrand—the vicomte had sworn to Madame de Lucenay, that, dupe of a scoundrel from whom he had received in payment the forged draught, he ran the risk of being regarded as an accomplice of the forger, having himself put it in circulation.

Madame de Lucenay knew that the vicomte was imprudent, prodigal, and careless; but never for a moment had she supposed him capable of an infamous action, not even the slightest indiscretion.

By twice lending him considerable sums under very peculiar circumstances, she had wished to render him a friendly service, the vicomte only accepting this money on the express condition of returning it; for there was due to him, he said, more than twice this amount.

His apparent luxurious manner of living allowed her to believe it. Besides, Madame de Lucenay, yielding to her natural kind impulses, had only thought of being useful to Florestan, without any care whether he could repay or not. He affirmed it, and she did not doubt. In answering for the honour of the vicomte, in supplicating the old comte to listen to the conversation of his son, the duchesse thought that he was going to speak of the abuse of confidence, of which he had been a victim, and that he would be thus entirely exculpated in the eyes of his father.

"Once more," continued Florestan, in an agitated voice, "I say this Petit Jean is a scoundrel; he assured me that he had no other bills than those I withdrew yesterday, and three days ago. I thought this one was in circulation; it was only payable after three months, at Adams & Co., London." "Yes, yes," said the clear and sharp voice of Badinot. "I know, my dear vicomte, that you have adroitly managed your affairs; your forgeries were not to be discovered until you were far away. But you have been caught by those more cunning than yourself."

"Ah! it is very well to tell me this now, wretch that you are!" cried Florestan, furiously; "did you not yourself introduce this person to me, who has negotiated the draughts?" "Come, my dear aristocrat," answered Badinot, coldly, "be calm! You are very skilful in counterfeiting commercial signatures; it is really wonderful; but that is no reason why you should treat your friends with disagreeable familiarity. If you go on in this way—I leave you, arrange as you please."

"Do you think one can preserve their 'sang froid' in such a position? If what you tell me is true—if this complaint is lodged against me to-day, I am lost." "It is exactly as I tell you, unless you should have recourse again to your charming *Providence* with blue eyes." "That is impossible." "Then be resigned. It is a pity it was the last draught—and for twenty-five thousand paltry francs, to go and take the air of the south at Toulon*—it is ridiculous, absurd, stupid! How could a cunning man like you suffer yourself to be thus cornered?"

"Mon Dieu! what is to be done? what is to

* Toulon, where the galley-slaves are confined.

be done? nothing that is here belongs to me; I have not twenty Louis of my own." "Your friends?"

"Ah! I owe to all those who could lend me; do you think me such a fool as to have waited until to-day to ask them?" "That is true; pardon me—come, let us talk tranquilly, it is the best way to arrive at a reasonable solution. Just now I wanted to tell you how you were attacked by those who were more cunning than yourself. You did not listen to me."

"Well, speak, if it can be of any use."

"Let us recapitulate: you said to me about two months since, 'I have about one hundred and thirteen thousand francs in draughts on different banking-houses, which have some time to run, can you find means to negotiate them for me, my dear Badinot—'" "Well! what next?"

"Stop! I asked to see these draughts. A certain something told me that these bills were forgeries, although perfectly well done. I did not suspect that you, it is true, possessed a caligraphic talent so far advanced; but having the charge of your fortunes, ever since you had no more fortune, I knew you were completely ruined. I had drawn up the deed by which your horses, your carriages, the furniture of this hotel, belonged to Bover and to Edwards. It was not, then, wonderful for me to be astonished at seeing you possess commercial securities of so much value, heiu?"

"Do me the favour to spare me your astonishment, and let us arrive at the facts."

"Here they are. I had thus not enough experience or timidity to care to meddle directly in affairs of that description; I recommended a third person to you, who, not less sharpsighted than I am, suspected the game you wished to play."

"That is impossible—he would not have discounted these bills if he had thought them false."

"How much money did he give you for these 113,000 francs?" "Twenty-five thousand francs cash, and the remainder in debts to be recovered."

"And how much did you ever recover from these?" "Nothing, you know well enough; they were imaginary; but he certainly risked 25,000 francs."

"How unfledged you are, my dear vicomte! Having my commission of 100 Louis to receive, I took good care not to tell this third person the real state of your affairs. He thought you still quite rich, and he knew, besides, that you were adored by a great lady, who was very rich, and who would never leave you in embarrassment; he was then pretty sure to get back what he advanced; he ran some risk, to be sure; but he also had a chance of making a great deal of money, and his calculation was a good one; for, the other day you paid him 100,000 francs to withdraw the forgery of 58,000 francs, and yesterday 30,000 for the second; for this last, he had been contented with receiving its real value. How you procured these 30,000 francs yesterday may the devil run away with me if I know! for you are a man 'unique.' So you see that at the end of the account, if Petit Jean forces you to pay the last draught for 25,000 francs, he will have received from you 155,000 francs for 25,000 francs which he paid you; now, I had reason to say that you were in the hands of those more cunning than yourself." "But why did he tell me that this last draught, which he presented to-day, was negotiated?"

"Not to alarm you, he also had told you that, with the exception of the 58,000 francs, the others were in circulation; the first, once paid, yesterday came the second, and to-day the third." "The scoundrel!" "Listen to me, then: *every one for himself*, as a celebrated lawyer said, and I like the maxim. But let us talk coolly; this proves to you that Petit Jean (and, between us, I should not be surprised if, notwithstanding his holy reputation, Jacques Ferrand was half concerned in these speculations), this proves to you, I say, that Petit Jean, allured by your first payments, speculates on this last bill, quite sure that your friends will not allow you to be dragged before the *Cour d'Assises*. It is for you to see if these friends are so well used, so drained that not another golden drop can be squeezed from them, for, if in three hours you have not the 25,000 francs, my noble vicomte, you are caged."

"If you were to repeat this to me forever—" "Perhaps you would consent to pluck a last feather from the wing of this generous duchesse." "I repeat to you, it must not be thought of. To find in three hours 25,000 francs more, after all the sacrifices she has already made—it would be madness to think of it."

"To please you, fortunate mortal, one would try an impossibility." "Ah! she has already tried it; this was to borrow 100,000 francs from her husband, and she succeeded; but these are experiments that cannot be tried twice. Let us see, my dear Badinot, until now you have never had any reason to complain of me. I have always been generous; try to obtain some delay from this miserable Petit Jean. You know I always can find means to recompense those who serve me; this last affair once hushed, I will take a new flight—you shall be content with me."

"Petit Jean is as inflexible as you are unreasonable."

"I!" "Try only to interest once more your generous friend in your *sad* fate. The devil! tell her right out the truth; not as you have already said, that you are the dupe, but that you are the forger himself." "No, never will I make such an acknowledgment; it would be shame without any advantage." "Do you prefer that she should learn it to-morrow by the *Gazette des Tribunaux?*"

"I have three hours left—I can flee."

"And where will you go without money? Judge now! on the contrary, this last forgery taken up, you will find yourself in a superb position; you would have no more debts. Come, come, promise me to speak once more to the duchesse. You are such a rake, you know how to make yourself so interesting in spite of your faults; at the very worst, perhaps, you will be esteemed the less, or even no more, but you will be lifted out of this scrape. Come, promise me to see your friend, and I will run to Petit Jean, and do my best to obtain an hour or two more." "Hell! must I drink of shame to the very dregs!"

"Come, now! good luck—be tender, charming, fond; I run to Petit Jean: you will find me here until three o'clock: later it will no longer be in time: the office of the *procureur du roi* is closed after four o'clock." And Monsieur Badinot took his departure.

When the door was closed, Florestan was heard to cry, in profound despair, "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!"

During this conversation, which unmasked to the comte the infamy of his son, and to Ma-

dame de Lucenay the infamy of the man whom she had so blindly loved, both remained immovable, scarcely breathing, under the weight of this frightful revelation.

It would be impossible to describe the mute eloquence of the sorrowful scene which passed between this young woman and the comte, when there was no longer any doubt of the crime of Florestan. Extending his arm towards the room where his son remained, the old man smiled with bitter irony, cast a withering look on Madame de Lucenay, and seemed to say to her,

"Behold him for whom you have braved all shame, made every sacrifice! behold him you have reproached me for abandoning!"

The duchesse understood the look; for a moment she hung her head under the weight of her shame. The lesson was terrible.

Then, by degrees, to the cruel anxiety which had contracted the features of Madame de Lucenay, succeeded a kind of noble indignation. The inexcusable faults of this woman were at least palliated by the fidelity of her love, by the boldness of her devotion, by the grandeur of her generosity, by the frankness of her character, and by her inexorable aversion for everything that was cowardly and dishonest.

Still too young, too handsome, too much sought after, to experience the humility of having been made use of, this proud and decided woman, once the illusion of love having vanished, felt neither hatred nor anger; instantaneously, without any transition, a mortal disgust, an icy disdain, killed her affection, until then so lively; it was no longer a woman deceived by her lover, but it was a woman of *haut ton* discovering that a man of her society was a cheat and a forger.

In supposing even that some circumstances might have extenuated the ignominy of Florestan, Madame de Lucenay would not have admitted them; according to her views, the man who overstepped certain limits of honour, either through vice or weakness, *no longer existed in her eyes, honourableness* being for her a question of *existence* or *non*-existence. The only sorrowful feeling experienced by the duchesse was excited by the terrible effect which this unexpected revelation produced on the comte, her old friend. For some moments he appeared not to see nor hear; his eyes were fixed, his head hung down, his arms suspended, his paleness livid, and from time to time a convulsive sigh escaped from his bosom. With a man as resolute as he was energetic, such a state of dejection was more alarming than the most furious bursts of rage.

Madame de Lucenay looked at him with much anxiety. "Courage, my friend," said she to him, in a low tone: "for you, for me, for this man—I know what remains for me to do."

The old man looked at her fixedly; then, as if he had been aroused from his stupor by some violent shock, he raised his head, his features assumed a threatening appearance, and, forgetting that his son might hear him, he cried,

"And I, also, for you, for me, for this man—I know what I have to do." "Who is there?" cried Florestan, surprised.

Madame de Lucenay, fearing to meet the vicomté, disappeared through the small door, and descended the private staircase.

Florestan, having again demanded who was there, and receiving no answer, entered the saloon.

The long beard of the old man changed him so much, he was so poorly dressed, that his son, who had not seen him for many years, did not at first recognise him; he advanced rapidly towards him with a menacing air, and said, "Who are you? What do you want here?"

"I am the husband of this woman!" answered the comté, showing the portrait of Madame de Saint Rémy.

"My father!" cried Florestan, retreating in alarm; and he endeavoured to recall to mind the features so long forgotten. Erect, formidable, his looks irritated, his face purple with rage, his white hair thrown back, his arms crossed on his breast, the comte, overawed, confounded his son, who, with his head down, dared not to raise his eyes upon him. Yet M. de Saint Remy, from some secret motive, made a violent effort to remain calm and to conceal his feelings of resentment.

"My father!" said Florestan, in a faltering voice; "you were there?" "I was there!"

"You have heard—" "All!"

"Ah!" cried the vicomte, mournfully, concealing his face in his hands. There was a moment's pause. Florestan, at first as much astonished as vexed at the unexpected apparition of his father, soon began to think what he could make out of this incident. "All is not lost," said he to himself; "the presence of my father is a stroke of fate. He knows all; he will not have his name dishonoured; he is not rich, but he must have more than 25,000 francs. Let us play close—address, emotion, and a little tenderness. I will let the duchesse alone, and I am saved!"

Then, giving to his charming features an expression of mournful dejection, moistening his eyes with the tears of repentance, assuming his most thrilling tones, his most pathetic manner, he cried, joining his hands with a gesture of despair,

"Ah! my father! I am very unhappy! after so many years—to see you again, and at such a moment! I must appear so culpable to you! But deign to listen to me, I entreat you—I supplicate you, permit me, not to justify myself, but to explain to you my conduct: will you, my father?"

M. de Saint R my answered not a word; his features remained immovable; he seated himself in a "fauteuil," and, with his chin resting on the palm of his hand, he looked at the vicomte in silence.

If Florestan had known the thoughts which filled the mind of his father with hatred, fury, and vengeance, alarmed at the apparent calmness of the comte, he would not have tried to dupe him, neither more nor less than a "bon homme Geroute."

But, ignorant of the suspicions attached to his birth, ignorant of the fault of his mother, Florestan doubted not the success of his trick, believing he had only to soften a father who, at once a misanthrope and very proud of his name, would be capable, rather than see his name dishonoured, to decide on any sacrifice.

"My father," he resumed, timidly, "permit me to try, not to exculpate myself, but to tell you how, from involuntary misleadings, I have reached, almost in spite of myself, actions—infamous—I acknowledge." The vicomte took the silence of his father for a tacit consent, and continued,

"When I had the misfortune to lose my mother—my poor mother, who loved me so well—I was not twenty. I found myself alone, without

counsel, without protection. Master of a considerable fortune, accustomed to luxury from my childhood, I had made it a habit, a want. Ignorant of the difficulty of earning money, I lavished it without measure. Unfortunately—and I say unfortunately, because this ruined me—my expenses, foolish as they were, by their elegance were remarkable. By good taste I eclipsed people who were ten times richer than I was. This first success intoxicated me. I became a man of luxury as one becomes a warrior or a statesman; yes, I loved luxury, not from vulgar ostentation, but I loved it as the painter loves a picture, as the poet loves poetry; like every other artist, I was jealous of my work; and my work was my luxury. I sacrificed everything to its perfection. I wished it fine, grand, complete, splendidly harmonious in everything, from my stables to my table, from my dress to my house. I wished in everything to be a model of taste and elegance. As an artist, in fine, I was greedy of the applauses of the crowd, and of the admiration of people of fashion; this success, so rare, I obtained."

In speaking thus, the features of Florestan lost by degrees their hypocritical expression, his eyes shone with a kind of enthusiasm; he told the truth; he had been at first reduced by this rather uncommon manner of understanding luxury. He looked inquiringly at his father; he thought he appeared rather softened.

He resumed, with growing warmth, "Oracle and regulator of the fashions, my praise or censure made the law: I was quoted, copied, extolled, admired, and that by the best company in Paris, that is to say, Europe—the world. The women partook of the general infatuation; the most charming disputed for the pleasure of coming to some very select fêtes which I gave, and everywhere, and always, nothing was heard but of the incomparable elegance and exquisite taste of these fêtes, which the *millionaires* could neither equal nor eclipse; in fine, I was what one calls *le Roi de la mode*.* This word will tell you all, my father, if you understand it."

"I understand it, and I am sure that at the galleys you would invent some refined elegance in the manner of carrying your chain, that will become the *fashion* in the yard, and will be called à la Saint Rémy," said the old man, with bitter irony; then he added, "And Saint Rémy is *my name!*"

It caused Florestan to exercise much control over himself to conceal the wound caused by this sarcasm.

He continued in a more humble tone: "Alas! my father, it is not from pride that I recall the fact of this success; for, I repeat to you, this success ruined me. Sought after, envied, flattered, praised, not by interested parisites, but by people whose position much surpassed mine, and over whom I only had the advantage derived from elegance—which is to luxury what taste is to the arts—my head was turned; I did not calculate that my fortune must be spent in a few years; little did I heed it. Could I renounce this feverish, dazzling life, in which pleasures succeeded to pleasures, enjoyments to enjoyments, fêtes to fêtes, intoxications of all sorts to enchantments of all sorts? Oh! if you knew, my father, what it is to be everywhere noticed as the hero of the day; to hear the whisperings which announce your entrance into a saloon; to hear the women say—'It is he!—there he is!' Oh! if you knew—"

"I know," said the old man, interrupting his son, and without changing his position; "I know. Yes, the other day, in a public square, there was a crowd; suddenly I heard a noise, like that with which you are received when you go anywhere; then the looks of all, the women especially, were fixed on a very handsome young man, just as they are fixed on you, and they pointed him out, just as they do you, saying, 'It is he!—there he is!' just exactly as they say of you."

"But this man, my father?"

"Was a forger they were placing in the pillory."

"Ah!" exclaimed Florestan, with suppressed rage; then feigning profound affliction, he added, "My father, have you no pity—what can I say to you now? I do not seek to deny my faults—I only wish to explain to you the fatal cause of them. Ah, well! yes, should you again overwhelm me with cruel sarcasms, I will try to go to the end of this confession—I will try to make you understand this feverish vanity which has ruined me, because then, perhaps, you will pity me. Yes, for one pities a fool—and I was a fool. Shutting my eyes, I abandoned myself to the dazzling vortex, into which I dragged along with me the most charming women, the most amiable men. Stop myself—could I do it? As well say to the poet who exhausts himself, and whose genius is consuming his health, 'Pause in the midst of the inspiration which carries you away!' No, I could not: I—I! abdicate this royalty which I exercised, and return, ruined, ashamed, mocked, to the state of a plebeian—unknown; give this triumph to my rivals, whom I had until then defied, ruled, crushed! No, no, I could not! not voluntarily, at least. The fatal day came, when, for the first time, my money was wanting. I was as surprised, as if this moment never could happen. Yet I had still my horses, my carriages, and the furniture of this house. My debts paid, I should still have 60,000 francs—perhaps—what should I do with this trifle? Then, my father, I took the first step in infamy. I was still honest. I had only spent what belonged to me: but then I began to contract debts which I could not pay. I sold all that I possessed to two of my people, in order to settle with them, and to be able, for six months longer, to enjoy this luxury which intoxicated me, in spite of my creditors. To provide for my wants at play and foolish expenses, I borrowed, in the first place, from the Jews; then, to pay the Jews, from my friends. These resources exhausted, commenced a new era in my life. From an honest man I had become a *chevalier d'industrie*, but I was not yet criminal. However, I hesitated. I wished to take a violent resolution. I had proved in several duels that I was not afraid of death. I thought I would kill myself!"

"Ah, bah! really?" said the comte, ironically.

"Yo do not believe me, my father?"

"It was too soon, or too late!" added the old man, quite immovable, and in the same attitude.

Florestan, thinking he had alarmed his father in speaking to him of his project of suicide, thought it necessary to get up the scene again for a little stage effect. He opened a closet and took from it a little "flacon" of green crystal, and said to the comte, in placing it on the mantelpiece; "An Italian quack sold me this poison."

* King of fashion.

"And—it was for yourself—this poison?" said the old man, still leaning on his elbow.

Florestan understood the bearing of his father's words. His face now expressed real indignation, for he spoke the truth. One day, he had had a fantasy to kill himself—an ephemeral fantasy; people of his stamp are too cowardly to resolve coldly and without witnesses upon death, which they will boldly meet in a duel through a point of honour. He cried, then, in a tone of truth, "I have fallen very low, but at least not so low as that, my father! It was for myself I reserved the poison!"

"And you were afraid?" said the comte, without change of position.

"I confess it, I recoiled before this dreadful extremity; nothing was yet desperate; the persons whom I owed were rich, and could wait. At my age, with my relations, I hoped for a moment, if not to repair my fortune, at least to assure myself an honourable independent position in its place. Several of my friends, perhaps less capable than myself, had made rapid strides in diplomacy. I had a velleity of ambition. I had only to request, and I was attached to the legation of Gerolstein. Unfortunately, some days after this nomination, a gambling debt contracted with a man I hated, placed me in the most cruel embarrassment. I had exhausted every resource. A fatal idea occurred to me. Believing myself certain of impunity, I committed an infamous action. You see, my father, I conceal nothing from you. I confess the ignominy of my conduct. I seek to extenuate nothing. One of two resolutions remain for me to take, and I have now to decide which. The first is to kill myself, and to leave your name dishonoured, for if I do not pay to-day even the 25,000 francs, the complaint is made, the affair known, and, dead or living, I am ruined. The second means is to throw myself in the arms of my father, to say to you, save your son, save your name from infamy, and I swear to leave to-morrow for Africa, to enlist as a soldier, and either to be killed or to return some day honourably reinstated. What I now tell you, my father, is true. In face of the extremity which overwhelms me, I have no other way. Decide; either I die covered with shame, or, thanks to you, I will live to repair my faults. These are not the threats and words of a young man, my father. I am now twenty-five; I bear your name; I have courage enough either to kill myself, or to become a soldier, for I will not go to the galleys." The comte arose.

"I will not have my name dishonoured," said he, coldly, to Florestan.

"Ah, my father! my saviour!" cried the vicomte, warmly; and he was about to throw himself into the arms of his father, when he, with an icy gesture, calmed this *entrainement*.

"They wait for you until three o'clock, at the house of this man who has the forgery?"

"Yes, my father; and it is now two o'clock."

"Let us pass into your cabinet—give me something to write with." "Here, my father."

The comte seated himself before the desk of his son, and wrote with a firm hand:

"I engage to pay this night, at ten o'clock, the 25,000 francs which are owed by my son.

"Comte de Saint Rémy."

"Your creditor insists upon having the money; notwithstanding his threats, this engagement of mine will make him consent to a new delay; he can go to M. Dupont, banker in the Rue de Richelieu, No. 7, who will inform him of the value of this note."

"Oh, my father! how ever can—"

"You may expect me to-night; at ten o'clock I will bring you the money. Let your creditor be here."

"Yes, my father, and after to-morrow I start for Africa. You shall see if I am ungrateful! Then, perhaps, when I have reinstated myself, you will accept my thanks."

"You owe me nothing; I have said my name shall be no farther dishonoured, it shall not be," said M. de Saint Rémy, calmly; and taking his cane, which he had placed on the bureau, he turned towards the door. "My father, your hand at least!" said Florestan, in a supplicating tone.

"Here, to-night, at ten o'clock," replied the comte, refusing his hand. And he departed.

"Saved!" cried Florestan, joyfully, "saved!" then, after a moment's reflection, he added, "saved! almost. No matter; so far good. Perhaps to-night I will acknowledge the *other thing*; he is in train; he will not stop half way and let his first sacrifice be useless, because he refuses a second. Yet why tell him? Who will know it? Never mind; if nothing is discovered, I will keep the money that he will give me to pay this last *debt*. I had a great deal of trouble to move him, this devil of a man! The bitterness of his sarcasms made me doubt my success; but my threat of suicide, the fear of having his name dishonoured decided him; that was the lucky stroke. He is, doubtless, not so poor as he pretends to be, if he possesses a hundred thousand francs. He must have saved money, living as he does. Once more, I say his coming was a lucky chance. He has a cross look, but, at the bottom, I think he is a good fellow; but I must hasten to this 'huissier!'"

He rang the bell. M. Boyer appeared.

"Why did you not inform me that my father was here? you are very negligent."

"Twice I endeavoured to speak to M. le Vicomte when he came through the garden with M. Badinot; but M. le Vicomte, probably preoccupied by his conversation with M. Badinot, made a motion with his hand not to be interrupted. I did not permit myself to insist. I should be deeply wounded if M. le Vicomte could believe me guilty of negligence." "Very well; tell Edwards to harness immediately *Onion*—no—*Plower*, to the cabriolet." M. Boyer bowed respectfully; as he was about to retire, some one knocked at the door. "Come in!" said Florestan; a second "valet de chambre" appeared, holding in his hand a small "plateau" of silver, gilt. M. Boyer took hold of the "plateau" with a kind of jealous officiousness, and came and presented it to the vicomte. Florestan took from it a rather voluminous envelope, sealed with black wax. The two valets retired ceremoniously. The vicomte opened the package. It contained twenty-five thousand francs, in treasury notes, with no other information.

"Decidedly," cried he, with joy, "the day is lucky—sacred! this time, completely saved. I shall go to the jeweller's—and yet—perhaps—no, let us wait—they can have no suspicion of me—twenty-five thousand francs are good to keep; pardieu! I was a fool ever to doubt my star; at the moment it seems most obscured, does it not appear more brilliant than ever? But where does this money come from? the writing of the

address is unknown to me; let me look at the seal—the cipher; yes, yes, I am not mistaken—an N. and an L.—it is Clothilde! How has she known?—and not a word—it is strange! How àpropos! Oh! mon Dieu! I reflect—I made a rendezvous for this morning—these threats of Badinot upset me. I have forgotten Clothilde—after having waited some time, she has gone. Doubtless, this is sent as a delicate hint that she fears I shall forget her on account of my monetary embarrassments. Yes, it is an indirect reproach for not addressing myself to her as usual. Good Clothilde—always the same!—generous as a queen! What a pity to come again from her—still so handsome! Sometimes I regret it; but I have never asked her until at the last extremity; I have been forced to it." "The cabriolet of M. le Vicomte is ready," said M. Boyer.

"Who brought this letter?"

"I am uninformed, Monsieur le Vicomte."

"Exactly—I will ask at the door; but tell me, is there no one in the rez-de-chaussée?" added the vicomte, looking at Boyer in a significant manner.

"There is no longer any one, M. le Vicomte."

"I was not deceived," thought Florestan. "Clothilde has waited for me, and has gone away."

"If Monsieur le Vicomte would have the goodness to grant me two minutes?" said Boyer.

"Speak, and make haste."

"Edwards and I have understood that M. le Duc de Montbrison was about to establish himself; if Monsieur le Vicomte would have the goodness to propose to let him have his house all furnished, as well as the stables, it would be a good occasion for us to dispose of all, and, perhaps, might also suit M. le Vicomte."

"Pardieu! you are right, Boyer; for myself, I should much prefer it. I will see Montbrison, and will speak to him about it. What are your conditions?"

"Monsieur le Vicomte understands—that we ought to try to profit as much as we can by his generosity."

"And gain by your bargain? nothing can be plainer! Come, what is the price?"

"For the whole, two hundred and sixty thousand francs, Monsieur le Vicomte."

"How much do you gain, you and Edwards?"

"About forty thousand francs, Monsieur le Vicomte."

"Very pretty! However, so much the better; for, after all, I am satisfied with you, and if I had had a will to make, I should have left this sum to you and Edwards." And the vicomte went out to go, in the first place, to his creditor and to Madame de Lucenay, whom he did not suspect of having overheard his conversation with Badinot.

CHAPTER X.

THE INTERVIEW.

The Hôtel de Lucenay was one of those princely habitations of the Faubourg Saint Germain which the *terrain perdu** renders so magnificent. A modern house could have been placed with ease in the space occupied by the staircase of one of these palaces; and an entire 'quartier' on the ground they covered.

* Literally, lost ground.

Towards nine o'clock in the evening of this same day, the enormous "porte cochère" of this hotel was opened to a glittering *coupé*, which, after having described a scientific curve in the immense court, stopped before a covered porch which led to a first antechamber.

While the stampings of the two vigorous and mettlesome horses resounded on the pavement, a gigantic footman opened the emblazoned door, and a young man descended slowly from this brilliant vehicle, and not less slowly mounted the five or six steps of the porch.

This young man was the Vicomte de Saint Rémy.

On leaving his creditor, who, satisfied with the engagement made by the Comte de Saint Rémy, had granted the delay asked, and agreed to come to Rue Chaillot at ten o'clock, Florestan was come to Madame de Lucenay to thank her for the new service she had rendered him; but, not having met the duchesse in the morning, he came in great spirits, certain to find her at the *prima sera*, an hour she habitually reserved for him.

From the obsequiousness of the two footmen of the autechamber who ran to open the door as soon as they recognised the carriage of Florestan; from the profoundly respectful air with which the rest of the liveried servants spontaneously arose as the vicomte passed, one could easily see that he was looked upon as the *second*, if not the real master of the mansion.

When the Duc de Lucenay entered his house, his umbrella in his hand, and his feet cased in huge overshoes (he detested to ride in the daytime), the same domestic evolutions were repeated, and always respectfully; yet, to the eyes of an observer, there was a great difference of expression between the reception given to the *mari*, and that which was reserved for the lover.

The same respectful eagerness was manifested in the saloon of the valets de chambre when Florestan entered there; in a moment, one of them preceded him, to announce M. le Vicomte to Madame de Lucenay.

Never had Florestan been more conceited; never did he feel more easy—more sure of himself—more irresistible. The *victory* which he had gained in the morning over his father; the new proof of *attachment* from Madame de Lucenay; the joy at having so miraculously escaped from so cruel a position; his renewed confidence in his star, gave to his handsome face an expression of boldness and good-humour, which rendered him still more seducing. In fine, he never was more pleased with himself; and he had reason. * * * * * *

A last glance in a mirror completed the excellent opinion that Florestan had of himself.

The valet de chambre opened the folding doors of the saloon, and announced,

"Monsieur le Vicomte de Saint Rémy!"

The astonishment and indignation of the duchesse were indescribable. She thought that the comte must have told his son that she also had overheard all.

We have said before, that, on learning the infamy of Florestan, the love of Madame de Lucenay was at once changed into utter disdain.

* * * * *

Madame de Lucenay being engaged out that evening, was, although *without diamonds*, dressed with her usual taste and magnificence: this splendid toilet; the rouge which she wore boldly; her beauty, quite striking at night; her

figure of *déese marchant sur les nues*, rendered still more striking a dignity, which no one possessed more than she did, and which she pushed, when it was necessary, to a most superlative haughtiness.

The proud, determined character of the duchesse is known to the reader; let him imagine her look, when the vicomte, smiling, advanced towards her, and said in loving tones, "My dear Clotilde, how kind you are! how much you—" The vicomte could not finish. The duchesse was seated, and had not stirred; but her actions, the glance of her eye, revealed a contempt at once so calm and so withering, that Florestan stopped short.

He could not say a word, or make a step in advance.

Never had Madame de Lucenay conducted herself thus towards him. He could not believe it to be the same woman whom he had always found so tender and affectionate. His first surprise over, Florestan was ashamed of his weakness: he resumed his habitual audacity; making a step towards Madame de Lucenay to take her hand, he said to her in the most caressing manner, "Mon Dieu! Clotilde, how is this? I have never seen you so handsome, and yet—" "Ah! this is too impudent!" cried the duchesse, recoiling with such unequivocal disgust and pride, that Florestan once more was surprised and confounded. However, assuming a little assurance, he said to her,

"You will inform me at least, Clotilde, the cause of this sudden change? What have I done? What do you wish?" Without replying to him, Madame de Lucenay looked at him, as is vulgarly said, from head to foot, with an expression so insulting, that Florestan felt the flush of resentment mount to his forehead, and he cried, "I know, madame, you are habitually very hasty in you ruptures. Is it a rupture you wish?"

"The pretension is curious!" said Madame de Lucenay, with a burst of sardonic laughter. "Know that when a lackey robs me—*I do not break with him*—I turn him out." "Madame!" "Let us put a stop to this," said the duchesse, in a decided and haughty tone. "Your presence is repugnant to me! What do you want here? Have you not got your money?" "I was right then. I guessed it was you. These twenty-five thousand francs—"

"Your last *forgery* is withdrawn, is it not? The honour of your family name is saved. It is well. Go away. Ah! believe—I much regret this money—it would have succoured so many honest people; but it was necessary to think of your father's shame and of mine."

"Then, Clotilde, you know all? Oh! look you now; nothing remains for me but to die," cried Florestan in the most pathetic and despairing tone. A burst of indignant laughter from the duchesse replied to this tragical exclamation, and she added, between two fits of hilarity,

"Mon Dieu! I never would have thought that infamy could make itself so ridiculous!"

"Madame!" cried Florestan, almost blind with rage.

The folding doors were thrown open suddenly, and a valet announced, "M. Le Duc de Montbrison!"

Notwithstanding his habitual self-command, Florestan could hardly restrain himself, which a man more accustomed to society than the duke would certainly have remarked.

M. de Montbrison was scarcely eighteen.

Let the reader imagine the charming face of a young girl, fair, white, and red, whose rosy lips and smooth chin shall be slightly shaded with an incipient beard; add to this, large, brown eyes, still slightly timid, a figure as graceful as that of the duchesse, and he will have, perhaps, an idea of the appearance of this young duke, the *cherubino* the most ideal that a countess and a Susanna had ever *coiffé* with a woman's cap, after admiring the whiteness of his ivory neck.*

The vicomte had the weakness or the audacity to remain. "How kind you are, Conrad, to have thought of me to-night!" said Madame de Lucenay in the most affectionate tone, extending her beautiful hand to the young duke, who hastened to shake hands with his cousin; but Clotilde shrugged her shoulders, and said to him gayly, "You may kiss them, cousin; you wear your gloves."

"Pardon me, cousin," said the youth; and he pressed his lips on the charming hand she presented him.

"What are you going to do this evening, Conrad?" demanded the duchesse, without taking the least notice of Florestan.

"Nothing, cousin; when I leave here I am going to my club." "Not at all; you shall accompany us, M. de Lucenay and me, to Madame de Senneval; it is her night; she has already asked me several times to present you."

"My cousin, I shall be too happy to place myself under your orders."

"And besides, frankly, I do not like to see you so soon accustom yourself to this taste for clubs; you have every requisite to be perfectly well received and even sought after in society. So you must go oftener." "Yes! cousin."

"And as I am with you pretty much on the footing of a grandmother, my dear Conrad, I am disposed to be very maternal. You are emancipated, it is true; but still I think you will have need for a long time of a tutor. And you must absolutely accept of me."

"With joy, with delight, my cousin!" said the young duke with vivacity.

It is impossible to describe the mute rage of Florestan, who remained standing, leaning against the chimney-piece.

Neither the duke nor Clotilde paid any attention to him. Knowing how quickly Madame de Lucenay decided on anything, he imagined that she pushed her audacity and contempt so far that she wished to play the coquette openly and before him with the young duke.

It was not so; the duchesse felt for her young cousin an affection quite maternal. But the young duke was so handsome, he seemed so happy at the gracious reception of his young cousin, that Florestan was exasperated by jealousy, or rather by pride; his heart writhed under the cruel stings of envy, inspired by Conrad de Montbrison, who, rich and charming, entered so splendidly this life of pleasures, which he was leaving—he, ruined, despised, disgraced.

M. de Saint Rémy was brave—with the bravery of the head, if we may so express it, which, through anger or vanity, causes one to face a duel; but, vile and corrupted, he had not that courage of the heart which triumphs over evil propensities, or which, at least, gives one the energy to escape infamy by a voluntary death.

* This refers to a scene in the Marriage of Figaro.

Furious at the sovereign contempt of the duchesse, thinking he saw a successor in the young duke, M. de Saint Rémy resolved to match the insolence of Clotilde, and, if it was necessary, to seek a quarrel with Conrad. The duchesse, irritated at the audacity of Florestan, did not look at him, and M. de Montbrison, in his attraction towards his cousin, forgetting the usages of society, had neither bowed nor said a word to the vicomte, whom he knew perfectly

He advanced towards Conrad, whose back was turned towards him, touched his arm lightly, and said, in an ironical and dry tone, "Bonsoir, monsieur. A thousand pardons for not having perceived you before."

M. de Montbrison, feeling that he had been wanting in politeness, turned quickly, and said, cordially, "Monsieur, I am confused, truly; but I dare hope that my cousin, who has caused my want of attention, will be pleased to make my excuses, and—"

"Conrad!" said the duchesse, incensed at the impudence of Florestan, who persisted to remain and brave her, "Conrad, it is right; no excuses; it is not worth the trouble."

M. de Montbrison, believing that his cousin reproached him in a playful manner for being too formal, said gayly to the vicomte, who was white with rage, "I shall not insist, monsieur, since my cousin forbids. You see her tutelage commences."

"And this tutelage will not stop there, my dear sir, be quite assured. Thus, in this view of the case (which Madame la Duchesse will readily approve, I do not doubt), an idea has just struck me to make you a proposition."

"To me, monsieur?" said Conrad, beginning to dislike the sneering tone of Florestan.

"To yourself. I leave in some days for the readily of Gerolstein, to which I am attached. I wish to dispose of my house all furnished, and my stables; you also should make *an arrangement*," and the vicomte emphasized these last words, looking at Madame de Lucenay. "It would be very 'piquant,' would it not, Madame la Duchesse?"

"I do not comprehend you, monsieur," said M. de Montbrison, more and more astonished.

"I will tell you, Conrad, why you cannot accept the offer which has been made you," said Clotilde.

"And why cannot monsieur accept my offer, Madame la Duchesse?" "My dear Conrad, that which is proposed to be sold to you, is already sold to others. You comprehend? You would have the inconvenience of being robbed as on the highway."

Florestan bit his lips with rage. "Take care, madame!" cried he. "How? threats here, monsieur?" said Conrad. "Come, now, Conrad, pay no attention," said Madame de Lucenay, taking a "pastille" from a "bonbonnière,"* with imperturbable sang froid. "A man of honour ought not, nor may not commit himself with monsieur. If he insists, I will tell you wherefore."

A terrible scene was perhaps about to take place, when the doors were again thrown open, and M. le Duc de Lucenay entered, and, according to custom, with much noise and disturbance.

"How, my dear! are you ready?" said he to his wife. "Why, it is astonishing! why, it is surprising! Good-evening, Saint Rémy; good-evening, Conrad. Ah! you see before you the most despairing of men; that is to say, I cannot sleep; I cannot eat; I am stupefied; I cannot get used to it. Poor D'Harville! what an event!" And M. de Lucenay, throwing himself backward on a kind of "causeuse" with a double back, threw his hat from him with a gesture of despair, and, crossing his left leg over the right knee, he took his foot in his hand, continuing to utter exclamations of grief.

The emotions of Conrad and Florestan had time to be subdued before M. de Lucenay, the least observing man in the world, had time to perceive anything.

Madame de Lucenay, not from embarrassment—she was not a woman to be untimely embarrassed—but the presence of Florestan was repugnant and insupportable, said to the duke, "When you are ready, we will go. I am to present Conrad to Madame de Senneval."

"No, no, no!" cried the duke, abandoning his foot to seize a cushion, which he struck violently with his two fists, to the greet alarm of Clotilde, who, at the unexpected cries of her husband, bounded from her chair.

"Mon Dieu! monsieur, what is the matter?" said she. "You quite shock me."

"No!" repeated the duke; and, throwing down the cushion, he arose quickly, and began to walk about, violently gesticulating. "I cannot help but think of poor D'Harville; and you, Saint Rémy?"

"Truly, a frightful event!" said the vicomte, who, with hatred and rage in his heart, sought the looks of M. de Montbrison; but he, after the last words of his cousin, not from want of courage, but from pride, turned away from a man so terribly debased.

"Pray, monsieur," said the duchesse to her husband, "do not regret M. d'Harville in a manner so noisy, and, above all, so singular. Ring, if you please, for my servants."

"Only to think," said M. de Lucenay, seizing hold of the bell-pull, "three days ago he was full of life, and now, what remains of him? Nothing, nothing, nothing!" These last three exclamations were accompanied by three pulls of the bell so violent that the cord broke which he held in his hand, separated from the upper spring, and fell upon a candelabra filled with waxlights, and overturned two; the one fell upon the mantelpiece, and broke a beautiful little vase of Sevres china; the other rolled on the ground, and set fire to a rug of ermine, which, for a moment in a blaze, was almost immediately extinguished by Conrad.

At the same moment, two "valets de chambre," summoned by the loud ringing, arrived in haste, and found M. de Lucenay with the bell-rope in his hand, the duchesse laughing violently at this ridiculous "cascatelle" of candles, and M. de Montbrison partaking the hilarity of his cousin.

M. de Saint Rémy alone did not laugh.

M. de Lucenay, quite habituated to these kind of accidents, preserved a serious countenance; he threw the rope to one of the servants, and said, "The carriage of Madame Clotilde." Becoming a little more calm, he cried,

"Really, monsieur, there is no one else in the world but yourself who could have caused a laugh at so lamentable an event."

"Lamentable! You may well say frightful!

* Box for sugar-plums.

horrible! Now, only see, since yesterday I have been thinking how many persons there are, even in my own family, whom I would rather should have died than poor D'Harville. My nephew Emberval, for instance, who is so tiresome with his stammering; or your aunt Merinville, who is always talking of her nerves, her blues, and who swallows every day, while waiting for her dinner, an abominable potpie, just like a porcière! Do you think much of your aunt Merinville?"

"Allons donc, monsieur, you are crazy!" said the duchesse, shrugging her shoulders.

"But it is true," answered the duke; "one would give a hundred indifferent persons for a friend. Is it not so, Saint Rémy?" "Doubtless."

"It is always this old story of the tailor. Do you know, Conrad, the history of the tailor?" "No, cousin."

"You will understand at once the allegory. A tailor was condemned to be hung; there was no other tailor in the village; what do the inhabitants do? They said to the judge, 'Monsieur le Juge, we have only one tailor, and we have three shoemakers; if it is all the same to you to hang one of the shoemakers in the place of the tailor, we shall have quite enough with two shoemakers.' Do you comprehend the allegory, Conrad?"

"Yes, cousin." "And you, Saint Rémy?" "I, also." "The carriage of Madame la Duchesse," said one of the servants.

"Ah! ça, but why do you not wear your diamonds?" said M. de Lucenay, unexpectedly; "with this dress they would look devilishly well!"

Saint Rémy shuddered.

"For one poor little time that we go out together," continued the duke, "you might have honoured me with your diamonds. They are really very handsome. Have you ever seen them, Saint Rémy?"

"Yes; monsieur knows them perfectly," said Clothilde. "Give me your arm, Conrad."

M. de Lucenay followed the duchesse with Saint Rémy, who was almost beside himself with rage.

"Are you not coming with us to the Senneval's?" said M. de Lucenay to him.

"No; impossible," answered he, hastily.

"Ah! now, Saint Rémy, Madame de Senneval, there is another one—what do I say, one?—two—whom I would sacrifice willingly; for her husband is also on my list." "What list?"

"Of those persons whom I would willingly see die, if poor D'Harville could have remained."

While M. de Montbrison was assisting his cousin with her mantle, M. de Lucenay said to him,

"Since you are going with us, Conrad, order your carriage to follow ours, unless you will go, Saint Rémy; then you can give me a place, and I will tell you a story worth two of the tailor's."

"I thank you," said Florestan, dryly, "I cannot accompany you." "Then, 'au revoir,' my dear. Have you had a dispute with my wife? See, she is getting into the carriage without speaking to you?"

"My cousin?" said Conrad, waiting through deference for the duke. "Get in, get in!" cried he; and stopping for a moment in the porch, he admired the equipage of the vicomte.

"Are these your sorrels, Saint Rémy?"

"Yes." "And your fat Edwards—what a 'tournure!' Just see how he holds his horses in his hands! I must confess, there is no one but this devil of a Saint Rémy who has the best of everything." "Madame de Lucenay and her cousin are waiting, 'mon cher,'" said Florestan, with bitterness. "It is true, 'pardieu'—how rude I am! Au revoir, Saint Rémy. Ah! I forgot; if you have nothing better to do, come and dine with us to-morrow. Lord Dudley has sent me from Scotland some grouse and heath-cocks. Just imagine something monstrous. It is agreed, is it not?" And the duke joined his wife and Conrad.

Saint Rémy remained alone, and saw the carriage depart; his own drew up, and as he took his seat he cast a look of rage, hatred, and despair on this house, where he had so often entered as a master, and which he now left, ignominiously driven away. "Home," said he, roughly. "To the hotel!" said the footman to Edwards, shutting the door. The bitter and sorrowful thoughts of Florestan on his way home can easily be imagined.

As he entered, Boyer, who was waiting for him at the lodge, said, "M. le Comte is up stairs; he awaits M. le Vicomte." "It is well." "There is also a man there, a man to whom M. le Vicomte has given an appointment at ten o'clock."

"Well, well." "Oh! what a soirée!" said Florestan as he was going up stairs to meet his father, whom he found in the saloon, where the interview of the morning had taken place.

"A thousand pardons! my father, for not being here when you arrived; but I—"

"The man who holds this forged draught, is he here?"

"Yes, my father, he is below."

"Send for him to come up." Florestan rang the bell; Boyer answered. "Tell M. Petit Jean to come here." "Yes, Monsieur le Vicomte;" and Boyer disappeared. "How kind you are, my father, to remember your promise?"

"I always remember what I promise."

"How grateful! How can I ever prove—"

"I will not have my name dishonoured; it shall not be."

"It shall not be! no; and it shall never be more, I swear to you, my father." The comte looked at his son in a singular manner, and repeated, "No, it shall never be more!" Then, with a sneering laugh, he added, "You are a conjurer!" "It is that I read my resolution on my heart."

The comte made no reply, but walked up and down the room, with his hands in the large pockets of his overcoat.

"Monsieur Petit Jean," said Boyer, introducing a man with a low and cunning expression of face.

"Where is this draught?" said the comte.

"Here it is, monsieur," said Petit Jean (a man of straw of Jacques Ferrand's), presenting it to the comte.

"Is that it?" said he to his son.

"Yes, my father." The comte drew from the pocket of his waistcoat twenty-five notes of one thousand francs each, handed them to his son, and said, "Pay!" Florestan paid, and took the draught with a profound sigh of satisfaction.

M. Petit Jean placed the bills carefully in an old pocketbook, and retired. M. de Saint Rémy went with him out of the room, while Florestan prudently tore up the note.

"At least, the twenty-five thousand francs from

Clothilde remain. If nothing is discovered, it is a consolation. But how she has treated me! Ah! now, what can my father have to say to M. Petit Jean?" The noise of a key turned in a lock made the vicomte shudder. His father re-entered; his pallor had increased.

"I thought I heard some one lock the door of my cabinet, my father?" "Yes, I locked it." "You, my father? and why?" demanded Florestan, surprised. The comte placed himself so that his son could not descend the private stairs which led to the "rez-de-chaussée."

Florestan, alarmed, began to remark the sinister look of his father, and followed all his movements with anxiety. Without being able to explain it, he felt alarmed. "My father, what is the matter?"

"This morning, on seeing me, your sole thought has been this: My father will not have his name dishonoured; he will pay, if I can manage to make him believe in my assumed repentance."

"Ah! can you think that—"

"Do not interrupt me. I have been your dupe; you have neither shame, nor regret, nor remorse: you are rotten to the heart; you have never had an honest sentiment; you have not robbed as long as you had enough to satisfy your caprices; that is what is called probity by rich people of your stamp; then followed want of decency, then baseness, then crime, forgery. This is only the first period of your life—it is beautiful and pure compared to that which awaits you."

"If I did not change my conduct, I acknowledged it; but I will change, my father. I have sworn it to you." "You would not change."

"But—" "You would not change! Driven from the society to which you have been accustomed, you would soon become criminal, like the wretches with whom you would associate; a robber inevitably, and, if necessary, an assassin. There is your future life."

"Assassin! I?"

"Yes, because you are a coward!"

"I have fought duels, and I have proved—"

"I tell you that you are a coward! You have preferred infamy to death! A day will come when you will prefer the impunity of your new crimes to the life of others. That cannot be; I arrive in time to save henceforth, at least, my name from public dishonour. It must be finished."

"How, my father—finished! what do you mean to say?" cried Florestan, more and more alarmed at the expression of his father and his increasing paleness.

Suddenly some one knocked violently at the door of the cabinet; Florestan made a movement, as if to open it, but his father seized him with an iron hand, and withheld him.

"Who knocks?" demanded the comte.

"In the name of the law, open, open!" said a voice.

"This forgery was not, then, the last?" said the comte, in a low voice, looking at his son with a terrible scowl. "Yes, my father, I swear it,' answered Florestan, trying in vain to release himself from the hold of his father.

"In the name of the law, open!" repeated the voice.

"What do you want?" demanded the comte.

"I am a commissary of police; I come to make a search on account of a robbery of diamonds, of which M. de Saint Rémy is accused. M. Baudoin, jeweller, has the proofs. If you do not open, monsieur, I shall be obliged to break in the door."

"A robber already! I was not deceived," said the comte, in a low tone. "I came to kill you—I have delayed too long." "To kill me!"

"My name is enough dishonoured! let us finish: I have two pistols here—you are going to blow out your brains, otherwise I will do it for you, and I will say you killed yourself to escape shame."

And the comte, with frightful sang-froid, drew from his pocket a pistol, and with his disengaged hand he gave it to his son, saying,

"Come! proceed, if you are not a coward!"

After new and fruitless efforts to escape from the hands of the comte, his son fell backward, overcome with fright and pale with horror. From the terrible and inexorable looks of his father, he saw there was no pity to expect from him.

"My father!" he cried.

"You must die!" "I repent!"

"It is too late! Do you hear? they will break down the door!" "I will expiate my faults!" "They are going to enter! I must, then, kill you!"

"Pardon?"

"The door will give way! You will have it so!" And the comte placed the barrel of the pistol against the breast of his son. The vicomte saw that he was lost. He took a sudden and desperate resolution; no longer struggling with his father, he said, with firmness and resignation, "You are right, my father; give me this pistol. There is infamy enough attached to my name; the life that awaits me is frightful, it is not worth contending for. Give me the pistol. You shall see if I am a coward." And he extended his hand. "But, at least, a word, one single word of consolation, of pity, of farewell," said Florestan. His trembling lips, his ashy paleness, evinced the emotion of his trying situation. "If this should be my son!" thought the comte, hesitating to give him the instrument, "if this is my son, I ought still less to hesitate at this sacrifice." The door of the cabinet was broken in with a tremendous crash.

"My father—they come—oh! I feel now that death is a benefaction. Thanks, thanks! but at least your hand, and pardon me!"

Notwithstanding his firmness, the comte could not prevent a shudder, and said, in a broken voice, "I pardon you."

"My father, the door opens—go to them—do not let them suspect you at least. And then, if they enter here, they will prevent me from finishing. Adieu."

The footsteps of several persons were heard in the adjoining apartment.

Florestan pointed the pistol to his heart.

It was discharged at the moment when the comte, to escape this horrible scene, had turned away, and rushed out of the room, the curtains closing after him.

At the noise of the explosion, at the sight of the comte, pale and trembling, the commissary stopped suddenly at the threshold of the door, making a sign for his officers not to advance.

Informed by Badinot that the vicomte was closeted with his father, the magistrate at once comprehended everything, and respected his great sorrows.

"Dead!" cried the comte, concealing his face in his hands; "dead!" repeated he, overwhelmed. "It was right—better death than infamy—but it is frightful!"

"Monsieur," said the magistrate, sadly, after a few moments' silence, "spare yourself a sorrowful spectacle; leave this house. Now there remains for me a duty to perform, still more painful than that which brought me here."

"You are right, monsieur," said M. de Saint Rémy. "As to the victim of the robbery, you can tell him to call at M. Dupont's, banker."

"Rue de Richelieu. He is well known," answered the magistrate.

"At what amount are the stolen diamonds estimated?"

"At about 30,000 francs, monsieur; the person who bought them, and through whom the robbery was discovered, gave that amount for them to your son."

"I can yet pay this, monsieur. Let the jeweller call the day after to-morrow on my banker; I will settle with him."

The commissary bowed, and the comte departed. As soon as he was gone, the magistrate, profoundly touched at this unexpected scene, turned towards the saloon, the curtains of which were down. He raised them with emotion.

"Nobody!" cried he, astonished, looking round the room, and not seeing the least trace of the tragic event which was supposed to have occurred.

Then, remarking the small door in the tapestry, he ran thither. It was locked on the other side. "A trick," cried he in a rage; "he has undoubtedly made his escape in this way."

And, in fact, the vicomte, before his father, pointed the pistol at his heart, but he had afterward very dexterously discharged it under his arm, and immediately fled.

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Notwithstanding the most active researches in all parts of the house, he was not to be found.

During the conversation between his father and the commissary, he had rapidly gained the boudoir, thence the conservatory, the back street, and finally reached the Champs Elysées.

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This is a sad picture of degradation in the higher classes. We know it.

But, for want of instruction, the rich have, also, fatally, their wants, their vices, their crimes.

Nothing is more common, and more lamentable, than the insensate prodigalities that we have just described, and which always bring in their train, ruin, turpitude, infamy, or shame.

It is a deplorable, fatal spectacle. Doubtless inheritance, property, are, and ought to be, inviolably sacred. * * * * * *

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For a long time yet, the frightful disproportions will exist that we have seen between the millionaire Saint Rémy, and the artisan Morel.

But from the very reason that these disproportions are sanctioned and protected by the laws, those who possess so much wealth ought morally to account to those who only possess probity, resignation, courage, and desire to work.

In the eyes of reason, of *human rights*, and even of social interests well understood, a large fortune should be an hereditary deposite, confided to prudent, firm, skilful, and generous hands, who, intrusted with the care of this fortune, and also of its disbursements, should know how to encourage, animate, ameliorate the condition of all those who come within its sphere.

It is thus sometimes, but the cases are rare.

How many young men, like Saint Rémy, masters, at twenty, of a considerable patrimony, madly dissipate in idleness, in "ennui," in vice, for the want of knowing how to employ this wealth better, both for themselves and others!

How many, alarmed at the instability of human affairs, hoard up in a miserly manner!

Finally, those who, knowing that a stationary fortune becomes less, give themselves up, either as dupes or knaves, to this immoral, hazardous stock-jobbing, which the laws encourage and protect.

How can it be otherwise?

This science, this instruction, these rudiments of *individual economy*, and, consequently, social, who teaches them to inexperienced youth?

No one.

The rich man is thrown in the midst of society with his riches, as the poor with his poverty.

No more care is taken of the superabundance of the one, than of the wants of the other.

And is it not possible to accomplish this grand and noble task?

If, taking pity on the miseries, the ever-increasing sorrows of patient industry, restraining an opposition fatal to all, attacking, in fine, the impending question of the organization of labour, one should set the example himself of the *association of capital and industry*.

But, of an honest, intelligent, equitable association, which would secure the well-being of the artisan without destroying the fortune of the rich, and which, establishing between these two classes ties of affection and gratitude, would be a safeguard forever of the tranquillity of a state.

How powerful would be the consequences of such practical instruction!

Among the rich, who should hesitate, then,

Between the improper and disastrous chances of stock-jobbing;

The wretched enjoyments of avarice;

The vain follies of a ruinous dissipation;

Or an investment, at once productive and beneficent, which would spread ease, morality, happiness, joy, among twenty families?

PART VII.

CHAPTER I.

THE ADIEUX.

The morning after these last-mentioned events, a touching scene took place at Saint Lazare, at the hour of the recreation of the prisoners.

On this day, during the promenade of her companions, Fleur de Marie was seated on a bench near the basin, already called the *bench of La Goualeuse*. By a sort of tacit agreement, the prisoners abandoned this place, which she loved, for the sweet influence of the young girl had much increased. The Goualeuse preferred this seat near the basin, because the moss which grew around the border of the reservoir recalled to her mind the verdure of the fields, and even the limpid water with which it was filled made her think of the little river of the village of Bouqueval.

To the sad gaze of a prisoner, a tuft of grass is a meadow, a flower is a garden.

Confiding in the kind promises of Madame d'Harville, Fleur de Marie had been expecting for two days to leave Saint Lazare. Although she had no reason for inquietude at the delay

the young girl, from her habitual misfortunes, hardly dared to hope soon for freedom.

Since her return among these creatures, whose appearance and language awakened at each moment the incurable recollection of her first shame, the sadness of Fleur de Marie had much increased, had become still more overwhelming. This was not all. A new subject of trouble, sorrow, and almost of alarm for her, grew out of the affectionate warmth of her gratitude towards Rodolphe. Strange thing! she only sounded the depth of the abyss where she had been plunged, to measure the distance which separated her from this man, whose grandeur appeared to her superhuman; from this man, whose kindness was so august, whose power was so formidable to the wicked.

Notwithstanding the respect with which her admiration was stamped, sometimes, alas! Fleur de Marie feared she recognised in this admiration the character of love; but of a love as concealed as profound, as chaste as concealed, as desponding as chaste.

The unfortunate had not made this grievous discovery until after her interview with Madame d'Harville.

Naturally, from the expectation of so soon seeing her friends at Bouqueval and Rodolphe, Fleur de Marie should have been transported with joy.

It was not so. Her heart beat sadly; her thoughts returned without ceasing to the words, the lofty looks of Madame d'Harville, when the poor prisoner had spoken with so much enthusiasm of her benefactor.

With singular intuition, the Goualeuse had thus discovered a part of the secret of Madame d'Harville.

"The warmth of my gratitude for M. Rodolphe has wounded this young lady, so handsome and of a rank so elevated," thought Fleur de Marie. "Now I comprehend the bitterness of her words! she expresses a disdainful jealousy!

"She! jealous of me! it must be, then, that she loves him, and that I love him—also him? My love must have betrayed itself in spite of me!

"To love him—I—a creature forever ruined! ungrateful, and wretch that I am! Oh! if that were so, rather death a hundred times."

Let us hasten to say, the unhappy child, who seemed doomed to every kind of martyrdom, exaggerated what she called *her love*. To her profound gratitude towards Rodolphe was joined an involuntary admiration of the grace, strength, and beauty which distinguished him above all; nothing less material, nothing more pure than this admiration, but it existed lively and powerful, because physical beauty is always attractive.

And then, besides, the voice of blood, so often denied, mute, unknown, or disowned, sometimes makes itself heard; these bursts of passionate tenderness, which drew Fleur de Marie towards Rodolphe, and at which she was alarmed, because in her ignorance she misconstrued their tendency, resulted from mysterious sympathies as evident, but also as inexplicable as the resemblance of features. In a word, Fleur de Marie, learning that she was the daughter of Rodolphe, could have at once accounted for her feelings towards him; then, completely enlightened, she could admire without any scruple the the beauty of her father.

Thus is explained the dejectedness of Fleur de Marie, although she expected from one moment to another to leave Saint Lazare.

Fleur de Marie, melancholy and pensive, was then seated on a bench near the basin, regarding with a kind of mechanical interest the gambols of two daring birds that came to sport on the curb-stone. She ceased for a moment to work on a little child's frock which she was hemming. Is it necessary to say that this belonged to the new *layette* so generously offered to Mont Saint Jean by the prisoners, thanks to the touching intervention of Fleur de Marie?

The poor and deformed protégée of La Goualeuse was seated at her feet; quite busy in making a little cap, from time to time she cast on her benefactress a look at once grateful, timid, and devoted—the look of a dog to his master.

The beauty, the charms, the adorable sweetness of Fleur de Marie, inspired this degraded woman with as much affection as respect.

There is always something holy and grand even in the aspirations of a heart debased, which, for the first time, opens itself to gratitude; and, until then, no one had caused Mont Saint Jean to experience the religious ardour of a sentiment so new to her. At the end of a few moments, Fleur de Marie shuddered slightly, wiped away a tear, and resumed her sewing.

"You will not, then, take a little rest during the recreation, my angel saviour?" said Mount Saint Jean to La Goualeuse.

"As I have given no money to buy the layette, I must finish my proportion in work," answered the young girl. "Your part, mon bon Dieu! why, without you, instead of this fine white linen, this warm fustian, to clothe my child, I should only have had those rags, which were trampled in the mud. I am very grateful towards my companions; they have been very kind to me, it is true; but you! oh, you! How, then, shall I explain myself?" added the poor creature, hesitatingly, and very much embarrassed to express her thoughts. "Hold!" resumed she; "there is the sun, is it not? there is the sun!"

"Yes, Mont Saint Jean, come, I listen," answered Fleur de Marie, inclining her enchanting face towards the hideous visage of her companion.

"Mon Dieu! you will laugh at me," answered she, sadly; "I want to speak, and I don't know how."

"Say on, Mont Saint Jean."

"Have you not the eyes of an angel!" said the prisoner, looking at Fleur de Marie in a kind of ecstasy; "they encourage me—your beautiful eyes. Come, I will try to say what I wish. There is the sun, is it not? It is very warm, it makes our prison gay, it is pleasant to see and feel, is it not?" "Without doubt."

"Well, let us suppose—this sun—did not make itself, and if one is grateful to it, so much the more reason—"

"To be grateful towards Him who created it, is it not so, Mont Saint Jean! You are right; thus, you should pray to Him, adore Him—it is God."

"That's it, there's my idea," cried the prisoner, joyfully; "that's it; I ought to be grateful to my companions, but I ought to pray to you, adore you, La Goualeuse, for it is you who have rendered them good to me, instead of being wicked, as they were."

"It is God whom you must thank, Mont Saint Jean, and not me."

"Oh! yes—you, you—I see you—you have done me good, both by yourself and others."

"But, if I am good, as you say, Mont Saint Jean, it is God who has made me so: it is, then, he whom you must thank." "Ah! marry—perhaps so, then, since you say so," answered the prisoner; "if it pleases you to have it so, very well."

"Yes, my poor Mont Saint Jean, pray to Him often. This will be the best way of proving to me that you love me a little." "If I love you! La Goualeuse, mon Dieu! mon Dieu! But, do you not recollect what you told the others, to prevent them from beating me? 'It is not her alone you beat, it is also her child.' Well! for the same reason, I do not love you for myself alone, but also for my child."

"Thank you, thank you, Mont Saint Jean; you give me pleasure to hear you say that."

And Fleur de Marie, much affected, extended her hand to her companion. "What a pretty little fairy's hand! how white and small it is!" said she, drawing back, as if she feared to touch it with her own coarse and red hands. However, after a moment's hesitation, she touched with her lips the ends of the fairy fingers which Fleur de Marie presented to her; then, falling on her knees abruptly, she looked at her fixedly, in a profound and solemn manner.

"But, come, then, and sit there—near me," said La Goualeuse. "Oh! as for that, no, never—never." "Why not?" "'Respect discipline,' as my brave Mont Saint Jean used to say; 'soldiers together, officers together, each one with his fellow.'"

"You are crazy; there is no difference between us."

"No difference? mon bon Dieu! And you say that, when I see you as I see you, handsome as a queen; oh! stop—what is it to you—leave me here, on my knees—let me look at you, as I did just now. Marry—who knows, my child may resemble you."

Here, from a feeling of almost incredible delicacy in a creature of her species, fearing she might have wounded or humiliated Fleur de Marie by this singular wish, she added, sadly,

"No, no; I did but joke, La Goualeuse. I did not permit myself to look at you with this idea, unless you should allow it. My child shall be as ugly as myself—what of that? I shall not love it the less; poor little thing, it did not ask to be born, as they say. And if it lives, what will become of it?" said she, in a gloomy manner. "Alas! yes, what will become of it? mon Dieu!" The Goualeuse shuddered at these words. And, in effect, what would become of this poor, miserable, degraded, and despised child? What a fate! what a future! "Do not think of that, Mont Saint Jean," answered Fleur de Marie; "hope that your child will find some charitable persons on its path."

"Oh! one has never two chances, do you see, La Goualeuse," said Mont Saint Jean, bitterly, shaking her head. "I have met you—you—it is already a great chance—and, stop, let it be said without offence, I would have preferred that my child should have had this happiness instead of me. This wish is all that I can give it."

"Pray, pray God will assist you."

"Come, I will pray, if it please you, La Goualeuse; perhaps it will bring me good fortune: in fact, who would have told me, when La Louve beat me and I was the scapegoat of every one, that a good little angel would be there, who, with her pretty soft voice, would be stronger than any one, than La Louve, who is so strong and wicked?" "Yes; but La Louve has been very good to you, when she reflected that you were doubly to be pitied." "Oh! that is true, thanks to you, and I shall never forget it. But, tell me, La Goualeuse, why has she, since the other day, asked to have her room changed; she, who, in spite of her anger, seemed to like you?"

"She is a little capricious."

"It is droll: a woman who came here this morning from the ward where she now is, says she is quite changed."

"How is that?" "Instead of quarrelling with every one, she is very sad, and remains by herself; if any one speaks to her, she turns her back and does not answer. To see *her* silent who was always making a noise, it is astonishing, is it not? And then this woman told me something; but as for that, I don't believe it."

"What is that?" "She says she saw her weep: it is impossible."

"Poor Louve! it is on my account that she wished to change her quarters. I offended her without meaning it," said La Goualeuse, sighing.

"You offend any one, my good angel saviour!"

At this moment, Madame Armand, the inspectress, entered the court. After having sought for Fleur de Marie with her eyes, she came to her with a satisfied and smiling air. "Good news, my child!"

"What do you say, madame?" cried La Goualeuse, rising. "Your friends have not forgotten you; they have obtained your liberty. The director has just received the notice."

"Can it be possible, madame! ah! what happiness, mon Dieu!" And the emotion of Fleur de Marie was so violent, that she turned pale, put her hand to her heart, which beat violently, and fell back on her seat. "Calm yourself, my child," said Madame Armand, kindly: "happily, such shocks are without danger." "Ah! madame, how grateful I ought to be!"

"It is, doubtless, Madame d'Harville who has obtained your liberty. There is an old lady here who is charged to conduct you to your friends. Wait for me; I will return for you; I have a few words to say in the work-room." It would be difficult to describe the expression of deep grief which spread over the features of Mont Saint Jean on learning that her good angel saviour was to leave Saint Lazare.

The grief of this woman was caused less by the fear of a renewal of her torments, than by the sorrow of parting from the sole being who had ever evinced any interest for her. Still

seated at the foot of the bench, she took hold of the two tufts of tangled hair, which escaped from under her old black cap, as if to tear them out; then, this violent affliction giving way to dejection, she let her head fall, and remained dumb and immovable, with her face buried in her hands.

Notwithstanding her joy at leaving the prison, Fleur de Marie could not prevent a shudder at the remembrance of La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole; recollecting that these two monsters had made her swear not to inform her benefactors of her sad fate.

But these sad thoughts were soon dispelled at the hope of seeing Bouqueval, Madame Georges, and Rodolphe again; to the latter, she wished to recommend La Louve and Martial; it even seemed to her that the sentiment which she reproached herself for having felt towards her benefactor, being no longer nourished by sorrow and by solitude, would be calmed and modified as soon as she should resume the rustic occupations which she loved so much to partake with the good and honest inhabitants of the farm.

Astonished at the silence of her companion, of which she did not suspect the cause, she touched her slightly on the shoulder, and said,

"Mont Saint Jean, since I am now free, can I be of any service to you?"

On feeling the hand of La Goualeuse, the prisoner shuddered, let her arms fall, and turned towards the young girl, her face streaming with tears.

"Mon Dieu! what is the matter?" said La Goualeuse; "how you weep!"

"You are going away!" murmured she, in a voice almost suffocated with sobs; "I never thought that you might leave this place from one moment to another, and that I should never see you again—never more."

"I assure you that I will often, always remember your friendship, Mont Saint Jean."

"Mon Dieu, mon Dieu! and to think that I already love you so much! When I was seated there on the ground at your feet, it seemed to me I was saved; that I had nothing more to fear. It is not on account of the blows I may receive again, that I say this. I have a hard life. But it seemed to me that you were my guardian angel, and that you had pity on me. It is true, when one is used to being ill-treated, one is more sensible of a kindness." Then bursting again into tears, she cried, "Come, it is finished—it is finished—true. This must have happened some day or other; my folly has been never to think of it. It is finished; nothing more—nothing more."

"Come, take courage; I will think of you, and you shall remember me." "Oh! as for that, they might cut me to pieces, rather than make me deny or forget you; I shall become old—old as the streets, but I shall always have before my eyes your angel face. The first word that I shall teach my child will be your name, La Goualeuse, for without you it would have died with cold."

"Listen to me, Mont Saint Jean," said Fleur de Marie, touched at the affection of this poor creature. "I can promise you nothing for yourself, although I know some very charitable people; but for your child, it is different; it is innocent of every evil; he, and the persons of whom I speak, would, perhaps, take the charge of it when you can part with it." "Part from it—never, oh! never!" cried Mont Saint Jean, with warmth. "What would become of me then, now that I have counted on him?"

"But how will you support it? son or daughter, it must be honest, and for that—"

"It must eat honest bread, is it not so, La Goualeuse? I think so; it is my ambition. I say it to myself every day, thus: on leaving here I shall not let the grass grow under my feet. I will become a '*chiffonnière*,' a '*balayeuse des rues*,'* but I'll be correct; one owes that, if not to one's self, at least to one's children, when one has the honour of having any," said she, with a kind of pride.

"And who will take care of your child while you work?" answered La Goualeuse; "would it not be better, if that is possible, as I hope it is, to place it in the country with some good people, who would make it a good farmer's girl, or a plough-boy? You can come from time to time to see it, and some day, perhaps, you would find the means to remain altogether—in the country it costs so little to live!"

"But to part with it, to part with it! All my joy is in it. I, who have no one to love me."

"You must think more for it than for yourself, my poor Mont Saint Jean; in two or three days I will write to Madame Armand, and if the demand I mean to make in favour of your child succeeds, you will never have occasion to say again, what you said just now, *Alas, mon Dieu! what will become of it?*"

The inspectress, Madame Armand, interrupted this conversation; she came to seek Fleur de Marie.

After having again burst into sobs, and bathing, with the tears of despair, the hands of the young girl, Mont Saint Jean fell back on the bench quite overcome with sorrow, not even thinking of the promise just made to her by Fleur de Marie.

"Poor creature!" said Madame Armand, leaving the yard, followed by La Goualeuse, "poor creature, her gratitude towards you gives me a better opinion of her."

On learning that Fleur de Marie was pardoned, the other prisoners, instead of being jealous, expressed their joy; some of them surrounded her, and bade her farewell in a cordial manner, congratulating her frankly on her quick deliverance from prison.

"All the same," said one of them; "this little *blondinette* has made us do some good; it was when we collected for the *layette* of Mont Saint Jean. This will be remembered at Saint Lazare."

When Fleur de Marie had left the prison buildings under the conduct of the inspectress, the latter said to her, "Now, my child, go to the wardrobe, where you will leave your prison garments, and resume the peasant's costume, which, from its rustic simplicity, becomes you so well; adieu. You go to be happy, for you go under the protection of worthy people, and you leave this house never to return. But—hold—I am not reasonable," said Madame Armand, whose eyes were bathed in tears; "it is

* A rag-picker, a street-sweeper.

impossible for me to conceal from you how much I am already attached to you, poor child!" Then, seeing Fleur de Marie much affected, she added, "You do not wish me thus to sadden your departure?"

"Ah! madame, is it not to your recommendation that this young lady, to whom I owe my liberty, interested herself in my fate?" "Yes, and I am happy at what I have done; my presentiments have not deceived me." At this moment a bell rang. "Ah! this is the signal for them to resume their work; I must go in. Adieu! once more adieu, my dear child!"

And Madame Armand, quite as much affected as Fleur de Marie, embraced her tenderly; she then said to one of the attendants, "Conduct mademoiselle to the wardrobe."

A quarter of an hour afterward, Fleur de Marie, clothed as a peasant, as we have seen her at the farm of Bouqueval, entered the office, where Madame Séraphin awaited her. This woman, housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand, came to take the unfortunate child to the island of the ravageur.

CHAPTER II.

SOUVENIRS.

Jacques Ferrand had easily and promptly obtained the liberty of Fleur de Marie.

Instructed by La Chouette of the sojourn of La Goualeuse at Saint Lazare, he had immediately addressed himself to one of his clients, an honourable and influential man, telling him that a young girl, led astray, but sincerely repentant, and recently confined at Saint Lazare, ran the risk, from contact with the other prisoners, of having her good resolutions weakened. This young girl had been strongly recommended to him by some respectable people, who would take charge of her as soon as she left the prison. Jacques Ferrand had added, he begged his all-powerful client, in the name of morality, of religion, and of the future rehabilitation of this unfortunate, to solicit her discharge. Finally, the notary, so as to completely conceal his part in the transaction, had particularly requested his client not to name him in the accomplishment of this good work; this wish, attributed to the philanthropic modesty of Jacques Ferrand, was scrupulously observed; the release of Fleur de Marie was demanded and obtained solely in the name of the client, who, as soon as it was received, sent it to Jacques Ferrand, that he might address it to the protectors of the young girl.

Madame Séraphin, on giving this order to the directors of the prison, added that she was charged to conduct La Goualeuse to her friends. From the excellent account given by the inspectress to Madame d'Harville, no one doubted that she owed her freedom to the intervention of the marquise. Thus the notary's housekeeper could in no way excite the suspicions of her victim.

Madame Séraphin had, as occasion required, as is commonly said, the air of a good woman; it required very close observation to remark something insidious, false, and cruel in her crafty look, her hypocritical smile.

In spite of her profound wickedness, which had made her the accomplice or confidant of her master's crimes, Madame Séraphin could not help being struck with the touching beauty of this young girl, delivered by herself when quite a child to La Chouette, and whom she was then about to conduct to certain death.

"Well, my dear demoiselle," said she, in honeyed tones, "you must be delighted to get out of prison."

"Oh! yes, madame; and, doubtless, I owe my deliverance to the protection of Madame d'Harville, who has been so kind to me?" "You are not mistaken. But come, we are rather late, and we have got a long road to travel."

"We are going to the farm of Bouqueval, to Madame Georges, is it not so, madame?" cried La Goualeuse.

"Yes, certainly, we are going to the country—to Madame Georges," said the housekeeper, to drive away every suspicion from the mind of Fleur de Marie; then she added, with malicious good-nature, "But this is not all; before you see Madame Georges a little surprise awaits you: come, come, our hack is below. What delight you must feel at leaving this place, dear demoiselle. Come, let us go. Your servant, messieurs." And Madame Seraphin, after having exchanged salutations with the "*greffier*" and his clerk, descended with La Goualeuse, followed by an officer to open the doors. The last one was closed on the two females, and they found themselves under the large porch which faces on the Rue du Faubourg Saint Denis, when they met a young girl who was coming, doubtless, to visit a prisoner. It was Rigolette. Rigolette is always neat and coquettish. A little plain cap, very clean, and trimmed with cherry-coloured ribands, which harmonized wonderfully with her jet-black hair, surrounded her pretty face; a very white collar was turned over her long brown "*tartan*." She carried on her arm a straw basket, and, thanks to her neat and graceful manner of walking, her thick-soled "*brodequins*" were of marvellous cleanliness, although she came, alas! very far, poor child.

"Rigolette!" cried Fleur de Marie, at once recognising her former companion in prison, and of her rural excursions.

"La Goualeuse!" exclaimed the grisette in her turn. And the two young girls threw themselves into each other's arms. Nothing could be more enchanting than the contrast between these two young creatures of sixteen tenderly embracing, both so charming, and yet so different in expression and beauty. The one blonde, with large, blue, melancholy eyes, and a profile of angelic pureness; the other a lively brunette, with round and rosy cheeks, pretty black eyes, a charming picture of youth and gayety, a rare and touching example of happiness in indigence, of virtue in destitution, and of joy in industry.

After an exchange of their mutual caresses, the two young girls looked at each other. Rigolette was joyful at the rencounter, Fleur de Marie confused.

The sight of her friend recalled to her mind the few days of calm enjoyment which had preceded her first degradation. "It is you—what happiness!" said the grisette. "Mon Dieu!

yes; what a delightful surprise! it is so long since we have seen one another!" answered La Goualeuse.

"Ah! now I am no longer astonished at not having met you for six months," remarked Rigolette, observing the rustic clothes of La Goualeuse; "you live in the country?" "Yes, for some time," said Fleur de Marie, casting down her eyes. "And you come, like me, to see some one in prison?" "Yes—I come—I come to see some one," answered Fleur de Marie, stammering and blushing with shame. "And you are returning home, far from Paris, without doubt? Dear little Goualeuse, always good, I recognise you there. Do you remember the poor woman to whom you gave your mattress, linen, and the small amount of money you had, which we were about to spend in the country? for then you were crazy after the country, you, mademoiselle village girl." "And you, you did not like it much, Rigolette. How kind you were, for it was on my account you went."

"And for mine also; for you, who were always a little serious, you became so contented, so gay, so lively, once in the midst of the fields or woods; if it were only to see you there, it was pleasure to me. But let me look at you again! How this little round cap becomes you! how pretty you look! Decidedly, it was your vocation to wear a peasant's cap, as it was mine to wear the grisette's. Now you are according to your wishes, you must be happy; it does not surprise me. When I did not see you any more, I said to myself, this good little Goualeuse is not made for Paris; she is a real flower of the forest, as the song says, and these flowers cannot live in the *capital*: the air is not good enough for them. Thus La Goualeuse has got a place with some good people in the country; this is what you have done, is it not?"

"Yes," said Fleur de Marie, blushing.

"Only I have a reproach to make you."

"To me?" "You should have advised me; one does not leave in this way from one day to another, or, at least, without sending some word."

"I—I left Paris so quick," said Fleur de Marie, more and more confused, "that I could not." "Oh! I did not wish it; I am too happy to see you again. In truth, you did right to leave Paris, it is so difficult to live here quietly, without reckoning that a poor girl, isolated as we are, might turn to evil without wishing it. When one has nobody to advise with, one has so few means of defence; the men make such fine promises, and then, marry, sometimes poverty is so hard. Hold! do you remember the little Julie, who was so pretty? and Rosine, the blonde with black eyes?"

"Yes, I recollect them."

"Well! my poor Goualeuse, they have both been deceived, then abandoned, and, finally, from misfortune to misfortune, they have fallen to be the wretched women such as are shut up here."

"Ah! mon Dieu!" cried Fleur de Marie, who held down her head and became purple with shame.

Rigolette, deceived as to the sense of the exclamation of her friend, resumed: "They are culpable, despicable even, if you wish, I grant this; but, look here, my good Goualeuse, because we have had the happiness to remain virtuous—*you*, because you have gone to live in the country, *I*, because I had no time to lose with lovers; that I preferred my birds to them, and all my pleasure was to have a nice little room—we must not be too severe upon others. Mon Dieu! who knows but that deceit, poverty, and circumstances, may not have had a great deal to do with the bad conduct of Rosine and Julie, and if in their place wes hould not have done as they have done!"

"Oh!" said Fleur de Marie, bitterly, "I do not accuse them; I pity them." "Come, come, we are in a hurry, my dear demoiselle," said Madame Séraphin, offering her arm to her victim impatiently.

"Madame, let us have a few moments' more; it is so long a time since I have seen my poor Goualeuse," said Rigolette. "It is very late, mesdemoiselles, already three o'clock, and we have a long way to go," answered Madame Séraphin, very much annoyed at this meeting; but she added, "I will give you ten minutes longer."

"And you," said Fleur de Marie, taking the hands of her friend in her own; "you have such a happy disposition! Are you always gay? always contented?"

"I was, until a few days past, contented and joyous; but now—" "You have sorrows?"

"I? ah! yes, you know me, a real *Roger Bontemps*. I am not changed, but, unfortunately, everybody is not like me; and as others have their troubles, that causes me to have some." "Always kind!"

"What would you have? Now just imagine I came here for a poor girl—a neighbour—a very lamb of the bon Dieu, who is accused wrongfully, and who is much to be pitied; she is called Louise Morel; she is the daughter of an honest workman who has become crazy from his misfortunes."

At the name of Louise Morel, one of the victims of the notary, Madame Séraphin shuddered and looked at Rigolette attentively. The face of the grisette was absolutely unknown to her; nevertheless, from that moment she paid great attention to the conversation of the young girls.

"Poor thing," replied the Goualeuse, "how happy she must be that you do not forget her in her trouble!"

"This is not all—it is a fatality; just as you see me, I come a great distance—and still from another prison—but a prison for men." "You?"

"Ah! mon Dieu! yes, I have there another very sad subject. Thus you see my basket" (and she showed it) "is divided in two: each one has a side; to-day I bring Louise a little linen, and just now I carried something to poor Germain; my prisoner is called Germain. Hold! I cannot think of what has just passed between us without having a desire to weep; it is foolish—I know it is of no use, but, indeed, it is my nature." "And why do you feel like weeping?"

"Only think that Germain is so unfortunate as to be associated with all the prison rogues; it quite overcomes him; he has a taste for nothing, eats nothing, and is growing thinner every day. I saw that, and I said to myself, 'He is not hungry; I will make him a nice little dainty bit, which he liked so much when he was my neighbour; that will give him an appetite.' When

I say a dainty bit, just understand me, it was just some fine yellow potatoes, mashed up with a little milk and sugar; I filled a pretty cup with it, and just now I took it to him in prison, telling him that I had prepared this myself, just as I used to do in our happy days—you understand; I thought, perhaps, I could thus induce him to eat; ah, truly—" "How?" "That caused him to weep, when he saw the cup in which I had so often taken my milk before him; he burst into tears; and, more than the bargain, I finished by doing as he did, although I tried all I could to prevent it; you see my luck. I thought I was doing good—consoling him, and I made him more sad than before." "Yes, but those tears must have been so sweet to him."

"All the same; I should have preferred to console him differently; but I speak of him without telling you who he is; he was an old neighbour of mine, the most honest lad in the world, as gentle and timid as a young girl, and whom I loved as a comrade, as a brother."

"Oh! then, I can imagine that his sorrows are yours."

"Is it not so? But you will see what a good heart he has. When I left him, I asked him, as I always do, for his commissions, saying to him, with a laugh, just to raise his spirits a little, that I was his little housekeeper, and that I should be very exact, very active, to keep his custom. Then he, trying to smile, asked me to bring him one of the romances of Walter Scott, which he used to read to me in the evenings when I worked. This romance is called 'Ivan — Ivanhoe;' yes, that is the name. I liked this book so much, that he read it to me twice. Poor Germain! he was so obliging!" "It is a souvenir of the happy days gone by that he wished to have." "Certainly; since he begged me to go to the same library, not to hire, but to buy the volumes we used to read together—yes, to buy them—and you may judge it is a sacrifice for him, for he is as poor as we are."

"Excellent heart!" said the Goualeuse, quite affected.

"There! you are as much moved as I was, when he gave me this commission, my good little Goualeuse; but, you comprehend, the more I felt a desire to weep, the more I tried to laugh; for to weep twice in a visit made expressly to enliven him, was too much. Thus, to drive this gloom away, I recalled to his mind the droll story of a Jew, one of the characters of this romance, which formerly had so much amused us. But the more I talked, the more he looked at me with the big, big tears in his eyes. Marry, it touched my heart. I had restrained my tears for a quarter of an hour; I ended by doing as he did. When I left him he was sobbing; and I said to myself, furious at my stupidity, 'If this is the way I cheer and console him, it is hardly worth while to go and see him; I, who promised myself to make him laugh! It is astonishing how I have succeeded!'"

At the name of François Germain, Madame Séraphin redoubled her attention.

"And what has this young man done to be in prison?" asked Fleur de Marie.

"He!" cried Rigolette, whose compassion gave place to indignation; "he is persecuted by an old monster of a notary, who is also the denouncer of Louise."

"Of Louise, whom you came here to see?"

"The same. She was the servant of the notary, and Germain was his cashier. It would be too long a story to tell you of what they unjustly accuse this poor boy. But what is quite sure is, that this bad man is much *enragéd* with these two unfortunates, who have never injured him. But patience—patience; every one his turn."

Rigolette pronounced these last words with an expression which made Madame Séraphin uneasy. Engaging in the conversation, instead of remaining quiet, she said to Fleur de Marie, in a wheedling manner, "My dear demoiselle, it is late; we must go; we are waited for. I can well comprehend what mademoiselle says interests you, for I, who do not know this young girl and this young man, am much affected. Mon Dieu! is it possible people can be so wicked! And what is the name of this bad notary of whom you speak, mademoiselle?"

Rigolette had no reason to be suspicious of Madame Séraphin; nevertheless, remembering the recommendations of Rodolphe, who had enjoined on her the greatest reserve on the subject of the secret protection which he granted to Germain and Louise, she regretted she had suffered herself to say, "Patience—every one his turn." "This bad man is called M. Ferrand, madame," answered Rigolette; adding, very adroitly, to repair her slight indiscretion, "And it is so much the more wicked in him to persecute Louise and Germain thus, as they have no one to interest themselves in their behalf except me, who can be of no use to them."

"What a pity!" said Madame Séraphin. "I had hoped the contrary when you said '*But patience.*' I thought that you reckoned on some protector to sustain these two unfortunates against this wicked notary."

"Alas! no, madame," answered Rigolette, in order to completely lull the suspicions of Madame Séraphin. "Who would be generous enough to take the part of these two poor young folks against a rich and powerful young man like M. Ferrand?" "Oh, there are hearts generous enough for that!" cried Fleur de Marie, after a moment's reflection, and with constrained warmth.

"Yes. I know some one who makes it a duty to protect those who suffer, and defend them; for he of whom I speak is as charitable to honest people as he is formidable to the wicked." Rigolette looked at the Goualeuse with astonishment, and was on the point of saying (thinking of Rodolphe) that she also knew some one who courageously took the part of the weak against the strong; but, always faithful to the requests of her neighbour, she answered Fleur de Marie, "Really? you know some one generous enough to come to the aid of the poor?"

"Yes. And although I have already implored his pity, his benevolence for other persons, I am sure if he knew the unmerited misfortunes of Louise and M. Germain, he would save them and punish their persecutor; for his justice and goodness are as inexhaustible as those of God."

Madame Séraphin looked at her victim with surprise. "This little girl would be still more

dangerous than we thought?" said she to herself. "If I had taken pity on her, what she has just said would render the *accident* inevitable which will rid us of her."

"My good little Goualeuse, since you have such a good acquaintance, I beg you will recommend my Louise and my Germain to him, for they do not deserve their fate," said Rigolette, thinking that her friends might gain by having two defenders instead of one.

"Be tranquil; I promise you to do what I can for your protégées with M. Rodolphe," said Fleur de Marie.

"M. Rodolphe!" cried Rigolette, strangely surprised.

"Certainly," said La Goualeuse.

"M. Rodolphe! a travelling clerk?"

"I do not know what he is. But why this astonishment?"

"Because I know a Monsieur Rodolphe also."

"Perhaps it is not the same."

"Let us see, yours—how is he?"

"Young!" "Exactly."

"A face full of nobleness and goodness."

"That's it! but, mon Dieu! just like mine," said Rigolette, more and more surprised; and she added, "Is he dark? Has he small mustaches?" "Yes."

"Is he tall and slender, fine figure, and an air *comme il faut*, for a travelling clerk? Does yours look just so?"

"Without a doubt, it is he," answered Fleur de Marie; "only, what is strange is, that you think him a travelling clerk."

"As to that, I am sure of it; he told me so."

"You know him?" "I know him? he is my neighbour." "M. Rodolphe?"

"He has a chamber on the fourth floor, alongside of mine." "He! he!"

"What is so astonishing in all this? it is very simple: he only earns fifteen or eighteen hundred francs a year; he can only hire a modest room, although he has very little regularity about him, for he does not know what his clothes cost him, my dear."

"No, no; it is not the same," said Fleur de Marie, reflecting. "Ah ça! yours, then, is a phœnix for order?" "He of whom I speak, do you see, Rigolette," said Fleur de Marie, with enthusiasm, "is all-powerful; his name is only pronounced with love and veneration; his appearance is imposing, and one is almost tempted to kneel before his grandeur and his goodness." "Then I am at fault, my poor Goualeuse; I say as you do, it is not the same; for mine is neither all-powerful nor imposing. He is a *très bon enfant*, very lively, and no one kneels before him—just the contrary; for he has promised to help me wax my floor, and take me a walk on Sunday. You see he is no great lord. But what am I thinking about? I have truly the heart for a walk! And Louise and my poor Germain! as long as they are in prison, there can be no pleasure for me."

For some moments Fleur de Marie reflected profoundly: she recalled to her mind that when she first saw Rodolphe at the *tapis-franc*, he had the appearance and language of the guests of the Ogresse. Might he not play the part of a travelling clerk with Rigolette? What could be the object of this new transformation? The grisette, seeing the pensive air of Fleur de Marie, said,

"There is no use of cracking your head on this account, my good Goualeuse, we shall soon find out if we know the same M. Rodolphe; when you see yours, speak to him of me; when I see mine, I will speak to him of you. In this way we can satisfy ourselves at once." "And where do you live, Rigolette?"

"Rue du Temple, No. 17."

"Now this is strange, and worth remembering," said Madame Séraphin to herself, having attentively listened to this conversation. "This M. Rodolphe, mysterious and all-powerful personage, who doubtless makes himself pass for a clerk, occupies a room adjoining that of this little *ouvrière*, who knows more than she chooses to say. Good, good; if the grisette and the pretended clerk meddle with what does not concern them, we know where to find them."

"When I have spoken to M. Rodolphe I will write you," said La Goualeuse; "and I will give you my address, so that you can answer; but repeat your address, I fear I shall forget it."

"Here, I have one of my cards that I leave at my customers';" and she gave Fleur de Marie a little card, on which was written, in magnificent italics, *Mademoiselle Rigolette, Dressmaker, Rue du Temple*, 17. "It is just as if it were printed, is it not?" added the grisette. "It was poor Germain who wrote them for me—he was so kind, so thoughtful. Now, look you, it seems as if it were done purposely; one would say I never found out his good qualities until he was unfortunate, and now I am always reproaching myself for having put off so long loving him."

"You love him, then?"

"Ah! mon Dieu! yes. I must have a pretext to go and see him in prison. Confess that I am a strange girl!" said Rigolette, stifling a sigh, and laughing through her tears, as the poets say.

"You are as good and generous as ever," said Fleur de Marie, pressing tenderly the hands of her friend.

Madame Séraphin had doubtless heard enough of the conversation of the young girl, for she said, almost roughly, to Fleur de Marie, "Come, come, my dear demoiselle, let us go; it is late; here is a quarter of an hour lost."

"What a surly look this old woman has! I don't like her face," whispered Rigolette to Fleur de Marie. Then she added, aloud, "When you come to Paris, my good Goualeuse, do not forget me; your visit will give me so much pleasure! I shall be so happy to pass a day with you, to show you my housekeeping, my room, my birds! I have birds—it is my luxury."

"I will try to come and see you, but I will certainly write. Come, adieu, Rigolette, adieu. If you knew how happy I am to have met you!"

"And I, then!—but this shall not be the last time, I hope; and then I am so impatient to know if your M. Rodolphe is the same as mine. Write me soon on this subject, I entreat you"

"Yes, yes. Adieu, Rigolette."

"Adieu, my good little Goualeuse;" and the two young girls embraced each other tenderly, concealing their emotion. Rigolette entered the prison to see Louise, and Fleur de Marie got into a hack with Madame Séraphin, who

ordered the coachman to go to Batignolles, and to stop at the *barrière*.

A cross-road led from this place almost in a straight line to the banks of the Seine, not far from the island of the Ravageur. Fleur de Marie being unacquainted with Paris, did not perceive that the carriage was driven on a different road from that to Saint Denis. It was only when the vehicle stopped at Batignolles that she said to Madame Séraphin, who invited her to get out, "But it seems to me, madame, that this is not the road to Bouqueval; and then, how can we go from hence to the farm on foot?"

"All I can say to you, my dear demoiselle," answered the housekeeper, "is, that I execute the orders of your benefactors, and that you would cause them much trouble if you hesitate to follow me."

"Oh! madame, do not think it," cried Fleur de Marie; "you are sent by them—I have no questions to ask—I follow you blindly; only tell me if Madame Georges is well."

"She is perfectly so."

"And—M. Rodolphe?"

"Perfectly well also."

"You know him, then, madame; but just now, when I spoke of him with Rigolette, you said nothing."

"Because I must say nothing—I have my orders."

"Did he give them to you?"

"Isn't she curious, the dear demoiselle, isn't she curious?" said the housekeeper, laughing.

"You are right; pardon my questions, madame. Since we go on foot to the place to which you conduct me," added Fleur de Marie, sweetly, "I shall know that which I so much desire to know."

"In fact, my dear demoiselle, before a quarter of an hour we shall have arrived."

The housekeeper having left behind her the last houses of Batignolles, followed, with Fleur de Marie, a grassy footpath. The day was calm and beautiful, the sky towards the west half concealed by red and purple clouds; the sun, beginning to decline, cast his oblique rays on the heights of Colombe, on the other side of the Seine. As Fleur de Marie drew near the banks of the river, her pale cheeks became slightly coloured; she inhaled with delight the sharp, pure air of the country. Her beautiful face expressed a satisfaction so calm and holy, that Madame Séraphin said to her, "You seem well contented, my dear demoiselle!" "Oh! yes, madame; I am going to see Madame Georges, perhaps M. Rodolphe. I have some poor creatures very unfortunate to recommend to them. I hope they will assist them. Why should I not be content? If I were sad, should not my sadness disappear? And, then, look! the sky is so gay with its rosy clouds! and the grass! how green it is, notwithstanding the season! and there—there—behind those willows, the river—how large it is! mon Dieu! the sun shines on it—it is dazzling—what golden reflections—it shone thus just now on the water in the little basin in the prison. God does not forget the prisoners. He gives them also their ray of the sun," added Fleur de Marie, with a kind of pious gratitude; then, led by the remembrance of her captivity, the better to appreciate the happiness of being free, she cried, in a burst of artless joy, "Ah! madame! and there in the middle of the river, do you see this pretty little island covered with willows and poplars, with the white house on the shore! how charming this habitation must be in summer, when all the trees are covered with leaves! What repose, what refreshing air must be found there!"

"Ma foi," said Madame Séraphin, with a strange smile, "I am delighted that you find the island pretty."

"Why, madame?" "Because we are going there." "To this island?" "Yes: does it surprise you?" "A little, madame." "And if you should find your friends there?" "What do you say?" "Your friends collected there, to celebrate your deliverance from prison? would you not be more agreeably surprised?" "Can it be possible! Madame Georges? M. Rodolphe?"

"Look here, my dear demoiselle, I have no more command over myself than a child. With your innocent looks, you make me say what I ought not to say." "I am going to see them! Oh! madame, now my heart beats!"

"Don't go so fast! I can imagine your impatience, but I can hardly follow you, little madcap." "Pardon, madame, I am in such haste to arrive." "It is very natural. I do not reproach you for it—quite the contrary." "The road is steep here, and bad; will you take my arm, madame?"

"It is not to be refused, my dear demoiselle, for you are active and young, and I am old."

"Lean well on me, madame; do not be afraid to fatigue me."

"Thank you, my dear demoiselle, your aid is very acceptable, this descent is so steep. Ah! now we are on a good road."

"Ah! madame, it is then true, I go to see Madame Georges? I cannot believe it."

"Yet a little patience—in fifteen minutes you will see her, and then you will believe!"

"What I cannot comprehend," added Fleur de Marie, thoughtfully, "is, that Madame Georges awaits me there, instead of at the farm."

"Always so curious, the dear demoiselle—always so curious!" "How indiscreet I am, madame!" said Fleur de Marie, smiling.

"Thus, to punish you, I have a mind to tell you of a surprise that your friends intend for you."

"A surprise? for me, madame?"

"Hold, leave me alone, little spy—you will make me speak in spite of myself."

We will leave Madame Séraphin and her victim on the road which led to the river.

We will precede them both for some moments to the island of the *Ravageur*.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOAT.

At night, the appearance of the island inhabited by the Martial family was gloomy, but in the brilliant light of the sun, nothing could be more charming and cheerful than this cursed dwelling-place.

Bordered by willows and poplars, and almost entirely covered with thick grass, intersected

with winding paths of yellow gravel, the island contained a small vegetable garden and a number of fruit-trees. In this orchard was situated the thatched roof dwelling where Martial had wished to retire with François and Amandine. From this place the island terminated at its point by a kind of stockade, formed of large piles, to prevent the washing away of the earth.

Before the house was an arbour of green trelliswork reaching quite to the landing-place, destined to support during the summer the hop-vine and *vigne vierge*, under whose shade were arranged the seats and tables of the guests.

At one of the extremities of the main building, painted white and covered with tiles, a woodhouse, surmounted by a granary, formed a sort of wing, much lower than the principal edifice. Immediately over this wing was a window with shutters covered with plates of iron, and fastened exteriorly by two bars of the same material.

Three boats were lying at the landing-place, and at the bottom of one of them Nicolas was trying how the *soupape* worked which he had arranged.

Mounted on a bench outside of the arbour, Calebasse, with her eyes shaded by her hand, was looking in the direction where she expected Madame Séraphin and Fleur de Marie to appear.

"No one yet, neither old nor young," said Calebasse, descending from her bench, and addressing Nicolas: "it will be as yesterday! We shall have waited for the King of * * * *. If these women don't come before a half hour, we must go; the affair at Bras-Rouge is better worth our while; he is waiting for us. The broker is to be at his house in the Champs Elysées at five o'clock—we must be there before him. This very morning La Chouette repeated it to us."

"You are right," answered Nicolas, leaving his boat. "May the thunder crush this old woman, who physics us for no purpose! The *soupape* works like a charm—of the two jobs perhaps we shall have neither."

"Besides, Bras-Rouge and Barbillon have need of us—of themselves they can do nothing."

"It is true; for, while one does the business, Bras-Rouge must remain outside his tavern to watch, and Barbillon is not strong enough to drag the broker into the cellar alone; she'll kick, this old woman."

"Did not La Chouette tell us, laughingly, that she kept the Maître d'Ecole as a *boarder* in this cellar?"

"Not in this one; in another which is much deeper, and inundated when the river is high."

"Mustn't he vegetate there, in that cellar! To be there all alone, and blind!"

"He will see clear there, if he sees nowhere else: the cellar is as dark as a furnace."

"All the same; when he has sung all the songs he knows to amuse himself, the time must appear devilishly long to him."

"La Chouette says that he amuses himself in hunting rats, and that this cellar is very full of game."

"I say, Nicolas, speaking of individuals who must be rather wearied, fatigued," said Calebasse, with a ferocious smile, pointing with her finger to the window just described, "there is one there who must be sucking his own blood."

"Bah! he is asleep. Since this morning he has made no noise; and his dog is silent."

"Perhaps he has strangled it for food; for these two days past they must have been almost mad with hunger up there."

"It is their business. Martial may endure all this as long as he pleases, if it amuses him; when he has finished, they will say that he died from a severe illness; there will be no difficulty." "You think so?" "Most surely. On going this morning to Asnières, mother met the Père Férot, the fisherman; as he expressed his surprise at not having seen his friend Martial for two days, she told him that Martial did not leave his bed he was so ill, and his life was despaired of. The père swallowed all that just like honey; he will tell it to others—and when the affair happens it will seem all natural."

"Yes, but he will not die at once; it takes a long time in this way."

"What would you have? there is no other way to manage it. This madman of a Martial, when he has a mind, is as wicked as the devil, and as strong as a bull in the bargain; had he suspected us, we could not have approached him without danger; while with his door once well nailed up on the outside, what can he do? His window was already ironed."

"Hold! he could loosen the bars by breaking away the plaster with his knife, which he would have done, if, mounted on a ladder, I had not mangled his hands with the hatchet every time he commenced his work!"

"What a duty!" said the brigand, chuckling; "how much you must have been amused!"

"I had to give you time to arrive with the iron plate and bars which you went to Père Micou's for."

"How he must have foamed! Dear brother!"

"He ground his teeth like a madman; two or three times he tried to push me off with blows from his club, but then, having but one hand free, he could not work at the grating."

"Fortunately, there is no fireplace in the room!"

"Yes, and the door is strong and his hands wounded! but for this he would be capable of making a hole through the plank."

"No, no, there is no danger that he can escape. His bier is more solid than if it were made of oak and lead."

"I say—and when La Louve gets out of prison, and come here to seek her man, as she calls him?"

"Well! we will tell her to look for him!"

"Apropos, do you know that if mother had not shut up these scamps of children, they would have been capable of gnawing the door like rats, to deliver Martial! This little scoundrel François is a real devil since he suspects that we have shut up our big brother."

"Ah, ça! but are you going to leave them in the room up stairs while we are away from the island? Their window is not grated—they have only to descend from the outside."

At this moment cries and sobs in the house attracted the attention of Nicolas and Calebasse. They saw the opened door of the ground-floor shut violently; a moment after the pale and sinister face of the widow appeared at the kitchen window. With her long, bony

arm she beckoned her children to come to the house.

"Come, there is a squabble! I bet it is François who kicks," said Nicolas. "Scoundrel of a Martial! except for him this *gamin* would have been all alone. Watch well, and if you see the two females coming, call me."

While Calebasse, remounted on the bench, awaited their approach, Nicolas entered the house. The little Amandine, kneeling in the middle of the kitchen, wept, and asked pardon for her brother François. He, irritated and threatening, stood in one of the corners of the room, brandishing the hatchet of Nicolas. He seemed this time to make a desperate resistance to the wishes of his mother.

As usual, quiet and calm, she pointed to the half-open door leading to the cellar, and made a sign to her son that she wished François shut up there.

"I will not go there!" cried the determined child, whose eyes sparkled like those of a wild-cat; "you wish to let us die with hunger, like our brother Martial."

"Mamma, for the love of God, leave us up stairs in our own room, as you did yesterday," asked the little girl, in a supplicating tone, clasping her hands; "in the dark cellar we will be so much afraid!"

The widow looked at Nicolas in an impatient manner, as if to reproach him for not having executed her orders, and she again pointed to François.

Seeing his brother approach, the young boy brandished his hatchet in a desperate manner, and cried, "If you want to shut me up there, whether it is my brother, my mother, or Calebasse, so much the worse—I strike, and the hatchet cuts!"

Both Nicolas and the widow felt the necessity of preventing the two children from going to the assistance of Martial during their absence, and also to conceal from them what was about to take place on the river. But Nicolas, as cowardly as he was ferocious, and not caring to receive a blow from the dangerous hatchet with which his brother was armed, hesitated to approach him.

The widow, vexed at the hesitation of her eldest son, pushed him roughly by the shoulder towards François.

But Nicolas, again drawing back, cried,

"If he wounds me, what shall I do, mother? You know well enough I am about to need the use of both my arms, and I still feel the blow that this *gueux* of a Martial has given me."

The widow shrugged her shoulders with contempt, and made a step towards François.

"Do not come near me, mother!" cried the enraged boy, "or you shall be paid for all the blows you have given to me and Amandine."

"My brother, rather let yourself be locked up. Oh! mon Dieu! do not strike our mother!" cried Amandine, terrified.

At this moment Nicolas saw on a chair a large woollen coverlet, which was used for the ironing-table; he seized it, and adroitly threw it over the head of François, who, in spite of all his efforts, finding himself entangled in its thick folds, could make no use of his arms. Then Nicolas threw himself upon him, and, with the aid of his mother, carried him into the cellar. Amandine had remained kneeling in the middle of the kitchen. As soon as she saw the fate of her brother, she arose quickly, and, notwithstanding her alarm, went of her own accord to join him in his gloomy prison. The door was double locked on the brother and sister.

"It is the fault of this *gueux* of a Martial, if these children are, like devils, unchained against us," cried Nicolas. "Nothing has been heard in his chamber since this morning," said the widow, in a thoughtful manner, and she shuddered; "nothing." "That proves, mother, that you did well to say what you did to the Père Férot, the fisherman of Asnières, that Martial was sick in bed, and like to die. In this way, when all is over, no one will be astonished."

After a moment's pause, and as if she had wished to escape a horrible thought, the widow said, roughly, "Did La Chouette come here while I was at Asnières?" "Yes, mother." "Why did she not remain and go with us to Bras-Rouge? I am suspicious of her." "Bah! you suspect everybody, mother: to-day it is La Chouette; yesterday it was Bras-Rouge." "Bras-Rouge is at liberty; my son is at Toulon: they both committed the same robbery." "You always repeat this old story. Bras-Rouge escaped because he is as cunning as a steel-trap, that's all. La Chouette did not remain here, because she had an appointment at two o'clock, near the *Observatoire*, with the tall man in black, on whose account she carried off this girl from the country, with the assistance of the Maître d'Ecole and Tortillard; and it was even Barbillon who drove the hack which this tall man in black hired for the occasion. Come, now, mother, why should La Chouette inform against us, since she tells us what jobs she has in hand, and we do not tell her ours? for she knows nothing of our proposed drowning scrape. Be tranquil, mother—wolves don't eat one another. The day's work will be a good one. When I think that the broker has often twenty, thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds in her bag, and that in two hours time we shall have her in the cellars of Bras-Rouge! Thirty thousand francs in diamonds! only think of it!"

"And while we hold the broker, Bras-Rouge remains outside?" said the widow, with an air of suspicion. "And where should he be? If any one should come in, must he not answer, and prevent them from approaching the place where we are doing our job?"

"Nicolas! Nicolas!" cried Calebasse, from without, "here are the two women."

"Quick, quick, mother! your shawl: I will row you over—it will be so much done," said Nicolas.

The widow had replaced her mourning-cap with one of black tulle. She wrapped herself in a large tartan shawl of white and gray, locked the door of the kitchen, placed the key behind one of the shutters of the "*rez-de-chaussée*," and followed her son to the landing-place.

Almost in spite of herself, before she left the island, she cast a long, lingering look at Martial's window, knit her brows, bit her lips, then, after a sudden fit of shivering, she murmured to herself, "It is his own fault—own fault."

"Nicolas! do you see them? there, just by that rising ground; there is a *paysanne* and a *bourgeoise*," cried Calebasse, pointing to the other side of the river, where Madame Séraphin and Fleur de Marie appeared, descending a small path leading to the shore, near a small elevation, on which was placed a plaster-kiln.

"Let us wait for the signal, and have no bungling," said Nicolas.

"Are you blind? Don't you recognise the fat woman who came here the day before yesterday? Look at her orange shawl, and see what a hurry the little peasant girl is in! poor little puss—it is plain to see she don't know what is coming."

"Yes, I see the fat woman now. Come, *ça chauffe*,' it looks like work. '*Ah ça!*' let us make our plans, Calebasse," said Nicolas. "I will take the old woman and the young girl in my boat with the 'soupape:' you will follow in the other, close behind; and be sure to row in such a manner that I can jump into your boat as soon as I set the trap at work, and mine will sink."

"Don't be afraid; it is not the first time that I have rowed, is it?" "I am not afraid of being drowned myself—you know I can swim—but, if I do not jump just at the right moment in the other boat, the females, in their struggles, may catch hold of me—and, thank you, I have no desire to drink *water* with them."

"The old woman is making a sign with her handkerchief," said Calebasse: "there they are on the shore."

"Come, come, step on board, mother," cried Nicolas, unfastening the boat: "come in the boat with the 'soupape,' so that the two women will not suspect anything. And you, Calebasse, jump into the other one, my girl—row strong. Ah! hold, take my hook, put it alongside of you—it is pointed like a lance—it may be of use—now, push ahead!" said the bandit, placing in the boat a long boathook, one end of which terminated with a sharp spike of iron.

In a few moments the two boats touched the shore, where Madame Seraphin and Fleur de Marie had been waiting impatiently.

While Nicolas was tying his boat to a post, Madame Séraphin approached him, and whispered, hurriedly, "Say that Madame Georges awaits us;" then she said, in a loud tone, "We are a little behindhand, mon garçon." "Yes, my good lady; Madame Georges has asked for you several times."

"You see, my dear demoiselle, Madame Georges is waiting for us," said Madame Séraphin, turning towards Fleur de Marie, who, notwithstanding her confidence, had felt her heart beat at the appearance of the sinister faces of the widow, Calebasse, and Nicolas. But the name of Madame Georges reassured her, and she answered, "I am also very impatient to see Madame Georges; happily, the passage is short."

"Won't the dear lady be happy!" said Madame Séraphin. Then, turning towards Nicolas, she added, "Come, 'mon garçon,' bring your boat a little nearer, that we can embark;" and, in a low tone, she whispered, "The little one must be drowned; if she comes up, put her under again."

"It is said; and you, don't be afraid; when I make a sign give me your hand. She will sink all alone—all is prepared—you have nothing to fear," answered Nicolas, in a low tone. Then, with savage imperturbability, without being touched either with the beauty or youth of Fleur de Marie, he offered her his arm.

The young girl leaned lightly on him, and entered the boat. "Now your turn, my good lady," said Nicolas to Madame Séraphin. And he offered to assist her.

Whether it was a presentiment, suspicion, or only a fear that she could not jump quick enough from the boat where La Goualeuse and Nicolas were seated when it should sink, the housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand said to Nicolas, drawing back,

"On second thoughts, I will go in the boat of mademoiselle." And she took a seat alongside of Calebasse. "Very good," said Nicolas, exchanging a glance with his sister; and, with the end of his oar, he shoved off his boat, his sister doing the same as soon as Madame Séraphin had taken her seat. Standing on the shore, erect, immovable, indifferent to this scene, the widow, pensive and absorbed, kept her eyes fixed on Martial's window, which could be distinguished, through the poplar trees, from the shore.

During this time the two boats moved slowly off towards the opposite side.

CHAPTER IV.

BONHEUR DE SE REVOIR.

Before we acquaint the reader with the "denouement" of the drama which passed in the boats, we will go back a little. A few moments after Fleur de Marie had left Saint Lazare with Madame Séraphin, La Louve had also quitted the prison.

Thanks to the recommendations of Madame Armand and of the director, who wished to recompense her for her good action towards Mont Saint Jean, she had been also pardoned and dismissed.

A complete change had taken place in this creature, heretofore so headstrong, vile, and corrupted.

Keeping constantly in mind the description made by Fleur de Marie of a peaceful and solitary life, La Louve held in honour her past crimes.

To retire to the depths of the forests with Martial, such was her only ambition, her fixed idea, against which all her ancient and bad instincts had in vain revolted. Separated from La Goualeuse (from whose growing influence she had fled), this strange woman had retired to another quarter of the prison.

To cause this rapid and sincere conversion (more assured, and consolidated by the fruitless struggles of the perverse habits of her companions), Fleur de Marie, following the impulse of her native good sense, had thus reasoned. La Louve, a violent and resolute creature, loves Martial passionately; she must, then, with joy hail a possibility of leaving the ignominious life of which she is ashamed for the first time, and of dedicating herself entirely to this rough man, whose every desire is hers—to this man, who seeks solitude as much from taste as to escape

the reprobation which pursues his detestable family.

Aided solely by these elements, Fleur de Marie, in giving a praiseworthy direction to the savage love and bold character of this creature, had then changed an abandoned girl into an honest woman. For only to dream of marrying Martial and retiring with him to the woods, to live there a life of labour and privation, is it not absolutely the wish of a virtuous woman?

Confiding in the aid which Fleur de Marie had promised her in the name of her unknown benefactor, La Louve determined to make this laudable proposition to her lover, not without the bitter fear of a refusal, for the Goualeuse, in leading her to blush for the past, had also given her a consciousness of her position towards Martial.

Once free, La Louve only thought of seeing him. She had received no news from him for many days. In the hope of meeting him at the island of the Ravageur, and decided to wait there if she did not find him, she got into a cabriolet, and was rapidly driven to the bridge of Asnières, which she crossed about fifteen minutes before Madame Séraphin and Fleur de Marie, coming on foot from the barrière, had arrived on the shore near the plaster-kiln.

When Martial did not come to take La Louve in his boat to the island, she forthwith applied to an old fisherman named the Père Férot, who lived near the bridge.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, a cabriolet stopped at the entrance of a little street of the village of Asnières. La Louve gave five francs to the coachman, jumped to the ground, and ran hastily to the abode of the Père Férot.

Having thrown off her prison dress, she wore a robe of dark green merino, a red shawl, imitation "cachemire," and a lace cap trimmed with ribands; her thick, crispy hair was scarcely smoothed. In her impatience to see Martial, she had dressed herself with more haste than care.

On reaching the house of the fisherman, she found him seated at the door mending his nets.

As soon as she saw him, she cried out, "Your boat, Père Férot—quick, quick!"

"Ah! is it you, mademoiselle? Good-day, good-day. You have not been here for a long time."

"Yes, but your boat—quick—to the island."

"Ah, well! fate will have it so: my good girl, it is impossible to-day."

"How?"

"My boy has taken my boat to go with the others to a rowing match at Saint Ouen. There is not a single boat left on the whole shore from this to the docks."

"Mordieu!" cried la La Louve, stamping and clinching her fists: "it happens so, expressly for me!"

"It's true! on my word! I am very sorry I cannot convey you to the island, for, without doubt, he must be worse."

"Worse? Who?"

"Martial." "Martial!" cried La Louve, seizing the Père Férot by the collar: "is Martial sick?"

"Did you not know it?"

"Martial!"

"Yes, certainly; but you will tear my blouse; do be quiet."

"He is sick! And since when?"

"Since two or three days."

"It is false! he would have written to me."

"Ah, well, yes! he is too sick to write!"

"Too sick to write? And he is on the island! you are sure of it?"

"I will tell you. Imagine that this morning I met the widow Martial—ordinarily, when I see her on one side, you understand, I generally cross to the other; for I don't like her company—then—"

"But my Martial—where is he?"

"Stop a moment. Finding myself face to face with his mother, I did not dare to avoid her; she looks so wicked, that I am afraid of her—she is stronger than I am: 'Here is two days now that I have not seen your Martial,' said I to her; has he gone to the city?" Thereupon she looked at me with her two eyes—but such eyes—they would have killed me, had they been pistols, as they say."

"I suffocate; what next—what next?" The Père Férot was silent for a moment, then said, "Hold! you are a good girl—promise to be secret, and I will tell you everything as I know it."

"About Martial?"

"Yes; for do you see, Martial is a good fellow, although wrong-headed; and if anything should happen to him from his old she-devil of a mother, or his 'gueux' of a brother, it would be a pity."

"But what has happened? What have his mother and brother done to him? Where is he, heiu? Speak! why don't you speak?"

"Come, good; there you are again at my blouse! Let me go. If you interrupt me by destroying my clothes, I can never finish, and you will know nothing." "Oh! what patience!" cried La Louve, stamping her feet with rage.

"You will not tell any one what I am going to say?" "No, no, no!"

"Word of honour?" "Père Férot, you'll throw me into convulsions."

"Oh, what a girl! what a girl! Hasn't she a hot head! 'Voyous,' I'll go on. In the first place, you must know that Martial is more and more at loggerheads with his family, and if they should play him some bad trick, I should not be surprised. It is on this account that I am sorry my boat is not here, for if you count on those from the island, you are wrong. Neither Nicolas nor this hussey of a Calebasse will take you there."

"I know it well enough. But what did his mother say? Did he fall sick on the island?"

"Don't get me into a scrape; this is the story: this morning I said to the widow, 'For two days past I have not seen Martial; his boat is there. Is he in the city?' Thereupon the widow looked at me with her wicked eyes: '*He is sick on the island; and so sick that he will never come off again.*' I said to myself, 'How can that be? There are three days that—' Well! what?" said the Père Férot, interrupting himself: "Well! where are you going to?—where the devil is she running to now?"

Believing the life of Martial menaced by the inhabitants of the island, La Louve, overcome with alarm, and transported with rage, listened no longer to the fisherman, but ran along the Seine.

Some topographical details are indispensable to understand the following scene.

The island of the Ravageur approached nearer the left side of the river than the right shore, from whence Fleur de Marie and Madame Séraphin had embarked. La Louve was on the left side. Without being very steep, the hills on the island concealed in all its length the view of one shore from the other. Thus, La Louve had not seen the embarcation of La Goualeuse, and the Martial family, of course, could not see her as she ran along the shore on the opposite side.

We will recall to the minds of our readers that the country house belonging to Doctor Griffon, where the Comte de Saint Rémy temporarily dwelt, was built on the hill side, near the shore where La Louve was wandering, half distracted.

She passed, without seeing them, near two persons, who, struck with her haggard look, turned to follow her at a distance. These two persons were the Comte de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon.

The first movement of La Louve, on learning the peril of her lover, had been to run impetuously towards the place where she knew he was in danger. But as she approached the island, she thought of the difficulty of getting there. As the old fisherman had told her, she could not count on any strange boat, and no one from the Martial family would come for her.

Breathless, her face flushed, her eyes sparkling, she stopped opposite to a point of the island which, forming a curve at this place, was nearest to the mainland. Through the leafless branches of the willows and poplars, La Louve could see the roof of the house where, perhaps, Martial was dying. At this sight, uttering a fearful groan, she tore off her shawl, her cap, and slipping down her robe, keeping on her petticoat, she threw herself into the river, and waded until she lost her footing, when she began to swim vigorously towards the island.

It was a spectacle of savage energy.

At each stroke, the thick and long hair of La Louve, untied by the violence of her movements, shook about her head like a shaggy mane of copper colour. * * * * *

Suddenly, from the other side of the island resounded a cry of distress, a cry of terrible, desperate agony. La Louve shuddered, and stopped short. Then sustaining herself on the water with one hand, with the other she pushed back her thick hair, and listened. A new cry was heard, but more feeble, more supplicating, convulsive, expiring—and all relapsed into a profound silence. "My Martial!" cried La Louve, swimming again with all her strength. She thought she had recognised the voice of Martial.

The comte and doctor had not been able to follow La Louve quick enough to prevent what she accomplished. They arrived opposite to the island at the moment that the two fearful screams were heard, and stopped, as much alarmed as La Louve. Seeing her struggle intrepidly against the current, they cried, "The poor thing will be drowned!" These fears were vain; she swam like an otter; still a few more strokes, and she reached the land. She was getting out of the water by the assistance of the poles, which, as we have said, formed a kind of stockade at the end of the island, when she perceived the body of a young girl, dressed as a peasant, sustained by her clothes, floating down the current.

To grasp with one hand the poles, and with the other to seize hold of the girl by her dress, such was the movement of La Louve, a movement as rapid as thought. Then she drew her so violently towards her and within the stakes, that, for a moment, she disappeared under the water, which was of no great depth at this place.

Endued with no common strength and address, La Louve raised up La Goualeuse (for it was she), whom she had not yet recognised, took her up in her robust arms, as one would have taken a child, made some steps in the water, and, finally, laid her on the green bank of the island.

"Courage! courage!" cried M. de Saint Rémy to her, a witness, as well as Doctor Griffon, of this bold act. "We are going to cross the bridge, and will come to your aid in a boat." La Louve did not hear these words. Let us repeat, that from the right shore of the Seine, where Nicolas, Calebasse, and their mother remained after the consummation of their horrible crime, nothing could be seen of the other side, owing to the height of the island. Fleur de Marie, suddenly drawn within the stockade by La Louve, having plunged for a moment, and not reappearing to the sight of her murderers, they believed their victim drowned and ingulfed.

Some few moments afterward, the current brought down another body, in an eddy, which La Louve did not perceive. It was the corpse of the notary's housekeeper. Dead—quite dead—this one.

Nicolas and Calebasse had as much interest as Jacques Ferrand to get rid of this witness, this accomplice of their new crime; thus, when the boat with the soupape sunk with Fleur de Marie, Nicolas, springing into the boat of his sister, nearly upset it, and, seizing a favourable moment, threw the housekeeper into the river and despatched her with the boathook.

* * * * * * *

Out of breath and exhausted, La Louve, kneeling on the ground alongside of Fleur de Marie, recruited her strength, and examined the features of her whom she had rescued from death. Let her surprise be imagined when she recognised her companion of the prison; her companion, who had exercised upon her destiny an influence so rapid, so benevolent. In her surprise, for a moment she forgot Martial.

"La Goualeuse!" cried she.

And, with bended body, leaning on her hands and knees, her hair dishevelled, her clothes dripping with water, she contemplated the unhappy child, extended, almost expiring, on the ground. Pale, inanimate, her eyes half open and without expression, her beautiful flaxen hair falling flat over her forehead, her blue lips, her small hand, already stiff and icy—one would have thought her dead. "La Goualeuse!" repeated La Louve, "what chance! I who came to say to my Martial the good and evil she had done me with her words and promises; the resolution that I had taken. Poor little thing! I find her here, dead! But, no, no!" cried La Louve, approaching still

nearer to Fleur de Marie, and feeling an almost imperceptible breath escape from her mouth: "No! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! she breathes still! I have saved her from death! that has never happened to me before, to save any one. Ah! that, that does me good; it makes me warm. Yes, but my Martial—I must save him also. Perhaps, at this moment, he is expiring; his mother and brother are capable of killing him. Yet I cannot leave this poor little thing here. I will carry her to the widow's; she must take care of her, and show me Martial, or I will break everything—I will kill everybody! Oh! neither mother, brother, nor sister do I care for, when I know my Martial is there!"

And, immediately getting up, La Louve carried Fleur de Marie in her arms. With this light burden she ran towards the house, not doubting but that the widow and her daughter, notwithstanding their wickedness, would lend their assistance to Fleur de Marie.

When she reached the highest part of the island, from whence could be seen both shores of the Seine, Nicolas, his mother, and Calebasse were far off; they were then going in all haste to the dwelling of Bras-Rouge.

At this moment also a man, who, concealed in the plaster-kiln, had invisibly assisted at this horrible tragedy, disappeared, believing, with the murderers, that the crime was executed.

This man was Jacques Ferrand.

One of Nicolas's boats was tied to a pile near the place where the Goualeuse and Madame Séraphin had embarked.

Hardly had Jacques Ferrand left the plaster-kiln to return to Paris, when M. de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon hastily passed the bridge of Asnières, running towards the island, thinking to reach it by Nicolas's boat, which they had seen from afar.

To her great surprise, on arriving at the house of the Ravageurs, La Louve found the door closed. Placing the still inanimate body of Fleur de Marie under the arbour, she drew near to the house. She knew the window of Martial's chamber. What was her surprise to see the shutters covered with iron plates, and fastened with bars of the same material!

Suspecting partly the truth, La Louve uttered a hoarse, resounding cry, and began to call with all her strength, "Martial! my friend!"

No one answered. Alarmed at this silence, La Louve began to walk around the building like a savage beast who scents his mate, and seeks, in roaring, the entrance of the den where he is confined.

From time to time she cried, "My man—are you there, my man?" And in her rage she shook the bars of the kitchen window—she knocked against the wall—she kicked against the door.

All at once a hollow sound answered from the interior of the house. La Louve shuddered—listened. The noise ceased.

"My man has heard me! I must enter, even if I have to gnaw the door with my teeth!" and again she uttered her savage cries.

Several blows, feebly struck on the inside of the window shutters of Martial's room, answered to her shouts.

"He is there!" cried she, stopping suddenly under the windows of her lover; "he is there! if necessary, I will tear off the iron shutters with my nails, but I will open these shutters!"

So saying, she saw a large ladder placed behind one of the blinds of the lower rooms; in drawing this blind violently towards her, La Louve caused the key to fall which the widow had concealed on the window bench. "If it unlocks," said La Louve, trying the key in the lock, "I can go up to his chamber. It opens," cried she, with joy; "my friend is saved!"

Once in the kitchen, she was struck by the cries of the children, who, shut up in the cellar, and hearing an extraordinary noise, called for help.

The widow, believing that no one would come to the island or house during her absence, had contented herself with locking François and Amandine in the cellar, leaving the key in the lock.

Set at liberty by La Louve, the brother and sister rushed precipitately from the cellar, crying, "Oh, La Louve, save our brother Martial! they wish to make him die; during two days he has been walled up in his chamber."

"They have not wounded him?"

"No, no; we believe not."

"I arrive in time!" cried La Louve, rushing to the staircase; then suddenly stopping, she said, "And La Goualeuse! whom I forget. Amandine, some fire at once; you and your brother, bring here, near the chimneyplace, a poor girl who was drowning. I saved her. She is under the arbour. François, a pair of pincers, a hatchet, an iron bar, so that I can break down the door of my Martial!"

"Here is an axe to split wood, but it is too heavy for you," said the young boy.

"Too heavy!" cried La Louve, and she lifted with ease this mass of iron, which, under any other circumstances, she could hardly have raised from the ground. Then mounting the stairs four at a time, she repeated to the two children,

"Run and bring in the young girl, and place her near the fire." In two bounds, La Louve was at the bottom of the corridor, at Martial's door. "Courage, my friend—here is your Louve!" cried she, and raising the hammer with both hands, with a furious blow she shook the door.

"It is nailed on the outside." "Draw out the nails," cried Martial, in a feeble voice.

Throwing herself on her knees in the corridor, with the aid of the pincers and of her nails, which she wounded, and her fingers, which she tore, La Louve succeeded in drawing out the enormous nails which fastened the door.

At length the door was opened.

Martial, pale, his hands covered with blood, fell almost lifeless into the arms of La Louve.

CHAPTER V.

LA LOUVE AND MARTIAL.

"At length, I see you! I hold you! I have you!" cried La Louve, receiving Martial in her arms with an accent of joy and savage energy; then sustaining him, almost carrying him, she led him to a seat placed in the corridor.

During some moments, Martial remained

weak and feeble, endeavouring to recover from this violent shock, which had exhausted his failing strength. La Louve saved her lover at the moment when, in a state of despair, he felt himself about to die, less from the want of food than from the deprivation of air, impossible to be renewed in a small room without a chimney, without any aperture, and hermetically closed—through the atrocious foresight of Calebasse, who had stopped up with old linen even the smallest fissures of the door and window.

Palpitating with happiness and anguish, her eyes wet with tears, La Louve, on her knees, watched the smallest movements of Martial. By degrees, he seemed to recover, as he breathed the pure and salubrious air. After a slight shudder, he raised his weary head, uttered a long sigh, and opened his eyes.

"Martial, it is I! it is your Louve! how do you feel?" "Better," answered he, in a feeble voice.

"Mon Dieu! what will you have? water, vinegar?" "No, no," cried Martial, less and less oppressed. "Air! oh, some air! nothing but air!" La Louve, at the risk of cutting her hands, broke the glass of a window which she could not open without moving a heavy table. "Now I breathe! I breathe! my head is relieved!" said Martial, coming quite to himself. Then, as if for the first time recalling to mind the services she had rendered him, he cried, in a tone of ineffable gratitude, "Without you, I should have died, my good Louve." "Well, well; how are you now?" "Better and better." "Are you hungry?" "No, I am too weak. I suffered most from want of air; finally, I suffocated—I suffocated! it was frightful!" "And now?" "I live again! I come out from the tomb, and I come out—thanks to you!"

"But your hands, your poor hands! these wounds! Who did this, mon Dieu!"

"Nicolas and Calebasse, not daring to attack me openly a second time, shut me in my chamber, and left me to die with hunger. I tried to prevent them from nailing up my window—my sister cut my hands with the hatchet!"

"The monsters! they wished to have it believed that you were dead from some sickness; your mother had already spread the report that you were in a dying state. Your mother, my man, your mother!" "Hold! do not speak to me of her," said Martial, bitterly; then, for the first time remarking the wet clothes, and strange accoutrement of La Louve, he cried, "What has happened to you—your hair is streaming with water? You are without your dress."

"What matters it? In fine, you are saved, saved!" "But explain to me why you are wet." "I knew you were in danger—I could find no boat."

"And you swam here?"

"Yes. But your hands; let me kiss them. You suffer—the monsters! And I was not there!"

"Oh! my brave Louve," cried Martial, with enthusiasm: "brave among all brave creatures!"

"Did you not write there '*Death to cowards?*'"

And La Louve showed her arm, where these words were written in indelible characters.

"Intrepid! Go: but you feel the cold; you tremble."

"It is not the cold."

"Never mind. Go in there; you will take the cloak of Calebasse—you will wrap yourself in it."

"But—" "I wish it."

In a second, La Louve was enveloped in a tartan cloak, and returned.

"For me, to run the risk of drowning!" repeated Martial, looking at her with pride.

"On the contrary. A poor girl was almost drowned. I saved her on reaching the island—"

"You saved her also—where is she?"

"Below, with the children; they are taking care of her." "And who is this young girl?"

"Mon Dieu! if you knew what a chance—what a happy chance! She is one of my companions of Saint Lazare—a very extraordinary girl—'va.'"

"How is that?"

"Imagine that I loved her and hated her, because she at the same time planted both death and happiness in my heart." "She?"

"Yes; concerning you." "Me?"

"Listen, Martial." Then, interrupting herself, she added, "No, no. I shall never dare."

"What is it, then?" "I wished to ask something of you. I came to see you on this account: for when I left Paris, I did not know that you were in danger." "Well! speak."

"I dare not." "You dare not—after what you have just done for me?"

"Exactly; it would seem as if I asked a recompense." "Asked a recompense! And do I not owe you one? Did you not take care of me, night and day, in my sickness, last year?"

"Are you not my Martial?"

"Then, you should speak to me frankly, because I am your Martial, and will be always."

"Always, Martial?"

"Always! true as I am called Martial. For me, there shall be no other woman in the world but you, La Louve. No matter what you have been—so much the worse—it is my business. I love you—you love me; and I owe my life to you. But, since you have been in prison, I am no longer the same: much has happened. I have reflected; and you shall no more be what you have been." "What do you mean to say?" "I never wish to leave you again. Neither do I wish to leave François and Amandine."

"Your little brother and sister?"

"Yes; from this day I must be to them a father—you comprehend. This gives me duties to perform—that tames me. I am obliged to take charge of them. They wished to make finished brigands of them: to save them, I shall take them away." "Where?" "I don't know; but certainly far from Paris." "And I?" "You? I will take you also."

"Take me also?" cried La Louve, in a joyous delirium. She could not believe in so much happiness. "I shall not leave you?"

"No, my brave La Louve, never. You shall aid me to bring up these children. I know you. On saying to you, I wish that my poor little Amandine should be a virtuous girl, I know what you will be for her; a good mother."

"Oh! thank you, Martial, thank you!"

"We will live as honest work folks; be easy, we will find work; we will work like negroes. But, at least, these children shall not be *des gueux* like their father and mother. I shall not hear myself called any more the son and brother of a guillotiné; in fine, I shall no more pass through streets where I am known. But what is the matter?"

"Martial, I am afraid I shall become crazy." "Crazy?" "Crazy with joy!" "Why?" "Because that, do you see, it is too much!" "What?" "What? you ask me. Oh, no! do you see, it is too much: because I have saved the Goualeuse, this has brought me this happiness; it must be so."

"But, once more, what is the matter?"

"What you have just asked! Oh, Martial! Martial!" "Well?" "I came to ask you!" "To leave Paris?" "Yes," answered she, quickly; "to go with you in the woods, where we would have a nice little house, children whom I should love! oh! how I should love them! how your Louve would love the children of her Martial! or, rather, if you wished it," said La Louve, trembling, "I would call you my husband; for we shall not have the place unless you consent to this," she hastened to add, quickly.

Martial, in his turn, looked at La Louve with astonishment, not in the least understanding her words. "Of what place do you speak?" "A gamekeeper's." "That I shall have?" "Yes." "And who will give it to me?" "The protectors of the young girl whom I have saved." "They do not know me!" "But I have spoken of you, and she will recommend us to her protectors."

"And what did you say about me?" "What should I say?" "Good, Louve." "And, besides, you may conceive that, in prison, confidence is soon gained; and this young person was so handsome, so mild, that in spite of myself, I felt attracted towards her; I at once saw that she was none of us." "Who is she, then?"

"I didn't know; I can't understand anything; but in my life I have never seen, never heard anything like her; she is like a fairy to read what one has in the heart; when I told her how much I loved you, instantly, on that account, she became interested, not by using hard words, you know how I would have stood that, but in speaking to me of a very laborious, hard life, tranquilly passed with you, according to your taste, in the midst of the forest; only, according to her idea, instead of being a poacher, you were a gamekeeper, and I your wife; and then our children were to run to meet you when you returned at night from your rounds, with the dogs, your gun on your shoulder; and then we would sup at the door of the cabin, in the cool of the evening, under the large trees; and then we would retire to rest so happy, so peaceful. What shall I say? in spite of myself I listened; it was like a charm. If you knew—she spoke so well, so well—that—all that she said, I thought I could see; I dreamed wide awake!"

"Ah! yes! it would be a happy life," said Martial, sighing in his turn: "without being altogether rotten at heart, this poor François has associated too much with Calebasse and Nicolas; so that the good air of the woods will be much better for him than the air of the city. Amandine could help you in the house; I would be a good keeper, as I was a famous poacher. I should have you for manager, my brave Louve, and then, as you say, with children, what should we need? When once one is accustomed to the forest, one is quite at home; a hundred years would pass as one day; but, see now, I am a fool. Hold, you should not have spoken to me of this life; it only causes regrets, that's all."

"I let you go on, because you say exactly what I did to La Goualeuse." "How?"

"Yes, in listening to these fairy tales, I said to her, 'What a pity, that these *castles in the air*, as you call them, La Goualeuse, are not the truth! Do you know what she answered, Martial?" said La Louve, her eyes sparkling with joy.

"No!" "Let Martial marry you, promise both of you to live an honest life, and this place, which causes you so much envy, I am almost sure to obtain for you on leaving the prison," was her answer. "A keeper's place for me?"

"Yes, for you."

"But you are right—it is a dream. If it only were needful that I should marry you to obtain this place, my brave Louve, it should be done to-morrow, if I had the means; for, from to-day, do you see, you are my wife—my true wife."

"Martial, I your real wife?"

"My real, my sole wife, and I wish you to call me your husband—it is just the same as if the mayor had joined us."

"Oh! La Goualeuse was right: it makes one so proud to say, '*My husband!*' Martial—you shall see your Louve keeping house, at work you shall see."

"But this place—do you believe?"

"Poor little Goualeuse, if she deceives herself, it is for others; for she appeared to believe what she told me. Besides, just now, on leaving the prison, the inspectress told me that the protectors of La Goualeuse, people of high rank, had taken her from the prison this very day; that proves that she has benefactors, and that she can do what she has promised."

"Ah!" cried Marshal suddenly, rising from his seat, "I do do not know what we are thinking about." "What is it?" "This young girl, she is below, dying, perhaps; and instead of helping her, we are here."

"Be satisfied, François and Amandine are with her; they would have called us if there had been any danger. But you are right: let us go to her; you must see her, she to whom, perhaps, we shall owe our happiness." And Martial, leaning on the arm of La Louve, descended the stairs.

Before they enter the kitchen, we will relate what passed since Fleur de Marie had been confided to the care of the children.

CHAPTER VI.

DOCTOR GRIFFON.

François and Amandine had just carried Fleur de Marie into the kitchen near the fire, when M. de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon, who had crossed over in Nicolas's boat, entered

the house. While the children stirred up the fire and threw on some dry fagots, which, soon kindling, gave out a cheerful blaze, Doctor Griffon exercised all his skill to restore the young girl.

"The poor child is hardly seventeen!" cried the comte, profoundly affected; then turning towards the doctor, he said, "Well, what do you think, my friend?"

"I can hardly feel the pulse; but, what is very singular, the skin of the face is not coloured blue in this subject, as is ordinarily the case in asphyxia from submersion," answered the doctor with imperturbable sang froid, looking at Fleur de Marie with an air profoundly meditative.

Doctor Griffon was a tall, thin man, very pale, and completely bald, except two very scanty tufts of black hair, most carefully gathered from behind, and laid flat on his forehead; his face, wrinkled and furrowed by hard study, expressed at once intelligence, reflection, and coldness.

Of immense knowledge, of consummate experience, a skilful and renowned practitioner, principal physician of a civil hospital (where we shall find him by and by), Doctor Griffon had but one defect—that of making, if we may so express it, a complete oversight of the patient, and only attending to the disease: young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, no matter; he thought only of the medical fact, more or less curious or interesting in a scientific point of view, which the *subject* offered.

For him there only existed *subjects*.

"What a charming face! how handsome she is, notwithstanding this frightful pallor!" said M. de Saint-Rémy, contemplating Fleur de Marie with sadness.

"Have you ever seen, my dear doctor, features more regular or more lovely? And so young—so young." "The age is nothing," said the physician, roughly: "no more than the presence of water in the lungs, which formerly was thought to be mortal. They were most grossly deceived; the admirable experiments of Goodwin, of the famous Goodwin, have proved it."

"But, doctor—"

"But it is a fact," answered M. Griffon, absorbed by the love of his art. To ascertain the presence of a foreign liquid in the lungs, Goodwin plunged some cats and dogs into a tub of ink for some seconds, drew them out living, and dissected my gentlemen some time afterward. Well! he convinced himself that the ink had penetrated into the lungs, and that the presence of this liquid in the organs of respiration had not caused the death of the subjects." The comte knew the physician to be an excellent man at heart, but that his phrensied passion for the sciences often made him appear hard-hearted, and almost cruel.

"Have you, at least, any hope?" asked he, with impatience.

"The extremities of the subject are very cold," said the doctor: "there is but little hope." "Ah! to die at this age—poor child! it is frightful!"

"The pupil fixed, dilated," answered the immovable doctor, raising with his finger the glazed eyelid of Fleur de Marie.

"Strange man!" cried the comte, almost with indignation: "one would think you without feeling; and yet I have seen you watch by my bedside, night after night. If I had been your brother, you could not have been more devoted."

The doctor, quite occupied in administering to Fleur de Marie, answered the comte, without looking at him, and with settled calmness,

"Parbleu, do you believe that one meets every day with such a malignant fever, so marvellously complicated, so curious to study as the one you had? It was admirable, my good friend, admirable! Stupor, delirium, twitchings of the sinews, syncopes; it united the most varied symptoms—your *dead* fever; you were also a rare thing, very rare, and eminently interesting; you were also affected in a partial and momentary manner with paralysis, if you please. If it were only for this fact, your disease had a right to all my attention; you presented to me a magnificent study; for, frankly, my dear friend, all I desire in this world is to come across just such another fine case—but one has no such luck twice." The comte shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

It was at this moment that Martial descended, leaning on the arm of La Louve, who had, as the reader knows, thrown over her wet clothes a tartan cloak belonging to Calebasse.

Struck with the pale looks of the lover of La Louve, and remarking his hands covered with coagulated blood, the comte cried, "Who is this man?"

"*My husband*," answered La Louve, looking at Martial with an expression of happiness and noble pride impossible to describe.

"You have a good and intrepid wife, monsieur," said the comte to him. "I saw her save this unfortunate child with rare courage."

"Oh, yes! monsieur, she is good and intrepid, *my wife!*" answered Martial, dwelling on the last words, and looking at La Louve in his turn with an air at once tender and affectionate. "Yes, intrepid! for she also saved my life."

"Yours?" said the astonished comte.

"See his hands, his poor hands!" said La Louve, wiping the tears which softened the indignant sparkling of her eyes. "Ah! this is horrible!" cried the comte. "This poor fellow has had his hands chopped. Look, doctor!"

Turning his head slightly, and looking over his shoulder at the numerous wounds which Calebasse had made, the doctor said, "Open and shut your hand." Martial executed this movement with much pain. The doctor shrugged his shoulders, continued to occupy himself with Fleur de Marie, and said disdainfully, as if with regret, "These wounds are absolutely nothing serious. None of the tendons are injured; in eight days the subject can use his hands." "Then, monsieur, my *husband* will not be a cripple?" cried La Louve, with gratitude.

The doctor shook his head negatively.

"And La Goualeuse, monsieur? She will live, will she not?" asked La Louve. "Oh! she must live; my husband and I owe her so much." Then turning towards Martial, "Poor little thing! There she is, she of whom I spoke. It is she who perhaps will be the cause of our happiness. It is she who gave me the idea of telling you all I have said. See what chance has done, that I should save her—and here too!"

"She is our Providence," said Martial, struck with the beauty of La Goualeuse. "What an angel face! Oh! she will live, will she not, Monsieur le Docteur?" "I don't know," answered the physician; "but, in the first place, perhaps, she will remain here; can she have the necessary attentions?"

"Here!" cried La Louve; "why they murder here!"

"Hush! hush!" said Martial.

The comte and doctor looked at La Louve with surprise. "This house has a bad reputation. It surprises me the less," whispered the physician to M. de Saint Rémy.

"You have, then, been the victim of violence?" asked the comte. "Who wounded you in this manner?" "It is nothing, monsieur. I had a dispute here, a fight ensued, and I have been wounded. But this young girl cannot remain in the house," added he, in a gloomy manner. "I shall not remain myself, neither my wife, nor my brother, nor my sister. We leave the island never to return."

"Oh, what joy!" cried both of the children.

"Then what must we do?" said the doctor, regarding Fleur de Marie. "It is impossible to think of transporting this subject in this state of prostration. Yet, happily, my house is close at hand, and my gardener's wife and daughter will make excellent nurses. Since this asphyxia from submersion interests you, you shall overlook her attendants, my dear Saint Rémy, and I will come and see her every day."

"And you play the part of a hard-hearted, unmerciful man," cried the comte, "when you have a most generous heart, as this proposition proves."

"If the subject sinks, as is possible, there will be a most interesting autopsy, which will allow me to confirm once more the assertions of Goodwin."

"What you say is frightful," said the comte.

"For him who knows how to read it, the human body is a book where one learns to save the life of the sick" said Doctor Griffon, stoically.

"In fine, you do good," said M. de Saint Rémy, bitterly; "that is the important thing. What matters the cause, as long as the benefit exists? Poor child, the more I look at her, the more she interests me."

"And she deserves it, 'allez!' monsieur," cried La Louve, passionately, drawing near.

"You know her?" said the comte.

"Do I know her, monsieur? It is to her that I owe the happiness of my life; in saving her I have not done as much for her as she has done for me."

"And who is she?" asked the comte.

"An angel, monsieur; all that there is good in the world. Yes, and although she is dressed as a peasant girl, there is not a 'bourgoise,' not a grand lady who can talk as well as she can, with her little soft voice, just like music. She is a noble girl, 'allez!' and courageous and good."

"How did she fall in the water?"

"I do not know, monsieur."

"She is not a peasant girl, then?" asked the comte.

"A peasant girl! look at her small white hands, monsieur."

"It is true," said M. de Saint Rémy; "what a singular mystery! But her name, her family?"

"Come," said the doctor, interrupting the conversation, "the subject must be carried to the boat."

Half an hour afterward, Fleur de Marie, who had not yet recovered her senses, was taken to the house of the physician, placed in a warm bed, and maternally watched by the gardener's wife, assisted by La Louve. The doctor promised M. de Saint Rémy, who was more and more interested in La Goualeuse, to return the same evening to visit her.

Martial went to Paris with Fraçois and Amandine, La Louve not being willing to leave Fleur de Marie until she was out of danger.

The island of the Ravageur remained deserted. We shall soon meet with its wretched occupants at Bras-Rouge's, where they had agreed to meet La Chouette to murder the diamond broker.

In the mean while, we will conduct the reader to the 'rendezvous' that Tom, the brother of Sarah, had given to the horrible old woman, the accomplice of the Maître d'Ecole.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PORTRAIT.

Half serpent and half cat.—WOLFANG, liv. ii.

THOMAS SEYTON, brother of the comtesse, Sarah M'Gregor, walked impatiently up and down on one of the boulevards near to the Observatoire, when he saw La Chouette appear.

The old wretch had on a white cap, and was wrapped up in a large red plaid shawl; the point of a round and very sharp dagger stuck through the bottom of the straw 'cabas' which she carried on her arm; this had once belonged to the Maître d'Ecole, but Tom did not perceive it.

"Three o'clock strikes at the Luxembourg," said the old woman. "I arrive like March in Lent, I hope?"

"Come," answered Thomas Seyton; and walking before her, he crossed some waste ground, entered a deserted street situated near the "*Rue* Cassini," stopped about the middle of the passage, where it was obstructed by a turnstile, opened a small door, made a sign for La Chouette to follow him, and after having taken a few steps in an alley shaded with large trees, said,

"Wait here," and disappeared.

"If he don't make me lose too much time," said La Chouette; "I must be at Bras-Rouge's at five, to *estourbir* the broker. Ah! speaking of that, and my *surin* (dagger), the scoundrel, he has his nose out of the window," added the old woman, seeing the point of the dagger sticking through her basket. "So much for not having put on his cap."

And taking it from the *cabas*, she placed it in such a manner, that it was completely concealed.

"It is a tool of Fourline's," said she. "Did he not ask me for it, to kill the rats, which come and laugh at him, in his cellar? Poor beasts! *plus souvent*. They have only the old man without eyes to divert them, and keep them

company! The least they can do is to nibble him a little. Thus I don't wish him to do any harm to these rats, and I keep the *surin*. Besides, I shall soon want it for the broker, perhaps. Thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds—what a treasure for each of us! A good day's work; it is not like the other day! This brigand of a notary, whom I wanted to pluck—ah! well, yes! I did threaten him, if he would not give me money, to inform that it was his 'bonne' who gave me La Goualeuse, through Tournemine, when she was quite small; nothing frightens him. He called me an old liar, and turned me out of doors. Good, good! I will have a letter written to these people at the farm, where Pegriotte was sent, and inform them it was the notary who abandoned her. They know, perhaps, her family, and when she leaves Saint Lazare, it will be hot work for this 'gredin' of a Jacques Ferrand. But some one comes—hold! it is the little pale lady who was disguised as a man at the *tapis-franc* of the Ogresse; and the same whom we robbed in the ruins near Nôtre Dame," added La Chouette, seeing Sarah appear at the other end of the alley. "Some more business to be done; it must be on account of this little lady that we carried La Goualeuse away from the farm. If she pays well for anything new, 'ça me chausse encore.'"

On approaching La Chouette, whom she saw for the first time since the scene at the tapis-franc, the countenance of Sarah expressed disgust—that disdain which people of a certain class feel when they are obliged to come in contact with wretches whom they use as instruments or accomplices.

Thomas Seyton, who, until now, had actively assisted the criminal machinations of his sister, considering them useless, had refused to continue this miserable game, consenting, nevertheless, to grant his sister, for the first and last time, an interview with La Chouette without wishing to take part in any new schemes he might hear.

Having been unable to bring Rodolphe back to her by breaking the ties which she thought dear to him, the comtesse hoped, as we have said, to render him the dupe of an infamous trick, the success of which might realize the dream of this opinionated, ambitious, and cruel woman. It was in agitation to persuade Rodolphe that the daughter, whom he had supposed dead, was alive, and to substitute some orphan in the place of his daughter.

The reader knows that Jacques Ferrand, having formally refused to enter into this plot, in spite of Sarah's threats, had resolved to make way with Fleur de Marie, as much from dread of the revelations of La Chouette, as from fear of the comtesse. But she had not renounced her designs, for she was almost certain of corrupting or intimidating the notary, when she had secured a girl capable of playing the part designed for her.

After a moment's silence, Sarah said to La Chouette, "Are you adroit, discreet, and resolute?"

"Adroit as a monkey, resolute as a dog, dumb as a fish, there's La Chouette, just as the devil has made her, ready to serve you, if she is capable—and she is," answered the old woman, in a lively manner. "I hope we have famously decoyed the young country girl, who is safely fastened up at Saint Lazare for two good months." "The question is no longer of her, but of other things."

"As you wish, my little lady. As long as there is money at the end of what you are about to propose, we shall be like two fingers of a hand."

Sarah could not suppress a movement of disgust. "You must know," said she, "some common people—some unfortunate family?"

"There are more of them than millionaires; one can choose; 'Dieu merci,' there is a rich misery in Paris."

"You must find for me a young orphan girl, above all, one who has lost her parents very young. She must be of an agreeable face, of a sweet temper, and not more than seventeen."

La Chouette looked at Sarah with astonishment.

"Such an orphan cannot be difficult to find," resumed the comtesse; "there are so many foundlings."

"Ah! ça; but say, now, my little lady, have you not forgotten La Goualeuse? Just what you want."

"Whom do you mean by La Goualeuse?"

"The young person whom we carried off from Bouqueval."

"I tell you, we have nothing to do with her!"

"But listen to me, then; and, above all, reward me with good advice: you wish an orphan, as gentle as a lamb, beautiful as day, and who is not seventeen?"

"Without doubt."

"Well, then, take La Goualeuse when she comes out of Saint Lazare; just what you want—as if made to order; for she was only six years old when this 'gueux' of a Jacques Ferrand (about six years ago) gave her to me, with a thousand francs, to get rid of her. It was a man named Tournemine, now in the galleys at Rochefort, who brought her to me, saying, that she was doubtless a child they wanted to get rid of, or pass for dead."

"Jacques Ferrand, say you!" cried Sarah, in a voice so changed that La Chouette stepped back with alarm. "The notary, Jacques Ferrand," repeated Sarah, "gave you this child, and—" she could not finish. Her emotion was too violent; with her hands stretched towards La Chouette, trembling violently, surprise and joy were expressed on her countenance."

"But I did not know you were going to fire up in this manner, my little lady," said the old woman. "Yet it is very plain. Ten years ago, an old acquaintance, Tournemine, said to me, 'Do you wish to take charge of a little girl that some one wants to get rid of? If she lives or dies, all the same; there is a thousand francs to gain; you may do with the child what you please.'"

"Ten years ago?" cried Sarah.

"Ten years."

"A little blonde?"

"A little blonde."

"With blue eyes?"

"With blue eyes, blue as the 'bleuets."

"And it is she, who, at the farm—"

"We packed up for Saint Lazare. I must say that I did not expect to find her there—this Pégriotte.'

"Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Sarah, falling on her knees, and raising her hands and eyes towards heaven; "thy ways are impenetrable. I bow before thy mysterious providence. Oh! if such happiness were possible—but no, I cannot believe it; it would be too much—no!" Then, suddenly rising, she said to La Chouette, who looked at her with amazement, "Come."

And Sarah walked before the old woman with hurried steps. At the end of the alley, she ascended some steps leading to the glass door of a cabinet, sumptuously furnished.

At the moment when La Chouette was about to enter, Sarah made her a sign to remain without. Then she rung a bell violently. A servant appeared.

"I am not at home to any one—let no one in; do you understand? absolutely no one."

The domestic retired, and Sarah, to be more secure, locked the door.

La Chouette heard the orders given to the servant, and saw Sarah lock the door. The comtesse, turning to her, said, "Come in quickly, and shut the door." La Chouette obeyed.

Hastily opening a secretary, Sarah took from it an ebony casket, which she placed on a desk in the middle of the room, and made a sign for La Chouette to come near her.

The casket contained many jewel boxes, placed one on the other, enclosing magnificent ornaments.

Sarah was so impatient to reach the bottom of the casket, that she threw out on the table these boxes splendidly furnished with necklaces, bracelets, and diadems, where rubies, emeralds, and diamonds sparkled with a thousand fires. La Chouette was astounded. She was armed, she was shut up alone with the comtesse, her flight was easy, secure. An infernal idea crossed the mind of this monster. But to execute this new misdeed, she must get her poniard from the basket, and draw near to Sarah, without exciting her suspicion.

With the cunning of a tiger-cat, who crawls and treacherously advances on its prey, the old woman profited by the preoccupation of the comtesse to steal around the bureau which separated her from her victim. She had already commenced this treacherous evolution, when she was obliged to stop suddenly. Sarah drew a medallion from the bottom of the box, leaned on the table, handed it to La Chouette with a trembling hand, and said, "Look at this portrait."

"It is La Pegriotte!" cried La Chouette, struck with the great likeness; "it is the little girl who was given to me; I see her as she was when Tournemine brought her to me. There is her thick curly hair which I cut off at once, and sold well, ma foi!" "You recognise her, it was she? Oh! I conjure you, do not deceive me—do not deceive me!" "I tell you, my little lady, that it is La Pegriotte; it is as if I could see her before me," said La Chouette, trying to approach Sarah without being remarked; "even now she looks like this portrait. If you saw her, you would be struck with it."

Sarah had experienced no sorrow, no fright on learning that her child had, during ten years, lived miserable and abandoned. No remorse on thinking that she herself had torn her from the peaceful retreat where Rodolphe had placed her. This unnatural mother did not at once interrogate La Chouette with terrible anxiety as to the past life of her child. No; ambition with Sarah had for a long time stifled maternal tenderness.

It was not joy at finding her daughter which transported her, it was the certain hope of seeing realized the proud dream of all her life. Rodolphe was interested for this unfortunate creature, had protected without knowing her, what would be his joy when he discovered her to be his *child!* He was free, the comtesse a widow—Sarah already saw glisten before her eyes a sovereign's crown. La Chouette, still advancing with cautious steps, had already reached one end of the table, and placed her dagger perpendicularly in her basket, the handle close to the opening, quite ready. She was only a few steps from the comtesse, when the latter suddenly said, "Do you know how to write?" And pushing back with her hand the boxes and jewels, she opened a blotter placed before an inkstand. "No, madame, I cannot write," answered La Chouette at all hazard. "I am going to write, then, from your dictation. Tell me all the circumstances attending the abandonment of this little girl." And Sarah, seating herself in an arm-chair before the desk, took a pen and made a motion for the old woman to draw near to her.

The eyes of La Chouette twinkled. At length, she was standing erect alongside of Sarah's seat. She, bending over the table, prepared to write. "I will read aloud slowly," said the comtesse—"you will correct my mistakes." "Yes, madame," answered La Chouette, watching every movement.

Then she slipped her right hand into her "cabas," so as to take hold of the dagger without being seen.

The comtesse began to write:

"I declare that—"

But interrupting herself, and turning towards La Chouette, who already had hold of the handle of her dagger, Sarah added,

"At what time was this child delivered to you?"

"In the month of February, 1827."

"And by whom?" asked Sarah, with her face still turned towards La Chouette.

"By Pierre Tournemine, now in the galleys at Rochefort. Madame Séraphin, housekeeper of the notary, gave the little girl to him."

The comtesse turned to write and read in a loud voice: "I declare that in the month of February, 1827, the named—"

La Chouette had drawn out the dagger.

Already she raised it to strike her victim between the shoulders. Sarah again turned.

La Chouette, not to be discovered, placed quickly her right arm on the back of the chair, and leaned towards her to answer her new question.

"I have forgotten the name of the man who confided the child to you."

"Pierre Tournemine," answered La Chouette.

"Pierre Tournemine," repeated Sarah, continuing to write—"now in the galleys at Rochefort, placed in my hands a child who had been confided to him by the housekeeper of—"

The countesse could not finish.

La Chouette, after having softly disencumbered herself of the cabas by dropping it on the ground, had thrown herself on the comtesse with as much rapidity as fury; with her left hand she caught her by the throat, and, holding her face down to the table, she had, with her right hand, planted the dagger between the shoulders.

This horrible deed was executed so quickly that the comtesse did not utter a single cry or groan. Still seated, she remained with her face on the table. The pen had fallen from her hand.

"The same blow as Fourline's, the little old man of the Rue du Roule," said the monster. "Another one who will talk no more—her account is made.

And La Chouette, gathering in haste the jewels, which she threw into her basket, did not perceive that her victim still breathed.

The murder and robbery accomplished, the horrible old woman opened the glass door, disappeared rapidly in the green alley, went out by the small door, and reached the waste ground. Near the observatoire, she took a hack, which conveyed her to Bras-Rouge's. The widow Martial, Nicolas, Calebasse, and Barbillon had, as the reader knows, given a rendezvous to La Chouette in this den, to rob and kill the diamond broker.

CHAPTER VIII.

L'AGENT DE SURETE.

The reader is already acquainted with the tavern of the *Cœur Saignant*, situated in the Champs Elysées, near the Cours la Reine, in one of the vast moats which bounded this promenade some years since. The inhabitants of the island had not yet appeared. Since the departure of M. Bradamanti, who had accompanied the stepmother of Madame d'Harville to Normandy, Tortillard had returned to his father's house.

Placed "en vedette" on the top of the staircase, the little cripple was to notify the arrival of Martial by a concerted signal, Bras-Rouge being then in secret conference with an "agent de sureté" named Narcisse Borel, who, it will be remembered, was seen at the tapis-franc of the Ogresse, when he came there to arrest two villains accused of murder.

This agent, a man of about forty years, strong and thick set, had his skin stained, a sharp and piercing eye, and face completely shaved, so as to be able to assume the different disguises necessary to his dangerous expeditions; for it was often necessary for him to unite the sudden transformations of a comedian with the energy and courage of the soldier, to surprise certain bandits whom he was obliged to match in courage and determination. Narcisse Borel was, in a word, one of the most useful, the most active instruments of the providence, on a small scale, modestly and vulgarly called the police.

* * * * * * *

Let us return to the interview between Borel and Bas-Rouge. Their conversation seemed very animated. "Yes," said the "*agent de sureté*," "you are accused of profiting by your position in a double manner, by taking part with impunity in the robberies of a band of very dangerous malefactors, and of giving false information concerning them to the police. Take care, Bras-Rouge; if this should be proved, they would have no mercy on you." "Alas! I know I am accused of this; and it is afflicting, my good Monsieur Narcisse," replied Bras-Rouge, giving to his weasel face an expression of hypocritical sorrow. "But I hope that to-day they will render me justice, and that my good faith will be certainly acknowledged." "We shall see." "How can I be suspected? Have I not given proofs? Is it not I—yes or no—who, in time past, caused you to arrest, in 'flagrant délit, Ambroise Martial, one of the most dangerous malefactors in Paris? For, as is said, that runs in his race, and the race of Martial comes from hell, where it will soon return, if the 'bon Dieu' is just."

"All this is very fine; but Ambroise was informed that he was about to be arrested; if I had not advanced the hour indicated by you, he would have escaped." "Do you believe me capable, Monsieur Narcisse, of having secretly given him information of your intentions?"

"All I know is, that I received a pistol-shot from the brigand, which, very fortunately, only went through my arm." "Marry, Monsieur Narcisse, it is very certain that in your calling one is exposed to such mistakes." "Ah! do you call that a mistake?" "Certainly; for doubtless he wished, the scoundrel, to plant the ball in your body." "In the arms, in the body, or in the head, no matter; it is not of that I complain: every trade has its *disagreements*."

"And its pleasures also, Monsieur Narcisse; and its pleasures! For example, when a man as cunning, as adroit, as courageous as you are, is for a long time on the tracks of a nest of robbers; follows them from place to place—from house to house, with a good blood-hound like your servant Bras-Rouge, and he succeeds in getting them into a mousetrap, from which not one can escape, acknowledge, Monsieur Narcisse, that there is great pleasure in it—a huntsman's joy—without counting the service rendered to justice," added the landlord of the *Cœur Saignant*. "I should be of your opinion, if the blood-hound was faithful; but I am afraid he is not." "Ah! Monsieur Narcisse, you think—" "I think, that instead of putting us on the scent, you amuse yourself by deceiving us, and that you abuse the confidence placed in you. Every day you promise to aid us to place our hands on the band; this day never comes." "And if this day comes to-day, Monsieur Narcisse, as I am sure it will; and if I cause you to pick up Barbillon, Nicolas Martial, the widow, her daughter, and La Chouette, will it be, yes or no, a good haul? Will you still suspect me?"

"No; and you will have rendered a real service; for we have against this band strong presumptions, almost certain suspicions, but, unfortunately, no proofs."

"Hold a moment—caught in the very act, allowing you do nab them so, will aid furiously to display their cards, heiu! Monsieur Narcisse?"

"Doubtless; and you assure me there has been no provocation on your part in the affair they have on hand?"

"No, on my honour! It is La Chouette who

came and proposed to me to entice the broker here, when this infernal '*borgnesse*' learned, through my son, that Morel, the lapidary, who lived in the Rue du Temple, worked in real instead of false stones, and that the 'Mère Mathieu had often about her jewels of value. I accepted the affair, proposing to La Chouette to add Barbillon and the Martials, so as to have the whole gang in hand."

"And the Maître d'Ecole, this man so dangerous, so strong, and so ferocious, who was always with La Chouette? one of the 'habitués' of the tapis-franc?"

"The Maître d'Ecole?" said Bras-Rouge, feigning astonishment.

"Yes, a galley-slave escaped from Rochefort, named Anselme Duresnal, condemned for life. It is known now that he has disfigured himself so as not to be recognised. Have you no information of him?"

"None," answered Bras-Rouge, intrepidly, who had his reasons for this falsehood, for the Maître d'Ecole was then shut up in one of the cellars of the tavern.

"There is every reason to believe that the Maître d'Ecole is the author of some new murders. It would be an important capture. For six weeks past, no one knows what has become of him."

"Thus we are reproached for having lost sight of him. Always reproaches! Monsieur Narcisse! always."

"Not without reason. And the smuggling?"

"Must I not know all sorts of folks, smugglers as well as anybody else, to put you on the scent? I informed you of this tunnel to introduce legends; beginning outside of the Barrière du Trône and ending in a house in the 'rue.'"

"I know all that," said Narcisse, interrupting Bras-Rouge; "but for one you denounce, you let perhaps ten escape, and you continue your trade with impunity. I am sure you feed out of two mangers, as the saying is."

"Ah! Monsieur Narcisse, I am incapable of such dishonest hunger."

"And this is not all. Rue du Temple, No. 17, lives a woman Burette, pawnbroker, who is accused of being your private receiver."

"What would you have me do, Monsieur Narcisse? one says so many things, the world is so wicked—once more I say, I must mix with the greatest number of scoundrels possible. I must even do as they do, worse than they, to avoid suspicions; but it cuts me to the heart to imitate them—to the heart—I must be well devoted to the service, 'allez,' to follow such a trade."

"Poor dear man! I pity you with all my heart."

"You laugh, Monsieur Narcisse. But if all these stories are believed, why do they not pay La Mère Burette and myself a visit?"

"You know well enough—not to startle these bandits whom you have for so long a time promised to deliver to us." "And I am going to deliver them to you, Monsieur Narcisse; in one hour's time you shall have them bound, and without much trouble, for there are three women. As to Barbillon and Nicolas Martial, they are as ferocious as tigers, but cowardly as chickens."

"Tigers or chickens," said Narcisse, opening his long riding coat and showing the butt-end of two pistols, which stuck out of the pockets of his pantaloons, "I have something here to serve them." "You will do well to take two of your men with you, Monsieur Narcisse; when they find themselves cornered, the greatest cowards become sometimes tigers."

"I will place two of my men in the little lower room, alongside of the one where you will put the broker. At the first cry, I will appear at one door, my two men at the other."

"You must make haste, for the band may arrive every moment, Monsieur Narcisse."

"So be it; I go to place my men. I hope it will not be for nothing this time."

The conversation was interrupted by the concerted signal. Bras-Rouge looked out of a window to see who Tortillard announced.

"Look! here is La Chouette already! Well! do you believe me now, Monsieur Narcisse?"

"This is something, but it is not all; in fine, we shall see. I go to place my men."

And the "agent de sureté" disappeared through a side door.

CHAPTER IX

LA CHOUETTE.

The rapidity of the step of La Chouette, the ferocious ardour of a desire for rapine and murder which she still possessed, had flushed her hideous visage; her green eye sparkled with savage joy.

Tortillard followed her, jumping and limping. Just as she was descending the last steps of the stairs, the son of Bras-Rouge, through a wicked frolic, placed his foot on the trailing folds of La Chouette's dress. This caused the old woman to stumble; not being able to catch hold of the balusters, she fell on her knees, her hands both stretched out, abandoning her precious "cabas," from whence escaped a golden bracelet set with diamonds and fine pearls. La Chouette, having, in her fall, excoriated her fingers a little, picked up the bracelet, which had not escaped the quick eyesight of Tortillard, rose up, and threw herself furiously on the little cripple, who approached her with a hypocritical air, saying,

"Ah! mon Dieu! your foot slipped?"

Without answering, La Chouette seized him by the hair, and, stooping down, bit him in the cheek; the blood spirted from the wound. Strange as it may appear, Tortillard, notwithstanding his wickedness, and the great pain he endured, uttered not a complaint nor cry. He wiped his bleeding face, and said, with a forced laugh,

"I would rather you would not kiss me so hard another time, hé! La Chouette."

"Wicked little devil, why did you step on my gown to make me fall?"

"I? Ah, well! 'par exemple,' I swear to you that I did not do it on purpose, my good Chouette; as if your little Tortillard would wish to hurt you; he loves you too well for that. You did well to beat him, affront him, bite him; he is attached to you like the poor little dog is to his master," said the child, in a caressing and coaxing voice.

Deceived by the hypocrisy of Tortilard, La Chouette answered, "Very well! if I have bitten you wrongfully, it shall be punishment for some other time, when you have deserved it, brigand. Come, 'vive la joie!' to-day I bear no malice. Where is your cheat of a father?" "In the house; shall I go and call him?" "No. The Martials, have they come yet?" "Not yet." "Then I have time to go and see Fourline; I want to speak to old *No-eyes*."

"Are you going to the cellar of the Maître d'Ecole?" asked Tortillard, hardly concealing his diabolical joy.

"What is that to you?" "To me?" "Yes; you asked me that in such a droll way." "Because I thought of something funny." "What?"

"That you must have brought a pack of cards along to amuse him," answered Tortillard in a cunning manner; "it will be a little change for him; he only plays at biting with the rats; that game he always wins, and in the end it tires him."

La Chouette laughed violently at this witticism, and said to the little cripple, "Mamma's little monkey. I do not know a *moutard* that is more wicked than you are. You little 'gueux,' go and get me a candle; you shall light me down to see Fourline, and you shall help me to open his door; you know that I can't move it alone." "Ah! well, no, it is too dark in the cellar," said Tortillard, shaking his head.

"How? how? you, who are as wicked as the devil, you a coward? I would like to see that—come, go quick, and say to your father I will soon return; that I am with Fourline; that we are talking about the publication of our banns of marriage—eh! eh! eh!" added the monster, chuckling. "Come, make haste, you shall be groomsman, and if you are a good boy, you shall have my garter." Tortillard went to get a light, and La Chouette, elated with the success of her robbery, amused herself, while he was gone, in handling the precious jewels in her basket. It was to conceal temporarily this treasure that she wished to visit the Maître d'Ecole in his cellar, and not to torment, as was her usual custom, her new victim. We will mention directly why, with the consent of Bras-Rouge, La Chouette had confined the Maître d'Ecole in the same subterranean hole where this brigand had formerly precipitated Rodolphe.

Tortillard, holding a light, reappeared at the door of the cavern. La Chouette followed him to the lower room, into which opened the large trap-door already described.

The son of Bras-Rouge, protecting his light with the hollow of his hand, and preceding the old woman, descended slowly a flight of steep stone steps leading to the entrance of the cellar which had so nearly been the tomb of Rodolphe.

Arrived at the foot, Tortillard appeared to hesitate about following La Chouette.

"Well! wicked '*lamkin*,' go on then," said she, turning round.

"Dame! it is so dark, and, besides, you go so fast, La Chouette; but stop, I'd rather go back, and leave you the candle."

"And the door of the cellar, imbecile? Can I open it alone? Will you go on?" "No, I am too much afraid." "If I come to you, take care."

"Since you threaten me, I'll go back."

And he retreated a few steps.

"Well! listen: be a good boy," answered La Chouette, restraining her anger; "I will give you something."

"Very well," said the boy, drawing near; "speak so to me, and you will make me do all you can wish, mother La Chouette." "Advance, advance, I am in a hurry." "Yes, but promise that you will let me 'torment' the Maître d'Ecole?"

"Some other day; now I have not the time."

"Only a little; just to make him foam."

"Some other time, I say; I must return at once."

"Why, then, do you open the door of his prison?"

"None of your business. Come, now, will you finish? The Martials perhaps are already above; I want to speak to them. Be a good boy, and you shan't be sorry; go on."

"I must love you well, La Chouette, you make me do just as you please," said Tortillard, advancing slowly. The trembling, sickly light of the candle, only made darkness visible in this gloomy passage, reflecting the black shadow of this hideous child on the green and crumbling walls, streaming with humidity.

At the end of the passage, through the obscurity, could be perceived the low, broken arch of the entrance to the cellar, its heavy door secured with bands of iron, and contrasting strongly, in the shade, with the plaid shawl and white bonnet of La Chouette.

With their united efforts, the door opened, creaking on its rusty hinges. A puff of humid vapour escaped from this hole, which was as dark as night.

The candle, placed on the ground, cast a ray of light on the first steps of the stone staircase, while the lower part was lost in total obscurity.

A cry, or, rather, a savage howl, came up from the depths of the cellar.

"Ah! there is Fourline, who says 'bonjour' to his mamma," said La Chouette, ironically; and she descended a few steps to conceal her "cabes" in some corner.

"I am hungry!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, in a voice trembling with rage; "do you, then, wish me to die here like a mad beast?"

"You are hungry, poor puss?" said La Chouette, shouting with laughter. "Well! suck your thumb."

The noise of a chain shaken violently was heard; then a sigh of restrained rage.

"Take care! take care! you will hurt your leg, as you did at the farm of Bouqueval, poor, dear papa!" said Tortillard.

"The child is right; keep quiet, Fourline," said the old woman; "the chain and rings are strong, old *No-eyes*; it comes from the Père Micou, who only sells first-rate articles. It is your own fault; for why did you allow yourself to be tied when you were asleep? afterward, there was nothing to be done but to slip on the chain, and bring you down here, in this nice cool place, to preserve you, old beau."

"It's a shame—he'll grow mouldy," said Tortillard.

The chains were heard rattling anew.

"Eh! eh! Fourline jumps like a June bug tied by the paw," cried the old woman; "I think I can see him."

"June bug! stole! stole! stole! Your husband's the Maître d'Ecole!" chanted Tortillard.

This variation augmented the hilarity of La Chouette. Having placed her "cabas" in a hole under one of the steps, she said, "Do you see, Fourline?"

"He does not see," answered Tortillard.

"The boy is right. Ah, well! Do you hear, Fourline? you should not have hindered me, when we returned from the farm, from washing Pegriotte's face with vitriol. You should not have played the good dog, simpleton. And then to talk of your conscience, which was becoming prudish. I saw that your '*pâte de franc, gueux*' was becoming sour, that it was turning honest, as they say to a spy, that some day or other you might *magna sur nous* (inform against us), old *No-eyes*; and then—"

"The old No-eyes *va manger sur toi*, La Chouette, for he is hungry," cried Tortillard, suddenly pushing, with all his strength, the old woman by the back.

La Chouette fell forward, uttering a dreadful imprecation, and rolled to the foot of the steps.

"Kiss—kiss—kiss! La Chouette is yours! jump on her, old man," added Tortillard.

Then seizing hold of the "cabas," which he had seen the old woman hide, he ran up the stairs precipitately, crying with savage joy, "There is a push worth double of what I gave you a while ago, La Chouette! This time you shall not bite me. Ah! you thought I didn't care; thank you, I bleed still."

"I have her, oh, I have her!" cried the Maître d'Ecole from the bottom of the cellar.

"If you have her, old man, fair play," said the boy, chuckling; and he stopped on the last step of the staircase.

"Help!" cried La Chouette, in a strangled voice.

"Thank you, Tortillard," answered the Maître d'Ecole, "thank you;" and he uttered an aspiration of fearful joy. "Oh! I pardon you the harm you have done me, and to reward you, you shall hear La Chouette sing! Listen well; the bird of death—"

"Bravo, bravo! here I am in the dress circle, private box," said Tortillard, seating himself at the top of the stairs.

CHAPTER X.

THE CELLAR.

Tortillard, seated on the first step, raised the light to endeavour to see what was going on in the cellar, but the darkness was too great; so faint a light could not dissipate it. The son of Bras-Rouge could distinguish nothing. The struggle between the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette was silent and furious, without a word, without a cry. Only from time to time could be heard a hard breathing or suffocating respiration, which always accompanies violent and continued struggles.

Tortillard, seated on the stone step, began to stamp his feet in the manner peculiar to spectators anxious for the commencement of a play; then he uttered the familiar cry of the occupants of *the paradise* in the theatres on the Boulevards, "Eh! the curtain! Begin, begin! Music! music!" "Oh! I have you as I wish," murmured the Maître d'Ecole from the bottom of the cellar; "and you shall—"

A desperate movement of La Chouette interrupted him. She struggled with that energy which is caused by the fear of death "Louder! We can't hear," cried Tortillard. "You have a fine chance at my hand. I have you as I wish to have you," continued the Maître d'Ecole. Then, having doubtless succeeded in holding La Chouette, he added, "That's it. Now listen—" "Tortillard, call your father!" cried La Chouette, in a breathless, exhausted tone. "Help! help!"

"Turn out that old woman! turn her out!" We can't hear!" said the little cripple, screaming with laughter. "Silence! out with her!"

The cries of La Chouette could not reach the upper apartments. The wretch, seeing she had no aid to expect from the son of Bras-Rouge, tried a last effort.

"Tortillard, go for help; and I will give you my 'cabas;' it is full of jewels. It is there under a stone."

"How generous you are! Thank you, madame! Don't you know that I have your 'cabas?' Hold! don't you hear it jingle?" said Tortillard, shaking it. "But, 'par exemple,' give me two sous to buy some hot cake, and I'll go seek papa!" "Have pity on me, and I—" La Chouette could not proceed. Again there was a pause.

The little cripple recommenced the stamping of his feet, and cried, "Why don't you begin? Ohé! the curtain! Begin, begin! Music, music!"

"In this manner, La Chouette, you can no longer deafen me with your cries," said the Maître d'Ecole, after some minutes, during which he had succeeded in gagging the old woman. "You know well," resumed he, in a slow and hollow tone, "that I do not wish to finish at once. Torture for torture. You have made me suffer enough. I must talk to you a long time before I kill you—yes, a long time. It will be frightful for you! What agony, heiu!"

"Ah, ça! none of your nonsense! eh! old man," cried Tortillard, half rising. "Correct her; but do not hurt her. You speak of killing her; it's only a joke, is it not? I hold to my Chouette. I have lent her to you, but you will return her to me. Don't damage her. I will not have any one harm my Chouette, or I will go and call papa." "Be not alarmed; she shall only have what she deserves—a profitable lesson," said the brigand, to reassure Tortillard, fearing the little cripple would go for help

"Very good! bravo! Now the play begins," said the son of Bras-Rouge, who did not believe that the Maître d'Ecole seriously meditated to destroy La Chouette.

"Let us talk a little," resumed the Maître d'Ecole, in a calm voice, to the old woman. "In the first place, since the dream I had at the farm of Bouqueval, which brought before my eyes all our crimes, since this dream, which almost made me mad, which will make me mad—for in the solitude, the profound state of isolation in which I live, all my thoughts, in spite of myself, tend towards this dream—a strange change has taken place within me. Yes, I have

thought with horror of my past wickedness. In the first place, I did not allow you to disfigure the Goualeuse. That was nothing. In chaining me here in this cave, in making me suffer cold and hunger, but in delivering me from your provocation, you have left me alone to all the horrors of my thoughts. Oh! you do not know what it is to be alone, always alone, with a black veil over the eyes, as the implacable man said who punished me. It is fearful? See now! It is in this cellar that I wished to kill him, and this cellar is the place of my punishment. It will be perhaps my tomb.

"I repeat to you, this is frightful. All that this man predicted is realized. He told me: 'You have abused your strength: you shall be the sport, plaything of the weakest.' This has been. He told me: 'Henceforth, separated from the exterior world, face to face with the eternal remembrance of your crimes, one day you will repent them.' And this day has arrived; solitude has confirmed it. I could not have thought it possible. Another proof that I am, perhaps, less wicked than formerly, is, that I experience an indescribable joy in holding you there, monster, not to avenge myself, but to avenge our victims. Yes, I shall have accomplished a duty, when, with my own hand, I shall have punished my accomplice. A voice tells me, that if you had fallen sooner into my power, much blood—much blood might have been spared. I feel now a horror of my past murders, and yet, is it not strange? it is without fear, it is with security that I intend to execute on you a frightful murder, with horrible refinement of cruelty. Speak! speak! can you realise this?"

"Bravo, bravo! well played, old *No-eyes!* You warm up, 'ça chauffe,'" cried Tortillard, applauding. "All this is only a joke?"

"Only a joke!" answered the Maître d'Ecole, in a hollow voice. "Hold still, then, La Chouette; I must finish explaining to you how, little by little, I came to repent. This revelation will be odious to you, heart of iron, and it will also prove to you how merciless I ought to be in the vengeance I wish to exercise on you in the name of our victims. I must hurry on. The joy of having you thus makes my blood run wild, my head throb with violence, as when I think of my dream. My mind wanders; perhaps one of my attacks is coming on; but I shall have time to render the approaches of death more frightful, in forcing you to hear me."

"Bold La Chouette!" cried Tortillard; "be bold with your answer. Don't you know your part? Come, tell the devil to prompt you, my old dear."

"Oh! you do well to struggle and bite," said the Maître d'Ecole, after a pause; "you shall not escape; you have cut my fingers to the bone, but I will tear your tongue out if you stir.

"Let us continue to converse.

"On finding myself alone—constantly alone in obscurity and silence—I began to have fits of furious rage; powerless, for the first time I lost my senses, my head wandered. Yes, although awake, I have dreamed the dream—you know? the dream. The little old man of the Rue de Roule—the woman drowned—the cattle-merchant—and you! soaring above all these phantoms! I tell you, all this is frightful.

"I am blind; and my thoughts assume a form, a body, and represent continually to me, in a visible manner, almost palpable, the features of my victims.

"I should not have this fearful dream, but that my mind, continually absorbed by the recollection of my past crimes, is troubled with the same visions.

"Doubtless, when one is deprived of sight, besetting ideas trace themselves almost materially on the brain. Yet, sometimes, by force of contemplating them with resigned alarm, it seems to me that these menacing spectres have pity on me; they grow dim, fade away, and disappear. Then I think I awake from a vivid dream; but I feel myself weak, exhausted, broken, and, do you believe it—oh! how you will laugh, La Chouette!—I weep—do you hear? I weep. You do not laugh? But laugh! I say laugh!" La Chouette uttered a stifled groan. "Louder"! cried Tortillard; "can't hear." "Yes," continued the Maître d'Ecole, "I wept, for I suffered, and rage is fruitless. I say to myself, To-morrow, and to-morrow, forever I shall be a prey to the same delirium, the same mournful desolation. What a life! oh! what a life!"

"And I have not chosen death, rather than to be interred alive in this abyss, which incessantly racks my thoughts!

"Blind, solitary, and a prisoner! what can distract my thoughts? Nothing—nothing.

"When the phantoms cease for a moment to pass and repass on the black veil which I have before my eyes, there are other tortures—there are overwhelming comparisons. I say to myself, 'If I had remained an honest man, at this moment I should be free, tranquil, happy, loved, and honoured by mine own, instead of being blind and chained in this dungeon, at the mercy of my accomplices.'

"Alas! the regret of happiness lost by crime is the first step towards repentance.

"And when to this repentance is added an expiation of frightful severity—an expiation which changes your life into a long sleep filled with avenging hallucinations or desperate reflections, perhaps then the pardon of man will follow remorse and expiation."

"Take care, old man!" cried Tortillard; "you are stealing from the part of M. Moessard. Found out! found out!" The Maître d'Ecole paid no attention to the son of Bras-Rouge.

"Does it astonish you to hear me talk thus, La Chouette? If I had continued to harden myself, either by other bloody misdeeds, or by the savage drunkenness of a galley-slave's life, this salutary change in me had never taken place, I know well. But *alone*—blind—and tortured with a remorse which was *visible*, what could I think of? New crimes—how could I commit them? An escape—how escape? And if I escaped, where should I go—what should I do with my liberty? No; I must henceforth live in an eternal night, between the anguish of repentance and the alarm of horrifying apparitions by which I am pursued. Yet sometimes a feeble ray of hope shines in the midst of the gloom—a moment of calm succeeds to my torments: yes, for sometimes I succeed in conjuring the spectres which besiege me, by opposing to them the recollections of a past life, honest and peaceful—by carrying back my thoughts to the days of my childhood.

"Happily, you see, the greatest villains have had, at least, some years of peace and innocence to offer in opposition to their long years of crime and blood.

"We are not born wicked.

"The most perverse have had the amiable simplicity of childhood—have known the sweet joys of that charming age. Thus, I repeat, sometimes I feel a bitter consolation in saying, I am at this moment the object of universal execration; but there was a time when I was beloved, protected, because I was inoffensive and good.

"Alas! I must take refuge in the past, when I can; there alone can I find any repose."

On pronouncing these last words, the voice of the Maître d'Ecole had lost its acuteness; this formidable man seemed profoundly affected; he went on—

"Now, you see, the salutary influence of these thoughts is such that my rage is appeased; courage, strength, the will, all fail me to punish you; no, it is not for me to shed your blood."

"Bravo, old one! Now you see, La Chouette, that it was only a joke," cried Tortillard, applauding.

"No, it is not for me to shed your blood," resumed the Maître d'Ecole; "it would be a murder—excusable perhaps, but still a murder; and I have enough with three spectres! And then, who knows, you! perhaps, you! will repent some day."

On speaking thus, the Maître d'Ecole had mechanically relaxed his grasp. La Chouette profited by it to seize hold of the dagger which she had placed in her bosom after the murder of Sarah, and to strike a violent blow with it in order to disembarrass herself of him altogether. He uttered a cry of great anguish. The savage phrensy of his rage, his vengeance, his hatred, his sanguinary instincts suddenly aroused, and exasperated at this attack, made an unexpected and terrible explosion, under which his reason sunk, already much shattered by so many trials.

"Ah! viper, I have felt your tooth!" cried he in a voice trembling with rage, and grasping La Chouette tightly, who had thought to escape. "You crawl in the cellar, hieu," added he, more and more wandering, "but I am going to crush you, viper, or Chouette (owl). You waited, doubtless, the coming of the phantoms; my ears tingle, my head turns, as when they are about to come. Yes, I am not deceived. Oh! there they are; out of the darkness they approach—they approach. How pale they are, and their blood, how it flows, red and smoking. This frightens you—you struggle. Ah, well! be tranquil, you shall not see them; I have pity on you; I shall make you blind. You shall be as me, *without eyes*." Here he paused.

La Chouette uttered a cry so horrible that Tortillard, alarmed, jumped from his seat, and stood erect.

The frightful cries of La Chouette seemed to increase the insanity of the Maître d'Ecole.

"Sing," said he in a low voice, "sing, La Chouette, sing your song of death. You are happy; you will never more see the phantoms of our victims; the old man of the Rue de la Roule, the drowned woman, the cattle merchant. But I see them; they come; they touch me. Oh! how cold they are, oh!"

The last spark of intelligence in this poor wretch was extinguished in this cry of horror. Then he reasoned no more, spoke not; he behaved and roared like a wild beast: he only obeyed the savage instinct of destruction for destruction. Horrible, frightful events took place in the gloom of the cellar.

A quick, rapid trampling was heard, interrupted at frequent intervals by a dull sound, like that of a box of bones which rebounded on a stone against which one wished to break it. Acute moans, and bursts of infernal laughter, accompanied each of these blows. Then it was a death rattle of agony. Then nothing could be heard.

Nothing, but the furious trampling; nothing, but the heavy and rebounding blows, which still continued.

Soon a distant noise of footsteps and voices reached even to the depths of the cellar. Numerous lights appeared at the extremity of the subterranean passage. Tortillard, frozen with terror by the frightful tragedy which he had heard, but not seen, perceived several persons rapidly descend the staircase. In a moment the cellar was invaded by several police officers, at the head of whom was Narcisse Borel; the municipal guards closed the march. Tortillard was seized on the upper steps of the cellar, holding still in his hand the cabas of La Chouette.

Narcisse Borel, followed by some of his men, descended into the cellar of the Maître d'Ecole. All stopped, struck with such a horrible spectacle. Chained by the leg to an enormous stone placed in the middle of the dungeon, the Maître d'Ecole, horrible, monstrous, his hair knotted, the beard long, mouth foaming, clothed with bloody rags, turned like a wild beast around his dungeon, dragging after him, by the feet, the corpse of La Chouette, whose head was horribly mutilated, broken, and crushed. It needed a violent struggle to take from him the bleeding remains of his accomplice and to secure him.

After a vigorous resistance, they succeeded in transporting him to the lower room of the tavern, a dull, gloomy apartment, lighted by a single window. There were found, with irons on their hands, and guarded 'a vue,' Barbillon, Nicolas Martial, his mother and sister. They had been arrested just at the moment they were dragging off the diamond broker to murder her. She was recovering herself in another room. Stretched on the ground, and held, with great difficulty, by two officers, the Maître d'Ecole, slightly wounded in the arm by La Chouette, but completely insensible, roared and bellowed like a baited bull. At times he almost raised himself from the earth by his convulsive movements.

Barbillon, with head down, livid face, discoloured lips, fixed and savage eye, his long black hair falling on the collar of his blouse torn in the struggle, Barbillon was seated on a bench; his arms, confined by handcuffs, rested on his knees. The juvenile appearance of this scoundrel (he was hardly eighteen), and the regularity of his features, rendered still more deplorable the hideous stamp with which debauchery and crime had marked his countenance. Unmoved, he said not a word. It cannot be known whether this apparent insensibility was due to stupidity or to a frigid energy

his breathing was rapid, and from time to time with his shackled hands he wiped the sweat from his pale forehead.

Alongside of him was placed Calebasse; her cap had been torn; her yellowish hair, tied behind with a string, hung down her back in many tangled and disordered tresses. More enraged than dispirited, her thin and jaundiced cheeks somewhat coloured, she regarded with disdain the affliction of her brother Nicolas, placed on a chair opposite.

Foreseeing the fate which awaited him, this bandit, sinking within himself, his head hanging, his knees trembling, was almost dead with affright; his teeth chattered convulsively, and he uttered low and mournful groans.

Alone, among all, the Mère Martial, the widow of the condemned, standing with her back to the wall, had lost nothing of her audacity. With her head erect, she cast a firm look around her. This mask of bronze betrayed not the slightest emotion. Yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, who was brought into the lower room, after having assisted in the minute search which the commissary had just made throughout the whole house—yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, we repeat, the features of the widow contracted in spite of herself; her small eyes, ordinarily dull, sparkled with rage, her compressed lips became bloodless, she stiffened her manacled hands. Then, as if she had regretted this mute manifestation of rage and impotent hatred, she conquered her emotion, and became of an icy calmness. While the commissary, assisted by his *greffier*, made his '*proces verbal*,' Narcisse Borel, rubbing his hands, cast a complacent look on the important capture he had just made, and which delivered Paris from a band of dangerous criminals; but feeling of what utility Bras-Rouge had been in this expedition, he could not prevent himself from expressing to him by a glance his gratitude.

The father of Tortillard was obliged to partake, until after their judgment, the prison and fate of those whom he had denounced; like them, he wore handcuffs; still more than them, he had a trembling, alarmed air, uttering sorrowful groans, and giving to his weasel face every expression of terror. He embraced Tortillard, as if he sought some consolation in these paternal caresses.

The little cripple showed but little sensibility at these proofs of tenderness: he had just learned that, until farther orders, he was to be sent to the prison for young offenders.

"What a misfortune to part with my darling son!" cried Bras-Rouge, feigning to weep; "it is we who are the most unfortunate, Mère Martial, for they separate us from our children."

The widow could no longer contain herself: not doubting the treason of Bras-Rouge, which she had prophesied, she cried, "I was sure that you had sold my son who is at Toulon. Hold, Judas!" and she spat in his face. "You sell our heads; so be it! they will see handsome corpses—corpses of the real Martial!"

"Yes; we will not budge before *la Carline*" (the scaffold), added Calebasse, with savage pride.

The widow, pointing to Nicolas with a withering glance of contempt, said to her daughter, "This *lache* will dishonour us on the scaffold!"

Some moments afterward, the widow and Calebasse, accompanied by two agents, were placed in a hack and sent to Saint Lazare.

The three men were conducted to La Force.

The Maître d'Ecole was transported to the dépot of the Conciergerie, where there are cells destined to receive temporarily the insane.

CHAPTER XI.

PRESENTATION.

"The evil that the wicked do without knowing it is often more cruel than that which they intended to do."—SCHILLER, *Wallenstein*, act ii.

Some days after the murder of Madame Séraphin, the death of La Chouette, and the arrest of the band of malefactors surprised at the house of Bras-Rouge, Rodolphe repaired to the house in the Rue du Temple.

We have said that—intending to overcome cunning by cunning, and to expose the concealed crimes of Jacques Ferrand to the punishment they merited, notwithstanding the address and hypocrisy with which he disguised them—Rodolphe had caused to be brought from her prison in Germany, a métisse Creole, the unworthy wife of the negro David.

Having arrived the evening previous, this creature, as handsome as she was perverted, as enchanting as she was dangerous, had received detailed instructions from the Baron de Graün.

It will be remembered that, in the last interview between Rodolphe and Madame Pipelet, the latter having adroitly proposed Cecily to Madame Séraphin to replace Louise Morel as servant to the notary, the housekeeper had willingly received her overtures, and promised to speak on the subject to Jacques Ferrand, which she had done in terms the most favourable to Cecily, the very same morning of the day on which she (Madame Séraphin) had been drowned at the island of the Ravageur.

Rodolphe came there to know the result of the *presentation* of Cecily.

To his great astonishment, on entering the lodge, he found, although it was eleven o'clock in the morning, M. Pipelet in bed and Anastasia standing beside him, offering him a drink.

Alfred, whose forehead and eyes disappeared under a formidable cotton cap, not answering Anastasia, she concluded he was asleep, and closed the curtains of the bed. On turning, she saw Rodolphe. Immediately she carried according to custom, the back of her left hand flat against her periwig.

"Your servant, my prince of lodgers. You find me overturned, amazed, grown thin. There are famous doings in the house. Without counting that Alfred is in bed since yesterday."

"And what is the matter?"

"Is that to be asked?" "How?"

"Always the same number. The monster yearns more and more after Alfred: he alarms me so that I do not know what more to do."

"Cabrion again?" "Again."

"It is the devil, then!" "I shall begin to think so, Monsieur Rodolphe; for this *gredin* always guesses when I am out. Hardly do I turn on my heels than 'crac,' he is here on the back of my *vieux chéri*, who does not know how to defend himself any more than a child. Yesterday, again, while I was gone to M. Ferrand's, the notary—there is the place to hear news—"

"And Cécily?" said Rodolphe, hastily. "I came to know—"

"Stop, my prince of lodgers; do not fluster me. I have so many things—so many to tell you, that I shall lose myself if you break my thread."

"Come, I listen."

"In the first place, as concerns this house: just imagine that yesterday they came and arrested 'La Mère Burette.'"

"The pawnbroker on the second floor?"

"Mon Dieu, yes. It appears that she had many droll trades beside that of a pawnbroker! She was a *receleuse, haricandeuse, fondeuse, voleuse, allumeuse, engeôleuse, brocanteuse, fricoteuse;* in fine, everything that rhymes with *gueuse.** The worst of all is, that her old beau, M. Bras-Rouge, is also arrested. I told you there was a real earthquake in the house: what!"

"Bras-Rouge also arrested?"

"Yes; in his tavern in the Champs Elysées. All are boxed, even to his son Tortillard, the wicked little cripple. They say there has been a whole heap of murderers there; that they were a band of assassins; that La Chouette, one of the friends of La Mère Burette, has been strangled; and that, if help had not arrived in time, La Mère Mathieu, the diamond-broker, would have been murdered. Ain't this news?"

"Bras-Rouge arrested! La Chouette dead!" said Rodolphe to himself, with astonishment. "Poor Fleur de Marie is at least avenged."

"So much for this. Without excepting the new infamy of Cabrion, I am going at once to finish with that brigand. You will see what impudence! When La Mère Burette was arrested, and we knew that Bras-Rouge, our principal tenant, was trapped, I said to the old darling, 'You must trot right off to the proprietor, and tell him that M. Bras-Rouge is locked up.' Alfred set out. At the end of two hours he came back to me, but in such a state—white as a sheet, and blowing like an ox!" "What was the matter?"

"You shall see, Monsieur Rodolphe. Figure to yourself that, at six steps from this, there is a large white wall: my '*vieux chéri*,' on leaving the house, looked by chance on this wall; what does he see written there with charcoal, in large letters? 'Pipelet—Cabrion!' the two names joined by a large mark of union. It is this mark of *union* with this scoundrel which sticks in his stomach the most, my old darling. Bon, that began to upset him; ten steps farther, what does he see on the great door of the Temple? 'Pipelet—Cabrion!' always with the sign of union. On he goes: at each step, Monsieur Rodolphe, he saw written these cursed names on the walls of the houses, on the doors, everywhere, '*Pipelet—Cabrion.*' My 'vieux chéri' began to see thirty-six candles; he thought every one was looking at him; he pulled his hat down to his nose, he was so much ashamed. He went on the boulevard, thinking that this 'gueux' of a Cabrion had confined his indecencies to the Rue du Temple. Ah, well, yes! all along the boulevard, at each place where there was room to write, always '*Pipelet—Cabrion,*' to the death! Finally, the poor dear man arrived at the proprietor's so bewildered, that, after having stuttered, stammered, and slabbered for a quarter of an hour, he could not understand one word of all that Alfred said; so he sent him back, calling him an old imbecile, and told him to send me to explain the thing. 'Bon!' Alfred retired, came back by another route, in order to avoid the names he had seen written on the walls. Ah, well, yes—"

"Pipelet and Cabrion again?"

"As you say, my prince of lodgers. In this way the poor dear man arrived, stupified, amazed, wishing to exile himself. He told me his story; I calmed him as I could. I left him, and went with Mademoiselle Cécily to the notary's. You think this is all? Oh, yes! Hardly was my back turned than this Cabrion, who had watched my departure, had the impudence to send here two great hussies, who put on Alfred's breeches. Stop! my hair stands on an end. I will tell you all this directly. Let us finish with the notary. I set out, then, in a coach with Mademoiselle Cécily, as you are advised. She wore her pretty German peasant's costume, 'as she had just arrived, and had not time to change it,' as I was to tell M. Ferrand. You will believe me, if you please, my prince of lodgers, I have seen many pretty girls; I have seen myself in my spring-time; but never have I seen (myself included) a young person who could come within a hundred pike-staffs of Cécily. She has, above all, in the look of her large, wicked, black eyes, something—something—in fine, I don't know what it is; but, for sure, there is something striking. What eyes!

"In fine, hold! Alfred is not suspicious; well! the first time that she looked at him, he became as red as a carrot, this poor vieux chéri, and for nothing in the world; he would not have looked at the 'donzelle' a second time—he wriggled on his chair for an hour afterward, as if he had been seated on a thorn; he told me afterward that the look of Mademoiselle Cécily had recalled to his mind all the histories of that impudent Bradamanté about the *savagesses*, which made him blush so much, my old prude of an Alfred."

"But the notary? the notary?"

"Here I am, Monsieur Rodolphe. It was about seven o'clock in the evening when we reached the house of M. Ferrand; I told the porter to tell his master that Madame Pipelet was there with the servant whom Madame Séraphin had spoken about and told me to bring. Hereupon the porter uttered a sigh, and asked me if I knew what had happened to Madame Séraphin. I said no. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe here is another earthquake!" "What now?"

"The Séraphin is drowned in an excursion to the country which she had made with one of her relations."

"Drowned! A party to the country in winter?" said Rodolphe, surprised.

"Mon Dieu! yes, Monsieur Rodolphe, drowned; as for me, it astonishes me more than it grieves me; for since the misfortune of poor Louise, whom she denounced, I hated her, the Séraphin. Thus, ma foi, I said to myself, 'She is drowned, ah well! she is drowned; after all it won't kill me.' That's my character."

"And M. Ferrand?"

"The porter at first said he thought I could not see his master, and begged me to wait in the lodge, but at the end of a moment he returned for me; we crossed the court, and entered a chamber in the rez-de-chaussée.

"There was only a single candle burning. The notary was seated at the corner of the fire

* For many of these words there is no translation. They mean she was a thief-receiver, coiner, female broker, &c., &c. "Gueuse," a beggarly wretch.

place, where smoked the remains of a fire-brand. What a barrack! I had never seen M. Ferrand. Dieu de Dieu, isn't he horrid! Here is another one who might in vain have offered me the throne of Arabia to prove false to Alfred."

"And did he appear struck with the beauty of Cécily?"

"Can any one know, with his green spectacles? such an old sacristan ought to be no judge of women. Yet when we both entered, he made a kind of start from his chair; it was, doubtless, astonishment at seeing the Alsatian costume of Cécily; for she had (only ten million times better) the 'tournure' of one of those little broom girls, with her short petticoats, and her pretty legs with blue stockings and red clocks; 'sapristie!' what calves! and such slender ancles! and the little foot; finally, the notary had a bewildered look at seeing her."

"It was doubtless the strange costume which astonished him?" "Must think so; but the funny moment drew near. Happily, I remembered the maxim you taught me, Monsieur Rodolphe; it was my safety."

"What maxim?" "You know: *It is enough that one wishes that the other should not wish, or that one should not wish that the other wishes.* Then I said to myself, I must rid my prince of lodgers of his German, in placing her with the master of Louise: pardieu! I am going to a sham, and this is what I said to the notary, without giving him time to draw breath:

"'Pardon me, monsieur, if my niece comes dressed in the costume of her country; but she has just arrived; she has no other clothes than these, and I have no means of getting her others, as it would hardly be worth while; for we came only to thank you for having said to Madame Séraphin that you would consent to see Cécily, from the good recommendations I had given her; but I do not think she can suit, monsieur.'"

"Very well, Madame Pipelet."

"'Why will your niece not suit me?' said the notary, who, seated in the chimney corner, seemed to look at us from under his spectacles.

"'Because Cécily begins to be home-sick, monsieur. She has only been here three days, yet she wishes to return, even if she has to beg her way back, and sell brooms like her countrywomen.'

"'And you, who are her relation, will not suffer this?'

"'Dame, monsieur, I am her relation, it is true; but she is an orphan; she is twenty years old, and she is mistress of her own actions.'

"'Bah! bah! mistress of her own actions; at her age she should obey her relations,' answered he, roughly.

"Hereupon Cécily began to cry and tremble, pressing against me; it was the notary who made her afraid, very sure."

"And Jacques Ferrand?"

"He grumbled and muttered."

"'Abandon a girl at her age is to wish to ruin her! To return to Germany as a beggar, fine resource! And you, her aunt, you allow such conduct?'

"Well, well, said I to myself, you'll walk alone, 'grigou.' I'll place Cécily with you, or I'll lose my name.

"'I am her aunt, it is true,' answered I, 'and it is a very unfortunate relationship for me; I have enough on my hands; I would be just as well pleased to have my niece go away as to have her on my hands. May the devil run away with such relations who send you such great girls as this without paying the postage!' To crown all, there was Cécily, who seemed to be up to trap, bursting into tears. Thereupon the notary assumed a snivelling tone like a preacher, and said to me,

"'You will have to account to God for the trust that Providence has placed in your hands; it would be a crime to expose this young girl to perdition. I consent to aid you in your charitable work, if your niece promises me to be industrious, honest, and pious, and, above all, never to go out. I will have pity on her, and take her in my service.'

"'No, no, I would rather go back to my country,' said Cécily, still weeping."

"Her dangerous duplicity did not fail her," thought Rodolphe; "the diabolical creature has, I see, perfectly comprised the orders of the Baron de Graün." Then the prince said aloud, "Did M. Ferrand appear vexed at the perverseness of Cécily?"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; he muttered between his teeth, and said to her hastily,

"'It is not a question, mademoiselle, of what you prefer, but of what is suitable and decent; Heaven will not abandon you, if you lead an honest life and fulfil your religious duties. You will be here in a house as severe as holy; if your aunt really loves you, she will profit by my offer; at first you will have but small wages, but if by your conduct and zeal you deserve more, perhaps I will increase them.'

"Good! thought I to myself; the notary is caught! here is Cécily fixed at your house, old miser, old *no-heart!* The Séraphin was in your service for many years, and you have not even the appearance of remembering that she was drowned the day before yesterday. And I said aloud:

"'Doubtless, monsieur, the place is advantageous, but if this young woman is home-sick?'

"'That will pass away,' answered the notary; 'come, do you decide—yes or no? If you consent, bring your niece to-morrow night at this hour, and she can enter at once into my service—my porter will instruct her. As to the wages, I commence by giving her twenty francs a month and board and lodging.'

"'Ah! monsieur, you'll add five francs more?'

"'No, by-and-by—if I am content—we shall see. But I must inform you, that your niece must never go out, and must have no one to come and see her.'

"'Eh! mon Dieu, monsieur, who would come to see her? she knows no one but me in Paris, and I have my door to take care of; it has incommoded me enough to come with her to-day—you will never see me again—she will be as much of a stranger as if she had never come out of her own country. As to her not going out, there is a very simple way; let her wear her own costume; she would never dare go out in the streets dressed in that manner.'

"'You are right,' said the notary; 'it is, besides, respectable to dress in the costume of one's country. She shall, then, remain in her Alsatian dress.'

"'Come,' said I to Cécily, who, with her head down, wept continually, 'you must decide, my child; a good place, in an honest house, is not to be found every day; and, besides, if you refuse, make your own arrangements; I'll have no more to do with them.'

"Then Cécily answered, sighing, 'that she

consented to remain, but on condition that if in a fortnight her home-sickness troubled her too much, she might go away.'

"'I do not wish to keep you by force,' said the notary; 'and I am not embarrassed to find servants. Here is your advance; your aunt will only have to bring you to-morrow night.'

"Cécily had not ceased to weep. I accepted for her the advance of forty sous from the old screw, and we returned here."

"Very well, Madame Pipelet! I do not forget my promise; here is what I promised if you should succeed in placing this girl, who embarrassed me." "Wait until to-morrow, my prince of lodgers," said Madame Pipelet, refusing the money; "for, perhaps, he will change his mind when I take Cecily to him this evening."

"I do not think that he will change his mind; but where is she?"

"In the cabinet belonging to the apartments of the commandant; in obedience to your orders, she does not stir from them; she seems as resigned as a lamb, although she has eyes—ah! what eyes! But, apropos of the commandant, isn't he an intriguer! When he came himself to superintend the packing of his furniture, did he not tell me that if there came any letters here addressed to a *Madame Vincent*, they were for him, and to send them to the *Rue Mondovi, No.* 5? He causes himself to be addressed under the name of a woman, the beautiful bird! how cunning it is! But this is not all; did he not have the impudence to ask me what had become of his wood! 'Your wood! why not your forest at once?' I answered. Now, it is true, for two mean cart-loads of nothing at all—one of drift, and the other new wood, for he did not buy all new wood—the save-penny made a fuss! His wood? 'I burned all your wood,' said I, 'to save your furniture from the damp; otherwise mushrooms would have sprung up on your embroidered cap, and on your glow-worm robe de chambre that you wore so often to see the "Roi de Prussé," while you were waiting for the little lady who quizzed you.'"

A heavy and plaintive groan from Alfred interrupted Madame Pipelet. "There is the vieux chéri dreaming; he is going to wake up; you will allow me, my prince of lodgers?" "Certainly; I have, besides, some more questions to ask."

"Well! vieux chéri, how do you feel?" said Madame Pipelet to her husband, opening the curtains; "here is Monsieur Rodolphe; he knows the new infamy of Cabrion; he pities you with ah his heart."

"Ah! monsieur," said Alfred, turning his head in a languishing manner towards Rodolphe; "this time I shall not get over it; the monster has stabbed me to the heart. I am the subject of the placards of the capital; my name can be read on all the walls of the capital, side by side with this scoundrel's: *Pipelet—Cabrion*, with an enormous sign of union—*monsieur*, a sign of union. I!! united to this infernal blackguard in the eyes of the capital of Europe!"

"M. Rodolphe knows it; but what he does not know is your adventure of last night with these two strapping women." "Ah! monsieur, he kept his most monstrous infamy for the last; this passed all bounds," said Alfred, in a mournful tone.

"Come, my dear Monsieur Pipelet, relate to me this new misfortune."

"All he had done previously was nothing to this, monsieur. He succeeded in his object—thanks to proceedings the most shameful. I do not know if I have the strength to relate; confusion, shame will impede me at each step."

M. Pipelet being painfully raised in the bed, modestly buttoned up his flannel waistcoat, and commenced in these *terms:* "My wife had just gone out; absorbed in the bitterness caused by the prostitution of my name written on all the walls of the capital, I sought to distract myself by endeavouring to sole a boot, twenty times taken up and twenty times abandoned, thanks to the obstinate persecutions of my tormentor. I was seated before a table, when I saw the door of my lodge open, and a woman enter. This woman was wrapped in a cloak, with a hood; I arose politely from my seat, and touched my hat. At this moment, a second woman, also enveloped in a cloak with a hood, entered my lodge, and locked the door inside.

"Although astonished at the familiarity of this procedure, and the silence which the two women preserved, I again rose from the chair, and again carried my hand to my hat. Then, monsieur—no, no, I never can—my modesty revolts."

"Come, old modesty, we are among men; go on, then." "Then," resumed Alfred, becoming crimson, "the mantles fell, and what did I see? Two species of sirens or nymphs, with no other clothing than a tunic of leaves, the head also crowned with foliage; I was petrified. Then they both advanced towards me, extending their arms, as if to engage me to precipitate myself into them!"

"The husseys!" said Anastasia.

"The advances of these barefaced individuals revolted me," resumed Alfred, animated by a chaste indignation; "and, following this habit, which never abandons me in the most critical circumstances of my life, I remained completely immovable on my chair; then, profiting by my stupor, the two sirens approached me in a kind of slow movement, spinning round on their legs, and moving their arms. I became more and more immovable. They reached me; they twisted their arms around me."

"Twisted their arms around an aged and married man, the '*gredines!*' Ah! if I had been there, with the handle of my broom," cried Anastasia, "I'd have given you a cadence, and spinning of legs to some purpose, '*gourgandines!*'"

"When I felt myself embraced," continued Alfred, "my blood made one rush—I was half dead. Then one of the sirens—the boldest, a large tall blonde—leaned on my shoulder, raised my hat, and uncovered my head, always, 'en cadence,' spinning on her legs and moving her arms: then her accomplice drew a pair of scissors from among the leaves, collected together an enormous lock of all the hair that remained behind my head, and cut it off. Monsieur, all—all; always with the spinning around on her legs; then she said to me, singing 'en cadence,' 'It is for Cabrion;' and the other impudence repeated in chorus, 'It is for Cabrion! it is for Cabrion!'"

After a pause, accompanied by a grievous sigh, Alfred went on with his story:

"During this scandalous spoliation, I raised my eyes, and saw looking through the window of the lodge the infernal face of Cabrion, with his beard and pointed hat. He laughed, and laughed; he was hideous! To escape this odi-

ous vision, I shut my eyes. When I opened them again, all had disappeared. I found myself on my chair, my head uncovered, and completely devastated! You see, monsieur, Cabrion has gained his end by force of cunning, audacity, and obstinacy; and by what means, mon Dieu He wished to make me pass for his friend. He began by putting up a notice here that we would carry on a friendly trade together. Not content with that, at this very moment my name is stuck with his on all the walls of the capital, with an enormous sign of union. There is not, at this moment, an inhabitant of Paris who can have any doubt of my intimacy with this wretch: he wished some of my hair, he has it; all thanks to the impudent exactions of these brazen sirens. Now, monsieur, you must see, there only remains for me to leave France—'ma belle France!' where I thought to live and die." And Alfred threw himself backward on his bed, and clasped his hands.

"But just the contrary, 'vieux chéri;' now that he has your hair, he will leave you quiet."

"Leave me quiet!" cried M. Pipelet, with a convulsive start; "but you do not know him; he is insatiable. Now, who knows what he will want from me?"

Rigolette, appearing at the entrance of the lodge, put an end to the lamentations of M. Pipelet.

"Do not enter, mademoiselle!" cried M. Pipelet, faithful to his habits of chaste susceptibility. "I am in bed, and in my linen." So saying, he drew one of the sheets to his chin. Rigolette stopped discreetly at the threshold.

"I was just going to see you, my neighbour," said Rodolphe to her. "Will you wait one moment?" Then, addressing Anastasia, "Do not forget to conduct Cécily to-night to M. Ferrand's."

"Be tranquil, my prince of lodgers; at seven o'clock she shall be installed there. Now that Madame Morel can walk, I will ask her to stay in the lodge, for Alfred would not, for an empire, remain alone."

CHAPTER XII.

VOISIN ET VOISINE.

The rosy cheeks of Rigolette became paler and paler; her charming face, until now so fresh, so round, began to lengthen a little; her piquant countenance, ordinarily so animated, so lively, was become serious and still more sad since the last interview between the grisette and Fleur de Marie at the gate of the prison of Saint Lazare.

"How happy I am to see you, my neighbour!" said she to Rodolphe, when he came out of the lodge. "I have many things to tell you, 'allez.'"

"In the first place, 'ma voisine,' how do you do? Let me look at your pretty face. Is it always rosy and gay? Alas! no; I find you pale. I am sure you work too much." "Oh! no, Monsieur Rodolphe; I assure you I am now used to this little increase of work. What changes me is grief. Mon Dieu, yes! Every time I see poor Germain I become still more sad." "He is, then, very much depressed?" "More than ever, Monsieur Rodolphe; and what is annoying is, that everything that I do to console him increases his despondency; it is like a spell." And a tear came and obscured the large black eyes of Rigolette. "Explain this to me, 'ma voisine.'" "For instance, yesterday I went to see him to take a book he wished to have, because it was a romance that we used to read together in our happy days. At the sight of this book, he burst into tears; that did not surprise me; it was very natural. Dame! this 'souvenir' of our evenings, so quiet, so pleasant, seated by my stove, in my snug little room, to compare that with his frightful life in prison—poor Germain! it is very cruel."

"Be comforted," said Rodolphe to the young girl. "When Germain gets out of prison, and his innocence is acknowledged, he will find his mother and friends, and he will soon forget, in their society and yours, the terrible moments of trial." "Yes, but until then, Monsieur Rodolphe, he is going to be still more tormented. And, besides, this is not all."

"What is there besides?"

"As he is the only honest man among all these bandits, they are prejudiced against him, because he cannot agree with them. The guardian of the 'parloir,' a very good man, told me to advise Germain, for his own sake, to be less proud, to try to be a little more familiar with the men; but he cannot. They are stronger than he is, and I fear that some day they will injure him." Then suddenly interrupting herself, she said, drying her tears, "But see, now, I only think of myself, and forget to speak to you about La Goualeuse."

"La Goualeuse?" said Rodolphe, with surprise.

"The day before yesterday, on going to see Louise at Saint Lazare, I met her."

"The Goualeuse?"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe." "At Saint Lazare?" "She came out with an old lady."

"It is impossible!" cried Rodolphe, astonished.

"I assure you it was she, 'mon voisin.'"

"You must be mistaken."

"No, no; although she was dressed as a peasant girl, I knew her at once. She is still very handsome, although pale; and she has the same soft, melancholy manner as formerly."

"She has come to Paris without my knowledge! I cannot believe it. And what was she doing at Saint Lazare?" "The same as I was; visiting a prisoner, doubtless. I had not the time to ask more questions, the old woman who accompanied her had such a cross look, and was in such a hurry. Thus you know La Goualeuse also, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"Certainly." "Then there is no more doubt that it is you of whom she spoke." "Of me?" "Yes, 'mon voisin.' Just imagine that I related to her the misfortunes of Louise and Germain, both so good, so virtuous, and so persecuted by this villain Jacques Ferrand, taking care not to tell what you forbid, that you interested yourself in them; then La Goualeuse told me that if a generous person whom she knew was informed of the unhappy and undeserved fate of my poor prisoners, he would certainly come to their assistance. I asked the name of this person, and she named you, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"It is she, it is she."

"You may suppose that we were both much astonished at this discovery, or this resemblance of names. Thus we have promised to write if our Rodolphe was the same person. And it appears that you are the same, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"Yes, I have also interested myself for this

poor child. But what you have told me of her presence in Paris surprises me so much, that if you had not given me so many details of your interview with her, I should have persisted in believing that you were mistaken. But, adieu, 'ma voisine;' what you have just told me about La Goualeuse obliges me to leave you. Remain always as reserved towards Louise and Germain as regards the protection of unknown friends. This secrecy is more necessary than ever. Apropos, how are the Morel family?"

"Better and better, Monsieur Rodolphe. The mother is on her feet again; the children improve daily. All owe their life to you—their happiness. You are so generous to them!" "And poor Morel, how is he?" "Better. I had news from him yesterday. He seems occasionally to have some lucid moments; there is great hope of restoring him to reason." "Come, courage, 'ma voisine;' I shall soon see you again. Have you need of anything? Do you still earn enough to support yourself?" "Oh! yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; I take a little from my hours of rest, and it is not much damage, allez, for I hardly sleep now." "Alas! my poor little neighbour, I much fear that *Papa Crétu* and *Ramonette* will not sing much more if they wait for you to begin."

"You are not mistaken, Monsieur Rodolphe; my birds and I sing no more, mon Dieu, no; but, now you are going to laugh! well, it seems to me that they comprehend that I am sad; yes, instead of warbling gayly when I arrive, they utter such low, plaintive notes, that they appear to wish to console me. I am foolish to believe this, am I not, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "Not at all; I am sure that your good friends, the birds, love you too much not to perceive your sorrow."

"Really, these poor little things are so intelligent!" said Rigolette, naïvely, much satisfied to be assured of the sagacity of the companions of her solitude.

"Without doubt, nothing is more intelligent than gratitude. Come, once more, adieu. Soon, my neighbour, I hope your pretty eyes will become sparkling, your cheeks very rosy, and your songs so gay—so gay—that *Papa Crétu* and *Ramonette* will hardly be able to follow you." "May what you have said be true, Monsieur Rodolphe," answered Rigolette, with a heavy sigh. "Well, adieu, 'mon voisin.'"

"Adieu, ma voisine, et à bientôt."

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Rodolphe could not comprehend how Madame Georges had, without advising him, sent or brought Fleur de Marie to Paris; he returned home, to send an express to the farm of Bouqueval. At the moment he entered the Rue du Plumet he saw a postchaise stop before the door of the hotel; it was Murph, who had just returned from Normandy. The squire had gone there, as we have stated, to unmask the sinister projects of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, and Bradamanti, her accomplice.

CHAPTER XIII.

MURPH AND POLIDORI.

The face of Sir Walter Murph was radiant with joy. On descending from the carriage, he handed to one of the servants of the prince a pair of pistols, took off his long riding-coat, and, without taking time to change his dress, he followed Rodolphe, who, very impatient, had preceded him to his apartment.

"Good news, monseigneur, good news!" cried the squire, when he found himself alone with Rodolphe. "The wretches are unmasked! M. d'Orbigny is saved! You sent me off in time; one hour later, a new crime had been committed." "And Madame d'Harville?"

"She is overjoyed at regaining her father's affection, and at having arrived in time, thanks to your advice, to save him from certain death!" "Thus Polidori—"

"Was once more the worthy accomplice of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville. But what a monster this stepmother! what 'sang-froid!' what audacity! And Polidori! Ah! monseigneur, you have often been pleased to thank me for what you call the proofs of my devotedness."

"I have always had proofs of your friendship, my good Murph."

"Well, monseigneur, never—no, never has this friendship been put to a severer test than in this affair," said the squire, in a half-joking manner.

"How is that?"

"The disguises of the coalman, the peregrinations in the cité, and *tutti quanti* were nothing, monseigneur, absolutely nothing, compared to the journey I have just made with this infernal Polidori."

"What do you say? Polidori—"

"I have brought him with me."

"With you?" "With me. Judge what a companion! during twelve hours, side by side with the man I despise and hate the most in the world! I would as soon travel with a serpent; my antipathy—" "And where is Polidori now?"

"In the house of the Allée des Veuves, under good and sure guard." "Did he make no resistance to follow you?"

"None. I left him the choice to be arrested on the spot by the French authorities, or to be my prisoner in the Allée des Veuves. He did not hesitate."

"You were right; it is better to have him thus in our own hands. You are a man of gold, my old Murph; but relate to me your journey; I am impatient to know how this unworthy woman and her depraved accomplice have been unmasked."

"Nothing could be plainer. I had only to follow your instructions to the letter to terrify and crush these wretches. In this case, monseigneur, you have saved, as usual, people of worth, and punished the wicked; noble Providence that you are!" "Sir Walter Murph! Sir Walter, do you remember the flatteries of the Baron de Graün?" said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Well, let it pass, monseigneur. I will commence, then; or, rather, you will first please to read this letter, from Madame la Marquise d'Harville, who will inform you of all that occurred previous to my arrival."

"A letter? give it to me quickly."

Murph, handing Rodolphe the letter of the marquise, added, "Thus, as it was agreed upon, instead of accompanying the marquise to her father's, I alighted at an inn, serving as a kind of watering-place, at a short distance from the château, where I was to stay until Madame la Marquise sent for me."

Rodolphe read what follows, with tender and impatient solicitude:

"Monseigneur,

"After all I owe you already, I shall owe you the life of my father!

"I shall let facts speak for themselves; they will tell you better than I can what new treasures of gratitude towards you I have collected in my heart.

"Comprehending all the importance of the counsels which you gave me through Sir Walter Murph, who rejoined me on the road to Normandy, just as I left Paris, I arrived in all haste at the Château des Aubiers.

"I do not know why, the features of the servants who received me appeared sinister; I did not see among them any of the old servitors of our house; no one knew me; I was obliged to announce myself. I learned that, for some days past, my father was quite ill, and that my stepmother had just returned from Paris with a physician.

"No more doubt—it was Doctor Polidori!

"Wishing to be conducted at once to my father, I asked where an old valet de chambre was, to whom he was much attached. This man had left the château some time before; this information was given me by an intendant, who had conducted me to my apartments, saying that he would go and inform my stepmother of my arrival.

"Was it an illusion—prejudice? it seemed to me that my arrival was disagreeable even to the servants of my father. Everything in the château seemed mournful and sad. In the disposition of mind in which I found myself, one seeks to draw conclusions from the merest trifles. I remarked everywhere traces of disorder, of negligence, as if it had been thought useless to take care of a dwelling so soon to be abandoned.

"My inquietudes, my anxieties increased at each moment. After having settled my daughter and her 'gouvernante' in my apartment, I was about to go to my father, when my stepmother entered.

"Notwithstanding her duplicity — notwithstanding the command which she ordinarily has over herself, she appeared uneasy at my arrival.

"'M. d'Orbigny did not expect your visit, madame,' said she to me. 'He is so ill, that such a surprise might be fatal. I think it, then, suitable to leave him in ignorance of your presence; he cannot, in any way—'

"I did not allow her to finish.

"'A great misfortune has happened, madame,' said I; 'M. d'Harville is dead! victim of a fatal imprudence! After such a deplorable event, I cannot remain in Paris, and I have come to pass at my father's my first mourning.'

"'You are a widow! Ah! what overpowering good fortune!' cried my stepmother, in a rage.

"From what you know of the unhappy marriage which this woman schemed for me, you will comprehend, monseigneur, the atrocity of her exclamation.

"'It is because I feared that you would be also as *overpoweringly fortunate* as I am, madame, that I came here,' said I, perhaps imprudently: 'I wish to see my father.'

"'This is impossible,' said she, turning pale: 'the sight of you might cause a dangerous attack.'

"'Since my father is so dangerously ill,' cried I, 'why was I not informed of it?'

"'Such were the commands of M. d'Orbigny,' answered my stepmother.

"'I do not believe you, madame, and I am going to assure myself of the truth,' said I, making a step towards the door.

"'I repeat to you that your unexpected appearance may do your father much harm,' cried she, placing herself before me, to bar the passage. 'I will not allow you to enter his chamber until I have informed him of your return, with all the precautions his situation requires.'

"I was in a state of cruel perplexity, monseigneur. A sudden surprise might, in effect, prove dangerous to my father; but this woman, ordinarily so cold, so much the mistress of herself, seemed so alarmed at my presence; I had so many reasons to doubt the sincerity of her solicitude for the health of him whom she had married from cupidity; finally, the presence of Doctor Polidori, the murderer of my mother, caused a terror so great, that, believing the life of my father to be threatened, I did not hesitate between the hope of saving him and the fear of causing him any serious emotions.

"'I will see my father at once,' said I to my stepmother.

"And although she caught me by the arms, I passed out.

"Losing her self-possession completely, this woman again endeavoured to stop me. This incredible resistance redoubled my alarm. I disengaged myself from her hands. Knowing the apartment of my father, I ran thither rapidly; I entered. Oh! monseigneur! on my life, I shall never forget the scene presented to my view. My father, almost unrecognisable, pale, thin, suffering painted on every feature, with his head leaning on a pillow, was stretched out in a large arm-chair.

"At the corner of the chimneypiece, standing near him, was Doctor Polidori, prepared to pour in a cup, which a nurse presented to him, some drops of a liquid contained in a little flacon of crystal which he held in his hand.

"His long red beard gave a still more sinister expression to his face. I entered so precipitately that he made a gesture of surprise, exchanged a look of intelligence with my stepmother, who followed in haste, and instead of giving my father the potion which he had prepared for him, he quickly placed it on the chimneypiece.

"Guided by an instinct which I cannot yet account for, my first movement was to seize the flacon.

"Remarking the surprise and alarm of my stepmother and Polidori, I felicitated myself on my action. My father, stupified, seemed irritated at seeing me; I expected it. Polidori cast a ferocious glance at me; notwithstanding the presence of my father and that of the nurse, I feared that this wretch, seeing his crime almost discovered, would carry matters to extremities.

"I felt the need of help at this decisive moment; I rang the bell; one of the servants appeared; I begged him to say to my valet de chambre (who had his instructions) to go and bring some things I had left at the inn; Sir Walter Murph knew that, not to arouse the suspicions of my stepmother, I would employ this subterfuge to bring him to me.

"The surprise of my father, of my stepmother was such, that the servant retired before they could say a word; I was reassured; in a few moments Sir Walter would be near me.

"'What does this mean?' said my father, at length, in a feeble but imperious and angry tone. 'You here, Clémence, without being sent for?

And then, hardly arrived, you take possession of the flacon which contains the potion that the doctor was about to give me; will you explain this folly?'

"'Leave the room,' said my stepmother to the nurse.

"'Calm yourself, my friend,' said she, addressing my father; 'you know the least emotion may injure you. Since your daughter comes here in spite of you, and her presence is disagreeable, give me your arm, I will conduct you to the little saloon; and leave our good doctor to make Madame d'Harville understand the imprudence (not to say anything worse) of her conduct.'

"And she cast a significant look at her accomplice. I comprehended the design of my stepmother. She wished to lead my father away and leave me alone with Polidori, who, in this extreme case, would have doubtless employed violence to force from me the flacon, which might furnish an evident proof of his designs. 'You are right,' said my father; 'since she comes and persecutes me even in my own room, without any respect for my wishes, I will leave the place free to her importunacy.' And rising with an effort, he accepted the offered arm, and made some steps towards the small saloon.

"At this moment, Polidori advancing towards me, I drew nearer my father, and said,

"'I will explain to you the cause of my unexpected arrival and what is strange in my conduct. Since yesterday I am a widow; since yesterday I know your days are threatened, my father.'

"He walked painfully, with his body bent. At these words, he stopped, stood erect, and looking at me with profound astonishment, cried, 'You a widow? my days threatened? What does all this mean?'

"'And who dares to threaten the days of M. d'Orbigny, madame?' audaciously asked my stepmother.

"'Who threatens them?' added Polidori.

"'You, monsieur; you, madame,' I answered.

"'What an outrage!' cried my stepmother, advancing towards me. 'What I say I will prove, madame.'

"'Such an accusation is frightful!' said my father.

"'I shall leave this house at once, since in it I am exposed to such atrocious calumnies!' said Doctor Polidori, with the assumed indignation of a man whose honour was outraged. Beginning to feel the danger of his position, he doubtless wished to fly. As he opened the door, he found himself face to face with Sir Walter Murph."

Rodolphe, stopping a moment, extended his hand to the squire, and said, "Very well, my old friend; your presence must have been like a thunderbolt to this wretch."

"That is the word, monseigneur; he became livid, and retreated two steps, looking at me in a kind of stupor; he seemed annihilated. To meet me in Normandy at such a moment! he thought it was a dream. But continue, monseigneur; you will see that this infernal Comtesse d'Orbigny had also her turn of a *thunderbolt*, thanks to what you told me of her visit to the quack Bradamanti Polidori in the house of the Rue du Temple; for, after all, it is you who act; or, rather, I was only the instrument of your thought."

Rodolphe smiled, and went on with the perusal of the letter of Madame d'Harville.

"At the sight of Sir Walter, Polidori was petrified; my stepmother fell from one surprise into another; my father, alarmed at this scene, and weakened by sickness, was obliged to seat himself in a chair. Sir Walter double locked the door by which he entered; and, placing himself before the one which opened into another apartment, so that the doctor could not escape, he said to my father, with the most profound respect,

"'I ask a thousand pardons, Monsieur le Comte, for the liberty I take; but imperious necessity, dictated solely by your interest (and you will soon acknowledge it), obliges me to act thus. My name is Sir Walter Murph, as this wretch can testify, who, at my sight, trembles with fear; I am the confidential adviser of his Royal Highness the reigning Grand-duke of Gérolstein.'

"'It is true,' said Doctor Polidori, confusedly, quite beside himself with alarm.

"'But then, monsieur, what do you come here for? what do you want?'

"'Sir Walter Murph,' said I, addressing my father, 'comes to aid me in unmasking these wretches, to whose machinations you were near falling a victim.'

"Then, handing to Sir Walter the crystal flacon, I added, 'I have had the good fortune to become possessed of this at the moment Doctor Polidori was about administering to my father its contents.'

"'A chemist from the neighbouring town shall analyze before you the contents of this bottle, which I am going to place in your hands, Monsieur le Comte, and if it be proved that it contains a slow and certain poison,' said Sir Walter to my father, 'there can remain no more doubt of the danger you have run, and which the affection of madame, your daughter, has happily prevented.'

"My poor father looked at his wife, Doctor Polidori, Sir Walter, and myself in a bewildered manner; his features expressed deep agony. I read upon his care-worn face the violent struggle which tore his heart. Without doubt he was resisting with all his strength growing and terrible suspicions, fearing to be obliged to recognise the guilt of my stepmother; at length, concealing his face in his hands, he cried, 'Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! all this is horrible—impossible! Is this, then, a dream?'

"'No, it is not a dream!' cried my stepmother, audaciously: 'nothing is more real than this atrocious calumny, previously concocted, to ruin an unhappy woman, whose sole crime has been to consecrate her life to you. Come, come, my friend! let us not remain a second longer here!' added she, addressing herself to my father; 'perhaps your daughter will not have the insolence to detain you in spite of yourself.'

"'Yes, yes, let us go,' said my father, almost wild; 'all this is not true—cannot be true: I wish to hear nothing farther; my reason would give way; frightful suspicions would arise in my mind, empoison the few days remaining for me to live, and nothing could console me for such an abominable discovery!'

"My father seemed so suffering, so despairing, that at any sacrifice I would have put a stop to a scene so cruel for him. Sir Walter divined my thoughts; but, wishing to do full and entire justice, he answered my father,

"'Yet a few words, Monsieur le Comte: you are about to experience the affliction, doubtless very painful, of discovering that a woman whom you believe attached to you by gratitude, has always been a monstrous hypocrite; but you will find certain consolation in the affection of your daughter, who has always been true.'

"'This passes all bounds!' cried my stepmother, in a rage; 'and by what right, monsieur, and on what proofs, dare you to utter such frightful calumnies? You say this flacon contains poison. I deny it, monsieur; and I will deny it until you prove the contrary; and even if Doctor Polidori might have by accident mistaken one medicine for another, is that a reason to dare to accuse me of having wished, with him as an accomplice—oh! no, no, I cannot finish—an idea so horrible is already a crime. Once more, monsieur, I defy you to say on what proofs you and madame dare to sustain this frightful calumny,' said my stepmother, with incredible audacity.

"'Yes, on what proofs?' cried my unfortunate father. 'The torture I suffer must be brought to a close.'

"'I have not come here without proofs, Monsieur le Comte,' said Sir Walter. 'And these proofs the answers of this wretch will furnish directly.' Then Sir Walter spoke to Doctor Polidori in German, who seemed to have recovered a little assurance, but lost it immediately."

"What did you say to him?" demanded Rodolphe, laying aside the letter for a moment.

"Some significant words, monseigneur, to this effect: 'You have escaped by flight the sentence pronounced against you in the grand-duchy; you live in the Rue du Temple, under the false name of Bradamanti; your present occupation is unknown; you poisoned the comte's first wife; three days ago Madame d'Orbigny came to bring you here to poison her husband. His royal highness is in Paris, and has the proofs of all I advance. If you confess the truth, so as to convict this miserable woman, you may hope, not pardon, but some mitigation of the punishment you deserve; you will follow me to Paris, where I will place you in security until his royal highness decides your fate. Otherwise two things: the one is, that the prince will demand you from the government, or this moment I will send to the neighbouring town for a magistrate; this flacon, containing poison, shall be placed in his hands; you will be arrested at once, your lodgings in the Rue du Temple searched; you know how much this will compromise you, and French justice shall follow its course. Choose, then.' These revelations, these accusations, these threats, that he knew well founded, succeeding one another so rapidly, confounded this miscreant, who did not expect to find me so well informed. In the hope to lessen the punishment which awaited him, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his accomplice, and answered, 'Interrogate me—I will tell the truth concerning this woman.'"

"Well, well, my worthy Murph, I expected no less from you." "During my interview with Polidori, the features of Madame d'Orbigny changed their expression of assurance alarmingly, although she did not understand German. She saw, from the increasing dejection of her confederate, from his supplicating attitude, that I had him in my power. In great anxiety, she endeavoured to catch the eye of Polidori, in order to give him courage or to implore his discretion, but he avoided her glances." "And the comte?"

"His emotion was indescribable; with his contracted fingers he clutched, convulsively, the arm of his chair, the perspiration standing on his forehead; he hardly breathed; his burning and glazed eyes were fixed on mine; his agony equalled that of his wife. The continuation of the letter of Madame d'Harville will instruct you as to the end of this painful scene, monseigneur.'

CHAPTER XIV.

PUNISHMENT.

Rodolphe resumed the perusal of the letter of Madame d'Harville. "After a conversation in German, which lasted for some moments, Sir Walter said to Polidori, 'Now answer: Was it not madame,' and he pointed at my stepmother, 'who, at the time of the illness of the first wife of M. la Comte, introduced you in the house as a physician?'

"'Yes, it was she,' answered Polidori.

"'In order to serve the fearful projects of madame, have you not been criminal enough to render mortal (by your homicidal prescriptions) the slight illness of Madame le Comtesse d'Orbigny?'

"'Yes,' said Polidori.

"My father uttered a heart-rending sigh, raised his two hands towards heaven, and let them fall, quite overwhelmed. 'Falsehoods and infamy!' cried my stepmother: 'all this is false; they conspire to ruin me!' 'Silence, madame!' said Sir Walter Murph, in an imposing voice; then, continuing to question Polidori,

"'Is it true that, three days ago, madame went to seek you at No. 17, Rue du Temple, where you reside, concealed under the false name of Bradamanti?'

"'That is true.'

"'Did not madame propose to you to come here to murder the Comte d'Orbigny, as you had murdered his wife?'

"'Alas! I cannot deny it,' said Polidori.

"At this overwhelming revelation, my father arose on his feet; he showed the door to my stepmother; then, extending his arms towards me, he cried, in a broken voice, 'In the name of your unfortunate mother, pardon me, pardon me! I have caused you much suffering; but I swear to you I was a stranger to the crime which has conducted her to the tomb.'

"And, before I could prevent him, he fell at my feet.

"When Sir Walter and myself raised him, he had fainted. I rang for the servants. Sir Walter took the doctor by the arm and went out with him, saying to my stepmother, 'Believe me, madame, you had better leave this house before an hour, or I will deliver you up to justice.'

"The wretched woman left the room in a state of alarm and rage, which you will easily conceive, monseigneur.

"When my father recovered his senses, all that had taken place appeared like a horrid dream. I was under the sad necessity of relating to him my first suspicions concerning the premature death of my mother—suspicions which your knowledge of the previous crimes of Doctor Polidori, monseigneur, changed into certainty.

"I was obliged, also, to tell my father how my stepmother had carried her hatred even to my marriage, and what had been her object in causing me to marry M. d'Harville.

"As much as my father had shown himself weak and blind respecting this woman, just so much he wished to treat her without mercy; he accused himself, with despair, of having been the accomplice of this monster, in giving her his hand after the death of my mother; he wished to give her up to justice; I represented to him the odious notoriety of such proceedings. I engaged him to drive her away forever from his presence, allowing her just enough for her support, since she bore his name.

"I had great trouble in procuring my father's consent to this; he wished me to turn her out of the house. This mission would be doubly painful; I thought that Sir Walter, perhaps, would act for me. He consented."

"And I, 'pardieu,' consented with joy, monseigneur," said Murph to Rodolphe; "nothing pleases me more than to give to the wicked this kind of extreme unction." "And what did this woman say?"

"Madame d'Harville had, in effect, carried her goodness so far as to ask from her father a pension of one hundred Louis for this creature. This appeared to me, not goodness, but weakness; it was bad enough to rob justice of such a dangerous woman. I went to find the comte; he coincided entirely with me; it was agreed that we should give, in all, twenty-five Louis to the infamous wretch, so that she might subsist until she found employment. 'And what kind of employment can the Comtesse d'Orbigny find?' demanded she, insolently. 'Ma foi, it is your affair; you might be something like a nurse or housekeeper; but, believe me, seek the most humble and obscure calling; for if you have the audacity to tell your name, this name which you owe to a crime, people will be astonished to see the Comtesse d'Orbigny reduced to such a condition; they will inquire, and you can judge of the consequences, if you are fool enough to noise abroad the past. Conceal your name in some distant place; cause yourself to be forgotten; become Madame Pierre or Madame Jacques, and repent—if you can.' 'And you think, monsieur,' said she to me, 'that I shall not claim the advantages secured to me by my marriage contract?' 'Certainly, madame, nothing can be more just; it would be unworthy of M. d'Orbigny not to execute his promises, and not to recognise all that you have done for him, and all you would have done. Sue, sue; address yourself to justice; I have no doubt the decision will be against your husband.' A quarter of an hour after our conversation, the creature was on the road to the neighbouring town."

"You are right: it is painful to allow such a woman to escape with impunity; but the scandal of such a trial for this old man, already so much debilitated, it must not be thought of."

"I have easily persuaded my father to leave Les Aubiers to-day," resumed Rodolphe, continuing to read the letter from Madame d'Harville: "too many sad recollections attend him here; although his health is delicate, the journey and change of air may be of service, as the physician says who has taken the place of Doctor Polidori. My father wished that he should analyze the contents of the flacon, without informing him of what had passed; he answered that he could only do this at his own house, but that in two hours we should know the result. This was, that several doses of this liquid, prepared with infernal skill, would, in a given time, produce death without leaving any traces.

"In a few hours, monseigneur, I leave, with my father and daughter, for Fontainebleau; we will remain there for some time; then, according to the wish of my father, we shall return to Paris, but not to my own house; it will be impossible for me to live there after the deplorable accident which has taken place.

"Thus, as I have said, monseigneur, on commencing this letter, events show all that I owe to your solicitude. Warned by you, aided by your advice, strong in the co-operation of your excellent and courageous Sir Walter, I have been able to snatch my father from certain death, and I am assured of the return of his tenderness.

"Adieu, monseigneur; it is impossible for me to say more, my heart is too full; too many emotions agitate it; I should badly express all that I feel. D'ORBIGNY D'HARVILLE.

"I open this letter in haste, monseigneur, to repair a neglect of which I am ashamed. In seeking, from your noble advice, to do some good, I went to the prison of Saint Lazare to visit the poor prisoners: I found there an unfortunate child in whom you are interested. Her angelic sweetness, her pious resignation, are the admiration of the respectable women who overlook the inmates. To inform you where the Goualeuse (such, I believe, is her name) can be found, is to request you to obtain her liberty; this unfortunate girl will relate to you by what a concourse of sinister circumstances, carried away from the asylum where you had placed her, she has been thrown into this prison, where she is appreciated by the purity of her conduct. Permit me also to recall to your mind my two future protégées, monseigneur, the unhappy mother and daughter—despoiled by the notary Ferrand. Where are they? Have you had any information concerning them? Oh! I pray you, endeavour to discover them, so that on my return to Paris I can pay them the debt which I have contracted towards all unfortunates!"

"The Goualeuse has, then, left the farm of Bouqueval, monseigneur?" cried Murph, as much astonished as Rodolphe at this new revelation.

"I heard but just now that she was seen coming out of Saint Lazare," answered Rodolphe; "I am lost in conjecture: the silence of Madame Georges confounds and distresses me. Poor little Fleur de Marie, what new misfortunes have happened to you? Let a man on horseback be sent off at once to the farm, and write to Madame Georges that I beg her to come at once to Paris. Say also to M. de Graün, I wish a permission to enter Saint Lazare. From what Madame d'Harville writes, Fleur de Marie is confined there; but no," said Rodolphe, reflecting, "she is no longer a prisoner, for Rigolette saw her come out in company with an aged woman. Can it be Madame Georges? otherwise, who is the woman? where is the Goualeuse gone to?"

"Patience, monseigneur; before this night you shall know all about it, since to-morrow you will have to interrogate this scoundrel Polidori; he has, he said, important communications to make to you, but to you alone."

"This interview will be hateful to me," said Rodolphe, sadly; "for I have never seen this man since the fatal day—where—I have—"

Rodolphe could not finish; he concealed his face in his hands.

"Eh! mon Dieu! monseigneur, why consent to what Polidori demands? Threaten him with the French courts, or a demand on the govern-

ment; he must resign himself to confess to me what he is only willing to confess to you."

"You are right, my good friend; for the sight of this wretch would render still more torturing these terrible recollections, to which are attached so many incurable griefs; from the death of my father to that of my poor little girl — I do not know but the more I advance in life, the more I feel the loss of this child. How I should have adored her! how dear and precious to me had been this fruit of my first love, of my first and pure beliefs, or, rather, my young illusions! I should have poured upon this innocent creature the treasures of affection, of which its odious mother was unworthy; and, besides, it seems to me that, such as I had dreamed her, this child, by the beauty of her mind, by the charms of her disposition, would have softened, calmed all the remorse which was attached, alas! to her fatal birth."

"Hold, monseigneur: I see with pain the increasing sway which these regrets, as fruitless as cruel, have upon your mind."

After a pause, Rodolphe said to Murph,

"I can now make a confession to you, my old friend. I love—yes, I love passionately a woman worthy of the most noble and devoted affection. Ah! it is since my heart is opened anew to all the delights of love, since I am predisposed to tender emotions, that I feel more vividly the loss of my daughter. I should have feared thus to speak, that a new attachment might have weakened my regrets. It is not so: all my loving faculties have augmented. I feel myself better, more charitable; and, more than ever, it is cruel to me not to have my daughter to adore."

"Nothing can be plainer, monseigneur, and pardon the comparison; but, in the same manner, as certain men are joyous and benevolent in their intoxication, you are good and generous in your love."

"Yet my hatred of the wicked is also become lively; my aversion to Sarah increases, doubtless, with my grief for the death of my child. I imagine that this bad mother has neglected her; that her ambitious hopes once ruined by my marriage, the comtesse, in her selfish egotism, has abandoned our child to mercenary hands, and that my daughter is perhaps dead from want of care. It is also my fault: I did not then know the extent of the sacred duties of paternity. When the true character of Sarah was suddenly revealed to me, I should have at once taken my daughter from her, to watch over her with love and solicitude. I ought to have foreseen that the comtesse could never be more than an unnatural mother. It is my fault—do you see—it is my fault."

"Monseigneur, grief causes you to err. Could you, after such a fatal event had happened, defer for one day the long journey imposed on you —as—" "As an expiation! You are right, my friend," said Rodolphe, sorrowfully.

"Have you heard anything from the comtesse since my departure, monseigneur?"

"No: since her infamous accusations, which twice came near proving the ruin of Madame d'Harville, I have no news of her. Her presence here annoys me; it seems that my evil spirit is near me, that some new misfortune threatens me."

"Patience, monseigneur, patience. Happily, Germany is interdicted for her, and Germany expects us."

"Yes: we will soon depart. At least, during my short stay at Paris, I shall have accomplished a sacred duty: I shall have made some steps more in the worthy path which an august and merciful will pointed out to me for my redemption. As soon as the son of Madame Georges shall be restored to her arms, innocent and free; as soon as Jacques Ferrand shall be convicted and punished for his crimes; as soon as I shall be assured of the future comforts of all the honest and industrious creatures who, by their resignation, their courage, and their probity, have deserved my interest, we will return to Germany—my journey will not have been fruitless."

"Above all, if you succeed in unmasking this abominable Jacques Ferrand, monseigneur, the corner-stone of so many crimes. Although the end justifies the means, and scruples should have no weight as regards this scoundrel, sometimes I regret having employed Cécily in this just and avenging reparation."

"She ought to arrive every moment?"

"She has arrived." "Cécily?"

"Yes; I did not wish to see her; De Graün has given her very detailed instructions; she has promised to conform to them."

"Will she keep this promise?"

"Everything seems to promise it—the hope of a mitigation of her punishment, and the fear of being sent immediately back to Germany; for De Graün has her well watched; at the slightest 'incartade' he will demand her of the government."

"It is just: she has arrived as an escaped convict; when they know what crimes caused her perpetual imprisonment, they would give her up at once." * * * *

"That does not astonish me, my worthy Murph, for I know this woman; besides, De Graün was almost alarmed at the sagacity with which Cécily comprehended, or, rather, guessed the part, at once *provoking* and *platonic*, she was to play at the notary's."

"But can she be introduced to him as early as you wish, monseigneur, through Madame Pipelet? People of the species of Jacques Ferrand are so suspicious."

"I had, with reason, counted on the appearance of Cécily to combat and conquer this suspicion."

"Has he already seen her?"

"Yesterday. From the account given by Madame Pipelet, I do not doubt but that he was fascinated by the Creole; he took her at once in his service."

"Come, monseigneur, our game is won."

"I hope so; a ferocious cupidity, and a savage luxury, have led the executioner of Louise Morel to the most frightful misdeeds. It is in his luxury, it is in his cupidity, that he will find the punishment of his crimes. A punishment which will not be barren for his victims; for you see the aim of all the efforts of the Creole."

"Cécily! Cécily! Never did greater depravity, never a more dangerous corruption, never a blacker soul serve to the accomplishment of a project of higher morality, or of a more equitable end; and David, monseigneur?" "He approves of all. With all the contempt and horror which he has for this creature, he only sees in her the instrument of a just vengeance. 'If this cursed woman can ever merit any compassion after all the injury she has done me,' said he to me, 'it will be in devoting herself to the punishment of this scoundrel, for whom she must be an exterminating demon.'"

A "huissier" having knocked slightly at the door, Murph went out, and returned, bringing in two letters, one of which seemed intended for Rodolphe.

"It is a line from Madame Georges!" cried he, reading it rapidly.

"Oh, bien! monseigneur—La Goualeuse?"

"No more doubt," cried Rodolphe, after having read the letter; "another mysterious plot. The same evening on which the poor child disappeared, and at the moment Madame Georges was about to inform me of the event, a man, whom she did not know, arrived express on horseback, came to her, as from me, to reassure her, saying, I was informed of the sudden departure of Fleur de Marie, and that some day I would bring her back to the farm. Notwithstanding this notice, Madame Georges, uneasy at my silence respecting her protégée, cannot, she writes me, resist her desire to have some news of her cherished daughter, as she calls this poor child."

"This is strange, monseigneur."

"For what end should she have been carried off?"

"Monseigneur," said Murph, suddenly, "the Comtesse Sarah is no stranger to this affair."

"Sarah? And what makes you think so?"

"Compare this with her denunciations to Madame d'Harville."

"You are right," cried Rodolphe, a new light bursting upon him; "it is evident; I comprehend now; yes, always the same calculating. The comtesse persists in believing, that by succeeding to break every tie of affection, she will make me feel the want of her. This is as odious as useless. Yet such an unworthy persecution must have an end. It is not only against me, but against all who merit respect, interest, and pity, that this woman directs her attacks. You will send M. de Graün at once, officially, to the comtesse; he will declare to her that I am advised of the part she has taken in the abduction of Fleur de Marie, and that if she does not give me the necessary information so that I can recover this unhappy child, I shall act without pity, and then it is to justice M. de Graün must address himself."

"From the letter of Madame d'Harville, the Goualeuse must be confined at Saint Lazare."

"Yes; but Rigolette affirms that she saw her free, coming out of this prison. There is a mystery to be cleared up."

"I will go at once and give your orders to the Baron de Graün, monseigneur; but allow me to open this letter; it is from my correspondent at Marseilles, to whom I recommended the Chourineur, to facilitate the passage of the poor devil to Algiers." "Well! has he gone?"

"Monseigneur, here is something singular!"

"What is it?" "After having waited at Marseilles a long time for a vessel to depart for Algiers, the Chourineur, who seemed every day more sad and thoughtful, suddenly declared, the day being fixed for his departure, that he preferred to return to Paris."

"How singular!" "Although my correspondent had, as was agreed upon, placed a considerable sum of money at the disposal of the Chourineur, he only took what was absolutely necessary for him to return to Paris, where he will soon arrive, as they write me."

"Then he will explain to us himself why he has changed his mind; but send De Graün at once to the Comtesse M'Gregor, and go yourself to Saint Lazare to gain some information concerning Fleur de Marie."

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In an hour's time the Baron de Graün returned from the Comtesse Sarah's.

Notwithstanding his habitual and official sang froid, the diplomatist seemed troubled; hardly had the huissier announced him, than Rodolphe remarked his paleness.

"Well! De Graün, what is the matter? have you seen the comtesse?" "Ah! monseigneur!"

"What is it?" "Will your royal highness pardon me for informing you so suddenly of an event so fatal, so unlooked-for, so—"

"The comtesse is, then, dead?"

"No, monseigneur, but her life is despaired of; she has been stabbed with a poniard."

"Ah! it is frightful!" cried Rodolphe, touched with pity, notwithstanding his aversion to Sarah. "And who has committed this crime?"

"No one knows, monseigneur; the murder was accompanied by robbery; some one has entered the apartment of the comtesse, and carried off a large quantity of jewels."

"And how is she now?"

"Her life is almost despaired of, monseigneur; she has not yet recovered her consciousness. Her brother is in a state of distraction." "You must go every day to inquire after her, my dear De Graün."

At this moment Murph returned from Saint Lazare.

"Learn sad news!" said Rodolphe to him; "the Comtesse Sarah has been wounded! her life is in great danger."

"Ah! monseigneur; although she is very culpable, yet I cannot but pity her."

"Yes; such an end would be frightful! And the Goualeuse?"

"Set at liberty yesterday, monseigneur, supposed by the intervention of Madame d'Harville."

"But it is impossible! Madame d'Harville begs me, on the contrary, to make the necessary arrangements to get her out of prison."

"Doubtless, monseigneur; and yet, an aged woman, of respectable appearance, came to Saint Lazare, bringing the order to set Fleur de Marie at liberty. Both have left the prison. This is what Rigolette told me; but this aged woman, who is she? where have they gone to? what is this new mystery? The Comtesse Sarah alone can enlighten us; and she is in a state to give us no information. May she not carry this secret with her to the tomb?"

"But her brother, Thomas Seyton, could certainly throw some light upon the affair. He has always been the adviser of the comtesse."

"His sister is dying; some new plot is on foot; he will not speak; but," said Rodolphe, reflecting, "we must find out the name of the person who applied for her release; thus we can learn something."

"It is just, monseigneur.'

"Try, then, to know and see this person as soon as possible, my dear De Graün; if you do not succeed, put your M. Badinot in the field; spare nothing to discover the traces of this poor child."

"Your royal highness may count on my zeal."

"Ma foi, monseigneur," said Murph, "it is perhaps as well that the Chourineur returns; we may need his services for these researches."

"You are right; and now I am impatient to see arrive at Paris my brave deliverer, for I shall never forget that to him I owe my life."

CHAPTER XV.

THE OFFICE.

Several days had passed since Jacques Ferrand had taken Cecily into his service.

We will conduct the reader (who already is acquainted with the place) to the office of the notary, at the breakfast hour for the clerks.

A thing unheard-of, stupendous, marvellous! instead of the meager and unattractive ragout brought every morning to these young people by the *departed* Madame Seraphin, an enormous cold turkey, served up on an old paper-box, ornamented the middle of one of the tables of the office, flanked by two loaves of bread, some Dutch cheese, and three bottles of sealed wine; an old leaden inkstand, filled with a mixture of salt and pepper, served as a salt-cellar; such was the bill of fare.

Each clerk, armed with his knife and a formidable appetite, awaited the hour of the feast with hungry impatience; some of them were cursing the absence of the head clerk, without whom they could not *hierarchically* commence their breakfast.

This radical change in the ordinary of the clerks of Jacques Ferrand announced an excessive domestic perturbation.

The following conversation, eminently *béotien* (if we may be allowed to borrow this word from the very witty writer who has made it popular), will throw some light upon this important question:

"Behold a turkey who never expected, when he entered into life, to appear at breakfast on the table of the clerks of the 'patron!'"

"Just so; when the 'patron' entered this life of a notary, in like manner he never expected to give his clerks a turkey for breakfast."

"For, in fine this turkey is ours," cried the *gutter-jumper* of the office, with greedy eyes.

"*Gutter-jumper*, my friend, you forget; this fowl must be a stranger to you."

"And, as a Frenchman, you should hate a stranger."

"All that can be done is to give you the claws."

"Emblem of the velocity with which you do your errands."

"I think, at least, I have a right to the carcass?" said gutter-jumper, murmuring.

"It might be granted; but you have no right, just as it was with the Charte of 1814, which was only another carcass of liberty," said the Mirabeau of the office.

"Apropos of carcass," said one of the students, with brutal insensibility. "May the soul of La Mére Séraphin rest in peace! for, since she was drowned, we are no longer condemned to hear her everlasting gabble."

"And for a week past, the 'patron,' instead of giving us a breakfast—" "Allows us each forty sous a day."

"This is the reason, I say; may her soul rest in peace."

"Exactly; for in her time the 'patron' would never have given us the forty sous."

"It is enormous!" "It is astonishing!"

"There is not an office in Paris—"

"In Europe."

"In the universe, where they give forty sous to a simple clerk for his breakfast."

"Apropos of Madame Seraphin, who of you has seen the new servant that takes her place?"

"This Alsatian, whom the portière of the house where poor Louise lived brought one evening?"

"Yes." "I have not seen her yet."

"Nor I." "Parbleu! it is altogether impossible to see her, for the 'patron' is more savage than ever to prevent our entering the pavilion in the courtyard."

"And, since it is the porter who cleans the office now, how can one get a glimpse at the 'donzelle?'"

"Well, I have seen her." "You?"

"Where was that?" "How is she?

"Large or small?" "Young or old?"

"I am sure, in advance, that she has not so good-looking a face as poor Louise—the good girl!"

"Come, since you have seen her, how does this new servant look?" "When I say I saw her, I have seen her cap—a very funny cap."

"Ah, bah! and how?" "It was cherry colour, and of velvet, I believe; something like those worn by the little broom girls." "Like the Alsatians? it is very plain, since she is an Alsatian."

"Hold! hold! hold!"

"Parbleu! what is it that surprises you? *A scalded cat dreads cold water.*" "Ah, ça! Chalamel! what relation between your proverb and this cap?"

"There is none." "Why did you say it, then?" "Because, *un bien fait n'est jamais perdu*, and that *le lézard est l'ami de l'homme.*"

"Hold! If Chalamel begins his bêtises in proverbs, which mean nothing, we are in for it. Come, tell us what you know of this new servant."

"The day before yesterday I passed through the court; she had her back towards one of the windows of the rez-de-chaussée." "The court?" "What stupidity! No, the servant. The glasses are so dirty that I could see nothing of her figure; but I could see her cherry-coloured cap, and a profusion of curls, as black as jet; for she had her head dressed á la Titus." "I am sure that the patron would not have seen through his spectacles as much as you did; for here you have one, as they say, who, if he remained alone with a woman on the earth, the world would soon come to an end."

"That is not astonishing. *He laughs best who laughs the last*; so much the more, as *exactness is the politeness of kings.*"

"Dieu! How wearisome this Chalamel is when he lays himself out to it!" "Dame! *Tell me where you frequent, and I will tell you who you are.*"

"Oh! how pretty!"

"As for me, I have an idea that it is superstition that stupifies the patron more and more."

"It is, perhaps, from penitence, that he gives us forty sous for our breakfast." "The fact is, he must be crazy." "Or sick." "I think for the last two or three days he has been quite wild."

"It is not that we see him so much. He who was for our curse in his cabinet from morning till night, and always at our backs, now has not, for two days, put his nose into the office."

"That is the reason the head clerk has so much to do." "And that we are obliged to die with hunger in waiting for him." "What a change in the office!"

"Poor Germain would be much astonished if any one should say to him, 'Imagine, my boy, that the patron gives us forty sous for our break-

fast.' 'Ah, bah! It is impossible!' 'It is possible; it is I, Chalamel, speaking in his own person, who announces it.' 'You wish to laugh.' 'I wish to laugh? This is the way it came to pass. During the two or three days which followed the decease of the Mère Séraphin, we did not breakfast at all. We liked that on one account, it was not so bad; but, on the other, our refection cost us money. Yet we were very patient, saying, "The patron has no longer a housekeeper or servant; when he gets one, we shall resume our disgusting 'pâtée.'" Well, not at all, my poor Germain. The patron took a new servant, and our breakfast continued to be buried in the waters of forgetfulness. Then I was made a deputy to carry to the patron the complaints of our stomachs. He was with the head clerk. "I no longer wish to furnish you with your breakfast," said he, in a cross tone, as if he was thinking of something else. "My servant has not the time to attend to you." "But, monsieur, it was agreed that you should furnish us with our breakfast." "Well, you can send for it, and I will pay. How much do you want? Forty sous each?" added he, as if he was thinking of something else, and said forty sous as he might have twenty or a hundred. "Yes, monsieur, forty sous will suffice," cried I, catching the ball as it bounded. "So be it; the head clerk will pay this amount, and account to me." And thereupon the patron shut the door in my face.' Acknowledge, gentlemen, that Germain would be much astonished at the liberality of the patron."

"Germain would say the patron was drunk."

"Seriously, I think the patron is sick: since ten days he is no longer recognisable; his cheeks are hollow enough to put in your fists."

"And so absent! The other day he raised his spectacles to read an act; his eyes were red and burning as live coals." "He had the right. *Good accounts make good friends.*"

"Let me speak, then. I tell you, gentlemen, that this is very singular. I presented this act to the patron to be read; but he held his head down." "The patron?" "The fact is, that this is very singular. What could he have been doing thus with his head down? He must have suffocated, unless his habits were, as you say, much changed."

"Oh! how fatiguing this Chalamel is! I tell you I gave this act to him upside down."

"How he must have growled!"

"Ah, well, yes! He did not even perceive it; he looked at the act for ten minutes, his great red eyes fixed upon it, and then he returned it to me, saying, 'It is well!'" "With his head always down?" "Always." "He did not read the act, then?"

"Pardieu! unless he read it upside down."

"It is droll!" "The patron looked so solemn and so wicked at that time, that I did not dare to tell him; and I walked off as if nothing had happened." "And I, also, four days ago, was in the office of the head clerk; a client came in, two clients, three clients, to whom the patron had given an appointment. They were amazed at being obliged to wait. At their request, I knocked at the door of the cabinet; no one answered; I entered." "Well?" "M. Jacques Ferrand had his arms crossed on his desk, and his bald head, not very savoury, resting on his arms: he did not stir." "He slept?" "I thought so. I approached. 'Monsieur, there are some of your clients here, to whom you have given an appointment.' He did not move. 'Monsieur!' No answer. At length I touched him on the shoulder; he started as if the devil had bitten him. In this sudden movement, his large green glasses fell below his nose, and I saw—you will never believe it!" "Well, what did you see?" "Tears." "Ah! what a farce!"

"The patron weep? Get out!"

"Ah! when that is seen, the May-bugs will play on the 'cornet à piston!'"

"And pullets wear white-top boots!"

"Ta, ta, ta! Your stupid jokes will not alter what I have seen, as plainly as I see you."

"Weep?" "Yes, weep. Afterward, he was so mad at my seeing him thus, that he adjusted his spectacles, and cried, 'Walk out! walk out!' 'But, monsieur—' 'Walk out!' 'There are some clients here.' 'I have no time; let them go to the devil, and you with them!' Thereupon he arose quite in a rage, as if to put me out. I did not wait; I marched to the right-about, and sent off the clients, who were not very well satisfied. But, for the honour of the office, I told them the patron had the whooping-cough."

This interesting conversation was interrupted by the head clerk, who entered, full of business. His arrival was saluted by a general acclamation, and all eyes were turned sympathetically towards the turkey with impatient eagerness.

"Without reproach, *seigneur*, you have made us wait a devilish long time," said the Chalamel.

"Take care another time; our appetites may not be in such a state of subordination."

"Eh! messieurs, it is not my fault; I feel as mad as you do; on my word of honour, the patron must have become crazy."

"Just as I said." "But that will not hinder us from eating." "On the contrary—"

"We can talk just as well with our mouths full."

"We can speak better," cried the gutter-jumper; while Chalamel, carving the turkey, said to the head clerk, "Why do you think the patron is crazy?"

"We have already concluded to believe him perfectly distracted, when he allowed us forty sous for our breakfast daily."

"I avow that this has surprised me as much as you, gentlemen; but that was nothing, absolutely nothing, in comparison to what has taken place just now."

"Ah, bah!" "Ah, ça! is it that this unfortunate man should become so mad as to force us to dine every day at his expense at the 'Cadran-Bleu?'"

"And afterward to the theatre?"

"And then to the café, and finish with some punch."

"And afterward—"

"Gentlemen, joke as much as you please, but the scene I have just been witnessing is rather frightful than pleasing." "Well! relate to us this scene."

"Yes, that is it; never mind your breakfast," said Chalamel. "We are all ears."

"And all jaw, my larks! I understand. While I talk you will play with your teeth, and the turkey and my story will be finished at the same time. Patience; it shall be for the dessert."

Was it the excitement of hunger or curiosity which gave activity to our young practitioners we do not know; but they put so much rapidity in their gastronomic operations, that the moment for the recital of the head clerk arrived almost instantaneously.

Not to be surprised by the patron, they sent young gutter-jumper, on whom the carcass and the claws of the turkey had been most liberally bestowed, as a sentry into the neighbouring room.

The head clerk said to his colleagues, "In the first place, you must know that, for some days past, the porter has been alarmed about the health of the patron. As the good man sits up very late, he has seen M. Ferrand go down to the garden in the night, in spite of the cold and rain, and walk up and down rapidly. He ventured to leave his nest, and ask his master if he had need of anything. The patron sent him to bed in such a tone that, since then, the porter has kept himself quiet, and he will keep himself so always, as soon as he hears the patron descend to the garden, which happens every night, no matter what weather."

"The patron is, perhaps, a somnambulist?"

"That is not probable; but such nocturnal promenades announce great agitation. I arrive at my story: Just now, I went into the cabinet of the patron to get some signatures. At the moment I placed my hand on the lock, I thought I heard some one speak. I stopped, and I distinguished two or three dull cries, like stifled sobs. After having hesitated to enter for a moment—ma foi! fearing some misfortune, I opened the door."

"Well?"

"What did I see? The patron on his knees, on the ground!"

"On his knees?" "On the ground?"

"Yes; kneeling on the floor, his face in his hands and his elbows leaning on the bottom of one of his old arm-chairs." "It is very plain. What fools we are! He is so bigoted, he was making an extra prayer."

"In any case, it would be a funny prayer! Nothing could be heard but stifled groans, only from time to time he murmured, between his teeth, 'Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!' like a man in a state of despair. Ma foi! seeing this, I did not know whether I ought to remain or retire."

"That would have been also my political opinion."

"I remained, then, there, very much embarrassed, when the patron arose and turned suddenly. He had between his teeth an old pocket-handkerchief; his spectacles remained on the chair. No, no, messieurs, in my life I have never seen such a face: he had the appearance of the damned. I drew back, alarmed—on my word of honour, alarmed! Then he—"

"Caught you by the throat?"

"You are out there. He looked at me, at first, with a bewildered air; then, letting his handkerchief fall, which he had, doubtless, gnawed and torn in grinding his teeth, he cried, throwing himself into my arms, '*Ah! I am very unhappy!*'"

"What a farce!"

"What a farce? Well, in spite of his death's-head look, when he pronounced these words his voice was so heart-rending—I would say, almost, so soft—"

"So soft? Get out! There is not a rattle, nor Tom-cat with a cold, whose sounds would not be music alongside the voice of the patron!"

"It is possible; that did not prevent his voice from being so plaintive at that time that I felt myself quite affected; so much the more as M. Ferrand is not habitually communicative. 'Monsieur,' said I, 'I believe that.' '*Leave me! leave me!*' he answered, interrupting me; '*to tell your sufferings to another is a great solace.*' Evidently he took me for some one else."

"He *tutoyé*? Then you owe us two bottles of Bordeaux:

'Quand le patron vous a tutoyé
A boira vous devez payer.'

It is the proverb that speaks; it is sacred. Proverbs are the wisdom of a nation."

"Come, Chalamel, leave your proverbs alone. You well comprehend, messieurs, that, on hearing the patron 'tuoyer,' I at once understood that he was mistaken, or that he was in a high fever. I disengaged myself, saying, 'Monsieur, calm yourself, calm yourself! it is I.' Then he looked at me with a stupid look."

"Very well! now that sounds like the truth."

"His eyes were wild. '*Heiu!*' he answered. '*What is it?—who is there?—what do you want with me?*' And at each question he passed his hand over his face, as if to drive away the clouds which obscured his thoughts."

"'Which obscured his thoughts!' Just as if it were written! Bravo! head clerk; we will make a melodrama together.

Who speaks so well, and so polite,
A melodrama ought to write."

"Do hold your tongue, Chalamel. Ma foi! I know nothing about it; but what is sure is, that, when he recovered his sang froid, it was another song. He knit his brows in a terrible manner, and said to me, with quickness, without giving me time to answer, 'What did you come here for?—have you been a long time here?—can I not be alone in my own house without being surrounded by spies?—what have I said?—what have you heard? Answer, answer.' Ma foi, he looked so wicked that I replied, 'I have heard nothing, monsieur: I just came in.' 'You do not deceive me?' 'No, monsieur.' 'Well, what do you want?' 'To ask you for some signatures, monsieur.' 'Give me the papers.' And he began to sign—to sign, without reading them, a half dozen notarial acts—he who never put his flourish on an act without spelling it, letter by letter, and twice over, from end to end. I remarked that, from time to time, his hand slackened a little in the middle of his signature, as if he was absorbed by a fixed idea, and then he resumed and signed quickly—quickly, and in a convulsive manner. When all were signed he told me to retire, and I heard him descend by the little staircase which leads from his cabinet to the court."

"I now come back to this: what can the matter be with him?"

"Messieurs, it is, perhaps, Madame Séraphin he regrets."

"Oh, yes! *he* regret any one!"

"That reminds me of what the porter said: that the Curé of Bonne-Nouvelle and his vicar had called several times, and were not received. That is surprising!"

"As for me, what I want to know is, what the carpenter and locksmith have been doing in the pavilion."

"The fact is, they have worked there for three days consecutively."

"And then, one evening they brought some furniture here in a covered cart."

"Ma foi, messieurs, trou, la, la! *I give my tongue to the dogs*, as sung the swan of Cambrai!"

"It is, perhaps, regret for having imprisoned Germain which torments him."

"Remorse—*he?* It is too hard to cook, and too tough for him, as the eagle of Meauve said."

"Farceur of a Chalamel!"

"Speaking of Germain, he is going to have famous recruits in his prison, poor fellow."

"How is that?"

"I read, in the *Gazette des Tribuneaux*, that the band of robbers and assassins who have been arrested in the Champs Elysées, in one of those little subterranean taverns—"

"They are real caverns."

"That this band of scoundrels have been confined at *La Force*."

"Poor Germain, this will be good society for him!"

"Louise Morel will have also her part of the recruits; for in the band they say there is a whole family of brigands, from father to son and mother to daughter."

"Then they will send the women to Saint Lazare, where Louise is."

"It is, perhaps, some of this band who have attempted the life of this comtesse who lives near the Observatoire, one of our patron's clients. Has he not sent me often enough to know how she is? He appears to be very much interested about her health. Only yesterday he sent me again to inquire how Madame M'Gregor had passed the night." "Well?"

"Always uncertain: one day they hope, the next despair—they never know whether she will get through the day; two days ago she was given up; but yesterday there was a ray of hope; what complicates the matter is, that she has a brain fever."

"Could you go into the house, and see the place where the deed was committed?"

"Oh! by no means! I could go no farther than the 'porte cochère,' and the 'concierge' did not seem disposed to talk much, not as—"

"Messieurs, here comes the patron," cried Gutter-Jumper, entering the office, always armed with the carcass. Immediately the young men seated themselves hastily at their respective tables, over which they bent, moving their pens, while the Gutter-Jumper deposited for the moment the skeleton of the turkey in a box filled with law papers.

Jacques Ferrand appeared.

Taking off his old silk cap, his red hair, mixed with gray, fell in disorder from each side of his temples; some of the veins on his forehead seemed injected with blood, while his flat face and hollow cheeks were of a livid paleness. The expression of his eyes could not be seen, concealed as they were by his large green spectacles; but the visible alteration of his features announced a consuming passion.

He crossed the office slowly, without saying a word to his clerks, without appearing to notice their presence, entered the room of the head clerk, walked through it, as well as his own cabinet, and descended immediately by the little staircase which led to the court. Jacques Ferrand having left behind him all the doors open, the clerks could, with good reason, be astonished at the extraordinary mtions of their patron, who came up one staircase and descended another, without stopping in any of the chambers, which he had traversed mechanically.

CHAPTER XVI.

LUXURIEUX POINT NE SERAS.

It was night.

The profound silence which reigned in the pavilion occupied by Jacques Ferrand was interrupted at intervals by the sighing of the wind, and by the gusts of rain, which fell in torrents. These melancholy sounds seemed to render still more complete the solitude of this dwelling.

In a bedchamber on the first floor, very comfortably and newly furnished, and covered with a thick carpet, a young woman was standing before an excellent fire.

What was very strange, in the centre of the door, which was strongly bolted, and opposite to the bed, was placed a small wicket of about five or six inches square, which could be opened on the outside.

A reflecting lamp cast an obscure light in this room, which was hung with a garnet-colour silk; the curtains of the bed of the window, as also the covering of a large sofa, are of silk and worsted damask, of the same colour.

We insist to be minute in these details of *demi-luxe* so recently imported into the dwelling of the notary, because this *demi-luxe* announces a complete revolution in the habits of Jacques Ferrand, who, until then, was of Spartan avarice and meanness (above all as respected others) for all that concerned living.

It is, then, on this garnet tapestry, of a strong back-ground and warmth of colour, on which is delineated the figure of Cécily, that we are going to paint her.

Of tall and graceful stature, the Creole is in the flower and in the bloom of youth. The development of her fine shoulders, and of her luxurious person, makes her waist appear so marvellously slender, that one would believe that Cécily might use her necklace for a "ceinture."

As simple as it is coquettish and provoking, her Alsatian costume is of a strange taste, a little theatrical, and thus more calculated for the effect it was intended to produce.

Her spencer of black cassimere, half open on her swelling bosom, very long in the "corsage," with tight sleeves and plain back, is slightly embroidered with purple wool on the seams, and trimmed with a row of small, chased, silver buttons. A short petticoat of orange merino, which seems of exaggerated amplitude, although it fits admirably on the "contours" of sculptural richness, allows a glance at the charming leg of the Creole, with the scarlet stockings and blue clocks, just as is met with among the old Flemish painters, who show so complacently the garters of their robust heroines.

Never did artist dream of a "galle" as pure as that of the "*jambes*" of Cécily; strong and muscular above their "*mallet rebondi*," they terminated by a small foot, quite at ease, and well arched in its very "petit" shoe of black morocco, with silver buckles.

Cécily is standing before the glass on the chimneypiece! The slope of her spencer displays her elegant and graceful neck of dazzling whiteness, but without transparency.

Taking off her cherry-coloured cap, to replace it by a "madrian," the Creole displayed her thick and magnificent hair of bluish black which, divided in the middle of her forehead and naturally curled, descended no lower than the "collier de Venus," which joins the neck to

the shoulders. One must know the inimitable taste with which a Creole twists around her head these handkerchiefs, to have an idea of the graceful "coiffure de nuit" of Cécily, and of the piquant contrast of this tissue, variegated with purple, azure, and orange, with her black hair, which, escaping from the close folds of the "madras," surround, with their large, silky curls, her pale, but round and firm cheeks.

The two arms raised above her head, she finished, with her slender, ivory fingers, arranging a large "rosette," placed very low on the left side, almost on the ear.

The features of Cécily are of the kind which it is impossible ever to forget.

A bold forehead, slightly projecting, surmounted a visage of perfect oval; her complexion of a dead white, the satin-like freshness of a camelia imperceptibly touched by a ray of the sun; her eyes, of a size almost immoderate, have a singular expression, for the pupil, extremely large, black, and brilliant, hardly allows the transparent "blenatre" of the globe of the eye to be seen from the corners of her eyelids, fringed with long lashes; her chin is perfect; her nose, straight and "fin," is terminated by two nostrils which dilate at each emotion; her lovely and impudent mouth is of a lively red.

Let one imagine this pale face, with its sparkling black glances, its red, moist, and glossy lips, which shine like wet coral.

Let us say that this tall Creole, at once slender and fleshy, strong and active as a panther, was the type in cammé of that sensuality which is only lighted up at the fires of the tropics.

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Such was Cécily.

Her detestable predilections, for some time restrained by her real attachment for David, were only developed in Europe; civilization and climatical influence of the North had tempered the violence, modified the expression. Instead o casting herself violently on her prey, and thinking only, like her compeers, to destroy as soon as possible their life and fortune, Cécily, fixing on her victims her magnetic glances, commenced by attracting them, little by little, into the blazing whirlwind which seemed to emanate from her; then, seeing them lost, suffering every torment of a "desir massouvi," she amused herself by a refinement of coquetry, to prolong their delirium; then, returning to her first instincts, she destroyed them in her homicidal "embrassemens."

This was more horrible still.

The famished tiger, who springs and carries off the prey which he tears with loud roars, inspires less horror than the serpent, which silently charms, attracts by degrees, twists in inextricable folds the victim, feels it palpitate under its deadly stings, and seems to feed upon its struggles with as much delight as upon its blood.

Cécily, as we have said, but lately arrived from Germany; having formerly been seduced by a man frightfully depraved, she continued, without the knowledge of David, who loved her with as much idolatry as blindness, to display and exercise, for some time, her dangerous blandishments; but soon the fatal scandal of her adventures was unveiled; horrible discoveries were made, and she was condemned to perpetual imprisonment.

To the foregoing let there be joined an adroit, insinuating, quick mind—an intelligence so marvellous, that in a year she spoke both French and German with the most extreme facility—sometimes even with marked eloquence. Imagine, in fine, a corruption worthy of the courtesan queans of ancient Rome, and audacity and courage above all proof, propensities, diabolical wickedness, and one would have a correct idea of the new *servant* of Jacques Ferrand—the determined creature who had dared to throw herself into the den of the wolf. And yet (singular anomaly), on learning from M. de Graün the provoking and *platonic* part which she was to play at the house of the notary, and what avenging ends were to be produced by her artifices, Cécily had promised to perform her *part avec amour;* or, rather, with a terrible hatred against Jacques Ferrand, being very indignant at the recital of the infamous violence he had used towards Louise—a recital it was found necessary to make, in order that she should be on her guard against the hypocritical attempts of this monster. Some retrospective words concerning the latter personage are indispensable.

When Cécily was presented to him by Madame Pipelet, as an orphan over whom she wished to have no control, no care, the notary had, perhaps, been less struck with the beauty of the Creole than fascinated by her irresistible glances—glances which, from the first interview, lighted a fire which disturbed his reason.

For we have said, in speaking of the insensate audacity of some of his words in the conversation with Madame de Lucenay, that this man, ordinarily with so much self-command, so calm, so cunning, forgot the cold calculations of his profound dissimulation, when the demon of luxury obscured his mind. Besides, he had no reason to doubt the protégée of Madame Pipelet.

After his conversation with the latter, Madame Séraphin had proposed to Jacques Ferrand to take the place of Louise, a young girl almost without a home, for whom she would answer. The notary had gladly accepted, in the hope of abusing, with impunity, the precarious and isolated condition of his new servant.

Finally, far from being suspicious, Jacques Ferrand found, in the march of events, new motives of security.

All responded to his wishes.

The death of Madame Séraphin rid him of a dangerous accomplice. The death of Fleur de Marie (he thought her dead) released him from the living proof of one of his first crimes. Then, thanks to the death of La Chouette, and the precarious situation of the Comtesse M'Gregor, he no longer feared these two women, whose revelations and importunities might have been fatal.

We repeat, no sentiment of suspicion came to counterbalance in his mind the sudden, irresistible impression which he had experienced at the sight of Cécily. He seized, with delight, the occasion to receive into his solitary dwelling the pretended niece of Madame Pipelet.

The character, habits, and antecedents of Jacques Ferrand known and stated, the provoking beauty of the Creole, such as we have endeavoured to paint it, some other facts which we will now expose, will cause to be comprehended, we hope, the sudden, phrensied passion of the notary, for this seductive and dangerous creature.

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Although Jacques Ferrand was never to obtain the object of his wishes, the Creole was very careful not to deprive him of all hope; but the

vague and distant hopes which she rocked in the cradle of so many caprices were for him only increased tortures, and rivetted more solidly still the burning chain he wore.

If any astonishment is felt that a man of such vigour and audacity had not had recourse to cunning or violence to triumph over the calculated resistance of Cécily, then it must have been forgotten that Cécily was not a second Louise. Besides, the next day after her presentation to the notary, she had played quite another part than she by whose aid she had been introduced to her *master*, or he would not have been the dupe of his servant for two consecutive days.

Instructed of the fate of Louise by the Baron de Graün, and knowing afterward by what abominable means the unfortunate daughter of Morel had become the prey of the notary, the Creole, entering into this solitary house, had taken excellent precautions to pass the first night in security.

The same evening of her arrival, remaining alone with Jacques Ferrand, who, in order not to alarm her, affected hardly to look at her, and told her, roughly, to go to bed; she avowed naïvely, that at night she was very much afraid of thieves, but that she was strong, resolute, and ready to defend herself.

"With what?" asked Jacques Ferrand.

"With this," answered the Creole, drawing from the ample woollen pelisse in which she was wrapped up a little dagger, of high finish, and which made the notary reflect.

Yet, persuaded that his new servant only feared *robbers*, he conducted her to the room she was to occupy (the former chamber of Louise). After having examined the localities, Cécily told him, trembling, with her eyes cast down, that, from fear, she would pass her night on a chair, because she saw on the door neither lock nor bolt.

Jacques Ferrand, already completely under the charm, but not wishing to awaken the suspicions of Cécily, said to her, in a cross tone, that she was a fool to have such fears; but he promised that the next day the bolt should be arranged.

The Creole did not go to bed.

In the morning the notary came to instruct her as to her duties. He intended to preserve, during the first day, a hypocritical reserve towards his new servant, in order to inspire her with confidence; but, struck with her beauty, which, in the broad daylight, seemed still more dazzling, blinded, and carried away by his feelings, he stammered forth some compliments on her figure and beauty.

She, with rare sagacity, had judged, from her first interview with the notary, that he was completely under the charm; at the avowal which he made of his *flame*, she thought she would at once throw off her feigned timidity, and change her mask. The Creole then assumed all at once a bold air. Jacques Ferrand went into new ecstacies on the beauty of features, and the enchanting figure of his new *bonne*.

"Look me full in the face," said Cécily, resolutely; "although dressed as an Alsatian peasant, do I look like a servant?"

"What do you mean to say?" cried Jacques Ferrand.

"Regard this hand—is it accustomed to rude labour?"

And she showed a white and charming hand, with slender and delicate fingers, the long nails polished like agate, but of which the slightly-shaded crown betrayed the mixed blood.

"And this foot? is it a servant's foot?"

And she advanced a ravishing little foot, coquetly "chaussé," which the notary had not yet remarked, and which he now only desisted from looking at, to regard Cécily with amazement.

"I have told my Aunt Pipelet just what suited me; she is ignorant of my past life; she thought I was reduced to this position by the death of my parents, and took me for a servant; but you have, I hope, too much sagacity to partake of her error, *dear master?*"

"And who are you, then?" cried Jacques Ferrand, more and more surprised at this language.

"That is my secret. For reasons best known to myself, I have been obliged to leave Germany in this disguise. I wished to remain concealed at Paris for some time. My aunt, supposing me reduced to poverty, proposed to me to enter your service, spoke of your solitary manner of living, and told me that I would never be allowed to go out. I accepted quickly. Without knowing it, my aunt anticipated my most anxious desire. Who could look for and discover me here?"

"Conceal yourself! and what have you done, to be obliged to conceal yourself?"

"Soft offences, perhaps; but this is my secret."

"And what are your intentions, mademoiselle?"

"Always the same. Saving your significant compliments on my shape and beauty, I should not, perhaps, have made this avowal, which your penetration had sooner or later provoked. Listen to me, then, my dear master: I have accepted for the moment the condition, or, rather, the part of a servant; circumstances oblige me to do so. I shall have the courage to play this part to the end. I will submit to all the consequences. I will serve you with zeal, activity, and respect, to preserve my place; that is to say, a sure and unknown retreat. But at the least word of gallantry, at the least liberty you take with me, I leave you—not from prudery, nothing in me, I think, looks like the prude."

And she cast a glance charged with sensual electricity, which reached the very bottom of the notary's soul; he shuddered.

"No, I am not a prude," she resumed, with a provoking smile, which displayed her dazzling teeth: "Vive Dieu! when love bites me, the *bacchantes* are saints in comparison. But be just, and you will agree that your unworthy servant only wishes to perform honestly her duty as a servant. Now you know my secret, or at least a part of my secret; will you, perchance, act as a gentleman? Do I seem too handsome to serve you? Do you desire to change parts and become my slave? So be it! frankly, I prefer that, but always on this condition, that I shall never go out of the house, and you shall have for me the most paternal attention—that need not hinder you from saying that you find me charming: it shall be the recompense of your devotion and your discretion."

"The sole? the sole?" stammered Jacques Ferrand.

"The sole—unless solitude and the devil make me mad; which is impossible, for you will keep me company, and, in your quality as a holy man, you shall exorcise the evil spirit.

"Come, decide, no mixed position; either I will serve you, or you shall serve me; other

wise, I leave your house, and I beg my aunt to find me *another place*. All this must seem strange to you; so be it; but if you take me for an adventurer, without the means of existence, you are wrong. In order to make my aunt my accomplice without her knowledge, I allowed her to think I was too poor to buy other clothes than these. Yet I have, you see, a purse well filled: on this side with gold, on the other with diamonds (and she showed the notary a long, red silk purse, filled with gold, and through the meshes of which shone precious stones). Unfortunately, all the money in the world could not give me a retreat as secure as your house, so isolated by the retirement in which you live. Accept, then, one or the other of my offers; you will render me a service. You see, I place myself at your discretion; for to tell you that I conceal myself, is to tell you I am sought for. But I am sure you will not betray me, even if you knew how to betray."

This romantic confidence, this sudden transformation of character, troubled the brain of Jacques Ferrand.

Who was this woman? Why did she conceal herself? Had chance alone conducted her to his dwelling? If, on the contrary, she came there for some secret purpose, what was this purpose?

Among all the hypotheses which this singular adventure raised in the mind of the notary, the true motive of the Creole's presence never came to his thought. He had not, or, rather, he thought he had not, any other enemies than the victims of his licentiousness and cupidity. Now all of them were in such a condition of trouble or distress, that he could not suppose them capable of spreading a snare of which Cécily was the bait.

And then, again, for what purpose was it spread?

No, the sudden transformation of Cécily inspired but one fear to Jacques Ferrand: he thought that if this woman did not speak the truth, she was an adventurer, who, believing him rich, introduced herself into the house to cajole him, find him out, and perhaps cause him to marry her. But, although his avarice and cupidity revolted at the idea, he perceived, shuddering, that these suspicions, these reflections, were too late; for, with a single word, he could put his suspicions at rest by sending this woman away. And this word he did not speak. Already he loved her, after his manner, and passionately. Already the idea of seeing this seducing creature leave his house seemed to him impossible. Already, even, feeling the pangs of a savage jealousy to think that Cécily might bestow on others favours refused to him, he experienced some consolation in saying,

"As long as she is sequestred in my house, no one will possess her."

The boldness of language of this woman, the fire in her eyes, the provoking liberty of her manners, sufficiently revealed that she was not, as she said, a *prude*. This conviction, giving vague hopes to the notary, assured still more the empire of Cécily.

In a word, the licentiousness of Jacques Ferrand stifled the voice of cold reason; he abandoned himself blindly to the emotions which overwhelmed him.

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It was agreed that Cécily should be his servant only in appearance: in this manner there would be no scandal; besides, to assure still more the security of his guest, he would take no other domestic; he would himself serve her, and serve himself also; a neighbouring "traiteur" could bring his repasts. He paid in money the breakfasts of his clerks, and the porter could take care of the office. Finally, the notary ordered to be promptly furnished a chamber on the first floor, according to Cécily's taste. She offered to pay the expense. He opposed it, and expended two thousand francs.

This generosity was enormous, and proved the unheard-of violence of his passion.

Then commenced for this wretch a strange life.

Shut up in the impenetrable solitude of his house, inaccessible to all, more and more under the yoke of his phrensied love, no longer attempting to discover the secrets of this strange woman, from master he became a slave; he was the valet of Cécily—he served her at her repasts—he took care of her apartment. Informed by the baron that Louise had been surprised by a narcotic, the Creole only drank very pure water, only ate meals impossible to adulterate; she chose the chamber which she occupied, and assured herself that the walls concealed no secret doors.

Besides, Jacques Ferrand soon comprehended that Cécily was a woman not to be surprised with impunity. She was vigorous, agile, and dangerously armed.

Nevertheless, not to allow his passion to flag, the Creole seemed at times touched with his attentions, and flattered by the terrible domination she exercised over him. Then, supposing that by proofs of his devotion and self-denial he could make her forget age and ugliness, she delighted to paint in glowing colours * * *

At these words of a woman so young and so lovely, Jacques Ferrand felt sometimes his mind wandering; a devouring imagery pursued him, waking or sleeping. The ancient fable of the belt of Nessus was realized for him.

In the midst of these nameless tortures, he lost his health, appetite, and sleep.

Often, at night, in spite of cold or rain, he descended to his garden, and endeavoured, by a rapid walk, to calm his emotions.

At other times, during whole hours, he looked into the chamber where the Creole slept; for she had had the infernal "complaisance" to allow a wicket to be placed in her door, which she often opened—often, in order that she might almost cause him to lose his reason, so that she could then execute the orders she had received.

The decisive moment seemed to approach.

The chastisement of Ferrand became from day to day more worthy of his outrages.

He suffered all the torments of hell. By turns absorbed, lost, out of his mind, indifferent to his most serious interests, the maintenance of his reputation as an austere, grave, and pious man—a reputation usurped, but acquired by long years of dissimulation and cunning—he astonished his clerks by his aberrations, displeased his clients by his refusal to see them, and harshly kept at a distance the priests, who, deceived by his hypocrisy, had been, until then, his most fervent trumpeters. * * * * * *

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As we were saying, Cécily was arranging her head for the night before the glass.

At a slight noise coming from the corridor, she turned her face away from the door.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WICKET.

NOTWITHSTANDING the noise which she had just heard at her door, Cécily did not the less tranquilly continue her "toilette de nuit;" she drew from her "corsage," where it was placed like a busk, a dirk five or six inches long, in a case of black "chagrin," with a handle of black ebony fastened with silver, a very simple handle, but perfectly *handy*.

This was not a weapon of display.

Cécily took the dirk from its case with excessive precaution, and placed it on the marble chimneypiece; the blade, of the finest Damascus and the best temper, was triangular; its point, as sharp as a needle, had pierced a dollar without blunting it.

Impregnated with a subtle and quick poison, the least wound from this poniard was mortal.

Jacques Ferrand, having one day doubted the dangerous properties of this weapon, the Creole made before him an experiment *in animâ viti*, that is to say, on the unfortunate dog of the house, who, slightly pricked in the nose, fell dead in horrible convulsions.

The dirk placed on the chimney, Cécily, taking off her spencer of black cloth, the shoulders, bosom, and arms remained naked like a woman in ball costume.

According to the custom of most girls of colour, she wore, instead of a corset, a second corsage of double linen, which was closely bound around her waist; her orange petticoat, remaining fastened under this kind of white "canezou" with short sleeves, composed thus a costume much less severe than the first, and harmonized wonderfully with the scarlet stockings, and the "madras" head-dress, so capriciously twisted around the head of the Creole. Nothing could be more pure, more beautiful, than the "contour" of her arms and shoulders, to which two little dimples gave a charm the more.

A profound sigh attracted the attention of Cécily. She smiled, in rolling around one of her ivory fingers some stray curls which escaped from the folds of her "madras."

"Cécily! Cécily!" murmured a voice, at once rude and plaintive.

And at the narrow opening of the wicket appeared the pale and flat face of Jacques Ferrand; his eyes sparkled in the shade.

Cécily, silent until then, began to sing softly in Creole, a Creole air. The words of this melody were soft and expressive. Although restrained, the noble *contre-alto* of Cécily overpowered the noise of the torrents of rain and violent gusts of wind, which seemed to shake the old house to its foundation.

"Cécily! Cécily!" repeated Jacques Ferrand, in a supplicating tone.

The Creole suddenly stopped, turned her head quickly, and appeared to hear, for the first time, the voice of the notary, and with "nonchalance" approached the door. "How! dear master, you are there?" said she with a slight foreign accent, which gave additional charm to her melodious voice.

"Oh! you are handsome!" murmured the notary.

"You think so?" answered the Creole: "this 'madras' suits well with my black hair, is it not so?"

"Every day I find you still more handsome."

"And my arm, see how white it is."

"Monster! go away! go away!" cried Jacques Ferrand, furiously.

Cécily laughed immoderately.

"No, no, it is to suffer too much! Oh! if I did not fear death!" cried the notary, in a hollow voice; "but to die—it is to renounce the sight of you, and you are so handsome. I prefer to suffer, and see you—"

"See me; this wicket is made for that, and, also, that we can talk as two friends, and thus charm our solitude; which, in truth, does not weigh heavily, you are so good a *master!* See what dangerous confessions I can make through this door."

"And this door, will you not open it? Yet see how submissive I am! to-night I might have tried to enter with you into your chamber—I did not."

"You are submissive for two reasons. In the first place, you know that being, from necessity, in the habit of wearing a dirk, I handle with a firm hand this venomous plaything, sharper than the tooth of a viper; you know, also, that on the day I have to complain of you, I shall leave forever this house, leaving you a thousand times more charmed, since you have been so gracious towards your unworthy servant as to be charmed with her." "My servant? it is I who am your slave—your slave, mocked, despised."

"It is true enough."

"And does not this touch you?"

"It amuses me. The days, and, above all, the nights, are so long." "Oh! the cursed—"

"No, seriously, you appear so completely bewildered, your features change so sensibly, that I am flattered. It is a poor triumph, but you are alone here."

"To hear that, and only be able to consume in powerless rage!" "How little wit you have! never, perhaps, have I said anything to you more tender."

"Scoff—scoff."

"I do not scoff; I have never seen a man of your age so much in love; and, it must be acknowledged, that a young and handsome man would be incapable of such mad passion. An Adonis admires himself as much as he admires us; he loves from the end of his teeth; and, then, to love him, what can be plainer? it is his due, hardly is he grateful; but to love a man like you, my master, oh! that would be to raise him from earth to heaven; it would be to accomplish his wildest dreams, his hopes, the most extravagant. For, in fine, the being who would say to you, 'You love Cécily madly; if I wish it, she shall be yours'—you would believe such a being endowed with supernatural powers, would you not, dear master?"

"Yes, oh! yes."

"Well! if you knew how to convince me better of your passion, I should have, perhaps, the 'bizarre' fantasy to play myself, in your favour, this supernatural part. Do you comprehend?"

"I comprehend that you scoff at me still, always, and without pity."

"Perhaps solitude creates such strange fantasies!"

Her tone of voice, until then, had been sardonic; but she pronounced these last words with a serious expression, and accompanied them by a glance which made the notary tremble. "Hush—do not look at me thus; you will make me mad. I prefer that you should say to me *never;* at least, I could abhor you, drive you from the house," cried Jacques Ferrand, who again abandoned his vain hopes. "Yes, for I expect nothing from you. But wo is me! wo! I know you now enough. You tell me to convince you of my love; do you not see how unhappy I am, mon Dieu! Yet I do all I can to please you. You wish to be concealed from every eye: I conceal you, perhaps at the risk of compromising myself; in fine, I do not know who you are; I respect your secret; I never speak to you about it. I have interrogated you on your past life; you have not answered me."

"Well! I was wrong; I am going to give you a mark of blind confidence. Oh! my master, listen to me."

"Once more a bitter pleasantry, is it not?"

"No, it is very serious. You must know, you should know, the history of her to whom you give such generous hospitality."

And Cécily added, in a tone of hypocritical and tearful compunction,

"The daughter of a brave soldier, brother of my Aunt Pipelet, I have received an education above my condition; I was seduced, then abandoned, by a rich young man. Then, to escape from the rage of my old father, I have fled my native country." Then, laughing heartily, Cécily added, "There, I hope, is a little story very 'présentable,' and, above all, very probable, for it has often been related. Amaze your curiosity with that, while waiting for some revelation more 'piquante.'"

"I was very sure that this was a cruel pleasantry," said the notary, with suppressed anger. "Nothing touches you, nothing; what must be done? speak, then, at least. I serve you like the meanest valet; for you I neglect my dearest interests; I know no more what I do. I am a subject of laughter for my clerks; my clients hesitate to leave me their business. I have broken with some pious people who used to visit me. I dare not think what the public say of this complete change in all my habits. But you do not know, no, you do not know the fatal consequences that my mad passion may have for me. See, now, the proofs of my devotion, my sacrifices. Do you wish more? speak? Is it gold you wish? The world thinks me richer than I am, but I—"

"What would you have me to do with your gold?" said Cécily, interrupting the notary, and shrugging her shoulders. "To reside in this chamber—what good would the gold do me? You have small invention!"

"But it is not my fault if you are a prisoner. Does this room displease you? Will you have it more magnificent? speak, command:

"For what purpose; once more, for what purpose? Oh! if I expected here an adored being!" * * * * * *

"I would have gold, silk, flowers, perfumes, all the wonders of luxury; nothing could be too sumptuous, too enchanting." * *

"Well! these wonders of luxury; say a word, and—"

"For what purpose? for what purpose? What should I do with the frame without the picture? And the adored being, where is he? oh! my master?"

"It is true!" cried the notary, bitterly. "I am old. I am ugly. I can only inspire disgust and aversion; she loads me with contempt; she scoffs at me, and I have not the strength to drive her away. I have only strength to suffer."

"Oh! the insupportable *cry-baby*; oh! the silly 'personnage,' with his complaints," cried Cécily, in a sardonic and contemptuous tone; "he does nothing but groan and lament, and has been for ten days shut up alone with a young woman, in a deserted house."

"But this woman despises me—but this woman is armed—but this woman is locked up!" cried the notary, in a rage.

"Well! overcome the disdain of this woman; cause the dagger to fall from her hand; constrain her to open this door, which separates you from her; and that not by brutal force, she would be all-powerful."

"And how then?"

"By the force of your passion."

"Passion! and how can I inspire it? mon Dieu!"

"Stop, you are but a notary lined with a sacristan; you make me pity you. Am I to teach you your part? You are ugly; be terrible, your ugliness will be forgotten. You are old; be energetic, your age will be overlooked. You are repulsive; be threatening. Since you cannot be the noble horse, who neighs proudly in the midst of his wives, be not, at least, the stupid camel, who bends the knee and crooks the back; be a tiger. An old tiger, who roars in the midst of carnage, has also his beauty; his tigress answers him from the depths of the desert."

At this language, which was not without a sort of bold and natural eloquence, Jacques Ferrand shuddered, with the savage and almost ferocious expression of the face of Cécily, who, with heaving bosom, expanded nostril, haughty mouth, fixed on him her large black and burning eyes.

Never had she appeared so lovely.

"Speak, speak again!" cried he, passionately; "you speak seriously this time. Oh! if I could—"

"One can do what one wishes," said Cecily, abruptly.

"But—"

"But I tell you that if you wish, repulsive as you are—" * * * * * *

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"Yes, I will do it! Try me, try me!" cried Jacques Ferrand, more and more excited.

Cécily continued approaching nearer, and fixing on the notary a penetrating look,

"For this woman would well know," resumed the Creole, "that she would have an exorbitant caprice to satisfy; that these 'beaux-fils' would look at their money if they had any, or, if they had none, to a mean trick, while the old tiger—"

"Would regard nothing—he—do you understand? nothing. Fortune, honour, he would know how to sacrifice all, he!"

"True," said Cécily, placing her charming fingers on the bony and hairy hands of Jacques

Ferrand, who, for the first time, touched the soft and velvet skin of the Creole.

He became still paler, and uttered a hoarse sigh.

"How this woman would be beloved!" added Cécily, "had she an enemy, whom, pointing out to her old tiger, she would say strike, and—"

"And he would strike," cried Jacques Ferrand, endeavouring to approach the ends of her fingers to his withered lips.

"True, the old tiger would strike," said the Creole, placing her hand softly on his.

"If you would love me," cried the wretch, "I believe I would commit a crime."

"Hold, master," said Cecily, suddenly withdrawing her hand; "in your turn go away, go away, I know you no more; you do not appear to me so ugly now as before; go away."

She retired quickly from the wicket.

The detestable creature knew how to give to her gestures and to her last words an accent of truth so incredible; her look, at once surprised and annoyed seemed to express so naturally her spite at having for a moment forgotten the ugliness of Jacques Ferrand, that he, transported with phrensied hope, cried, clinging to the bars of the wicket, "Cécily, return, command, I will be your tiger!"

"No, no, master," said Cécily, retreating still farther from the wicket; "and to lay the devil who tempts me—I am going to sing a song of my country. Master, do you hear? without the wind redoubles, the tempest is unchained; what a fine night for two lovers, seated side by side near a sparkling fire!"

"Cécily, return!" cried Jacques Ferrand, in a supplicating tone.

"No, no, presently, when I can without danger; but the light from this lamp hurts my eyes, a soft languor weighs down my eyelids. I do not know what emotion agitates me; a demi-obscurity will please me more; one would say I am in the twilight of pleasure."

And Cécily went towards the chimney, put out the lamp, took a guitar suspended on the wall, and stirred the fire, whose blaze illuminated this large room.

From the narrow wicket where he remained immovable, such was the picture which Jacques Ferrand perceived: In the midst of the luminous horizon formed by the undulating light of the fire, Cécily, in a position "pleine de mollesse et abandon," half reclining on a vast divan of garnet satin, held a guitar, from whence she drew some harmonious preludes.

The blazing hearth shed its rosy light on the Creole, who appeared brilliantly 'eclairée,' in the midst of the obscurity of the rest of the apartment.

To complete the effect of this picture, let the reader recall to his mind the mysterious and almost fantastic appearance of a room where the fire-light struggles with the long, dark shadows which tremble on the ceiling and walls.

The storm redoubled its violence, its roaring could be heard from within.

While preluding on her guitar, Cécily fixed her magnetic glances on Jacques Ferrand, who, fascinated, could not withdraw.

"Hold, master," said the Creole, "listen to a song of my country; we do not know how to make verses; we use a simple recitative, without rhyme, and at each pause we improvise a couplet appropriate to the subject; it is very pastoral; it will please you, I am sure, master. This song is called the 'Femme Amoureuse;' it is she who speaks."

And Cécily commenced a kind of recitative, much more accented by the expression of the voice than by the modulations of the song. A few soft and trembling cords served as an accompaniment.

This was the song of Cécily:

Flowers, everywhere flowers.
My lover comes! The hope of happiness enervates and destroys.
Soften the light of day—pleasure seeks a lucid darkness.
To the fresh perfume of flowers my love prefers my warm breath.
The glare of day shall not wound his eyes, for I will keep them closed by my kisses.
My angel, come! My heart beats; my blood burns!
Come, come, come!

These words, chanted with as much ardour as if she had addressed an invisible lover, were, thus to speak, translated by the Creole into a theme of enchanting melody; her charming fingers drew from her guitar sounds full of delicious harmony.

The animated face of Cécily, her veiled and moistened eyes, constantly fixed on those of Jacques Ferrand, expressed all the languor of the song.

Words of love; intoxicating music; inflamed looks; silence; night! all conspired at this moment to disturb the reason of the notary.

Thus "eperdu" he cried:

"Mercy! Cécily! mercy! I shall go wild! Hush! it is to die! Oh! that I were mad!"

"Listen then to the second couplet," said the Creole, preluding anew.

And she continued her passionate recitative:

If my lover were there, and with his hand touched my soft neck, I should shudder and die.
If he were there, and his hair touched my cheek, my cheek so pale would become red.
My cheek so pale would be as fire.
Life of my soul, if you were there, my parched lips could not speak.
Life of my life, if you were there—expiring—I would ask no mercy.
Those whom I love as I love you, I kill.
My angel, come! Oh! come! My heart beats; my blood burns!
Come, come, come!

If the Creole had accented the first stanza with a voluptuous languor, she poured into these last words all the transports of "l'amour antique."

And, as if the music had been powerless to express her wild delirium, she threw the guitar aside, and half rising from the couch, and extending her arms towards the door, she repeated, in an expiring, languishing voice,

"Oh! come, come, come!"

To paint the electric look with which she accompanied these words would be impossible.

Jacques Ferrand uttered a terrible cry.

"Oh! death—death to him you love so much, to whom you have addressed these words!" cried he, shaking the door in a transport of jealousy. * * * * * *

Active as a tigress, with one bound Cicely was at the wicket, and, as if she had with difficulty dispelled her feigned transports, she said to Jacques Ferrand, in a low, palpitating voice: "Well! I avow it. * * * *
I did not wish to return to the door. I am here

in spite of myself; for I fear your words spoken just now. *If you say strike—I will strike.* You love me well, then?"

"Do you wish gold—all my gold?"

"No; I have enough."

"Have you an enemy? I kill him."

"I have no enemy."

"Will you be my wife? I will espouse you."

"I am married."

"But what do you wish, then! Mon Dieu! what do you wish?"

"Prove to me that your passion for me is blind, furious, that you will sacrifice everything for me!"

"All! yes, all! But how?"

"I do not know; but there was a moment the glance of your eye bewildered me. If now, now, you give me some proof of your love. I do not know of what I should be capable! Hasten! I am capricious; to-morrow the impression of this hour will perhaps be effaced."

"But what proof can I give you on the moment?" cried the wretch. "It is an atrocious torment! What proof? Speak! What proof?"

"You are only a fool!" answered Cécily, retreating from the wicket with an appearance of extreme irritation. "I am mistaken! I thought you capable of energetic devotion! Good-night. It is a pity—"

"Cécily! oh! do not go—return. But what must I do? tell me, at least. Oh! my senses wander. What must I do? what do?"

"Seek." "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!"

* * * * * *

"But, in fine—speak! what do you wish?" cried the notary, quite beside himself.

"Guess." "Explain—command."

"Ah! if you love me as passionately as you say, you will find the means. Good-night."

"Cécily!" "I am going to shut this wicket—instead of opening the door—" * *

"Mercy! listen—remain—I have found—" cried Jacques Ferrand, after a moment's pause, with an expression of joy impossible to describe. The wretch was seized with a vertigo.

* * * He lost all prudence, all reserve; the instinct of moral preservation abandoned him.

"Well! this proof of your love?" said the Creole: who, having approached the chimney, took hold of her pogniard, and returned slowly towards the wicket.

Then, without being seen by the notary, she assured herself of the action of a small chain, one end of which was fastened to the door, the other to the doorpost.

"Listen," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hoarse and broken voice; "listen. If I place my honour, my fortune, my life, at your mercy—here—on the spot—will you then believe I love you? This proof of an insane passion, will it suffice?"

"Your honour, your fortune, your life? I do not comprehend." "If I confide to you a secret which would place me on the scaffold?"

"You—criminal? You jest. And your austerity?" "A lie?" "Your probity?" "A lie." "Your piety?" "A lie." "You pass for a saint, and you would be a demon! You are a boaster! No; there is no man quite cunning enough, bold enough, thus to insinuate himself into the confidence and respect of men. It would be a frightful defiance cast in the face of society."

"I am this man! I have thrown this taunt, this defiance, in the teeth of society!" cried the monster, in an access of frightful pride.

"Jacques! Jacques! do not speak thus," said Cécily. "Hold—you will make me mad!"

"My head for your love—do you wish it?"

"Ah! this is love, now!" cried Cécily "Here—take my poniard; you disarm me."

Jacques Ferrand took, through the wicket, the dangerous weapon with precaution, and threw it from him in the corridor.

"Verily—you believe me, then?" cried he in transport.

"If I believe you?" said the Creole, leaning with force her charming hands on those of Jacques Ferrand.

"Yes, I believe you; for I see again your look of just now—that look which fascinated me. Your eyes sparkle with savage ardour. Jacques, I love your eyes!"

"Cécily!!!"

"You should speak the truth."

"If I speak the truth! Oh! you shall see."

"Your countenance is lowering. Your expression formidable. Hold, you are as fearful and beautiful as a mad tiger. But you speak the truth, do you not?"

"I have committed crimes, I tell you."

"So much the better, if by their avowal you prove your love."

"And if I tell you all?"

"I grant all; for if you have this blind confidence in me—do you see, Jacques—it will no longer be the ideal lover of the song I call. It is to you, my tiger, you, that I shall say come—come—come."

* * * * * * *

"Oh, you will be mine. I shall be your tiger," cried he; "and then, if you will, you shall dishonour me—my head shall fall. My honour, my life, all is yours now."

"Your honour?"

"My honour! Listen: ten years since an infant was confided to my care, and two hundred thousand francs for its support; I have abandoned this child. I spread the report the child was dead, and I kept the money."

"It was bold and skilful—who would have thought it of you?"

"Listen again: I hated my cashier. One night he took from me a little gold, which he returned the next day; but to ruin him, I accused him of having robbed me of a considerable sum. I was believed, he was thrown into prison. Now my honour, is it at your mercy?"

"Oh! you love me, Jacques, you love me. To inform me thus your secrets—what empire have I, then, over you? I will not be ungrateful; let me kiss this forehead, where so many infernal thoughts were created.

"Oh!" cried the notary, stammering, "let the scaffold stand there, ready, I would not draw back. Listen again: This child, once abandoned, crosses my path—she inspires me with fears; I have had her killed."

"You? And how? where?"

"A few days since—near the 'Pont d'Asnières,' at the Island of the Ravageur. One Martial drowned her in a boat, à soupape. Are these details sufficient? do you believe me?

"Oh! demon from hell: you alarm, yet attract me. You inspire me. What is, then, your power?"

"Listen again: Before that, a man had confided to me a hundred thousand 'écus.' I set a trap for him. I blew his brains out. I proved that he committed suicide, and I denied the deposite, which his sister reclaimed. Now my life is at your mercy—open."

"Jacques, hold, I adore you!" said the Creole, with warmth.

"Oh! come a thousand deaths, and I have them!" cried the notary, in an intoxication impossible to describe.

"Yes, you are right; were I young and charming, I should not experience this triumphant joy. The key! throw me the key! draw the bolt!"

The Creole took the key from the lock, and handed it to the notary through the wicket, saying, "Jacques, I am mad!"

"You are mine, at length!" cried she, with a savage roar, turning the key in the lock.

But the door, fastened with a bolt, did not open.

"Come, my tiger! come," said Cécily, in an expiring voice.

"The bolt! the bolt!" cried Jacques Ferrand.

"But if you deceive me," cried the Creole, suddenly, "if these secrets are an invention, to cajole me—"

The notary remained for a moment struck with stupor: he thought he had succeeded; this last difficulty raised his impatient fury to its climax.

He thrust his hand quickly in his bosom, opened his waistcoat, broke with violence a small chain of steel, to which was suspended a small, thin portfolio, took it, and showing it through the wicket to Cécily, he said, in an oppressed and breathless tone,

"Here is what would cause my head to fall: draw the bolt—the portfolio is yours."

"Give it to me, my tiger," cried Cécily.

And hastily drawing the bolt with one hand, with the other she seized the portfolio.

But Jacques Ferrand did not abandon it until at the moment he felt the door ceding to his efforts.

But if the door ceded, it was only for about six inches, confined, as it was, by the chain above mentioned. At this unforeseen obstacle, Jacques Ferrand threw himself against the door, and shook it with a desperate effort. Cécily, with the rapidity of thought, took the portfolio between her teeth, opened the window, threw a cloak into the court, and with great dexterity making use of a cord previously fastened to the balcony, she let herself down into the court, as rapidly and lightly as an arrow falls to the ground.

Then, wrapping herself up in haste in the mantle, she ran to the porter's lodge, opened it, drew the cord, went out into the street, and jumped into a carriage, which, since her residence at Jacques Ferrand's, was sent every night by order of the Baron de Graün, and stationed not twenty steps from the notary's mansion.

This carriage was quickly driven off, drawn by two stout horses. It reached the boulevard before Jacques Ferrand had perceived the flight of Cécily.

Let us return to this monster.

Through the opening of the door it was impossible for him to see the window by which the Creole had escaped. With one mighty effort with his large shoulders, he burst the chain which confined the door, and rushed into the chamber, and found no one.

The cord danced in the wind, as he leaned from the balcony. Then, from the other side of the court, by the light of the moon, which burst forth at intervals from the driving clouds, he saw the "porte cochère" open.

In a moment he divined everything.

A last ray of hope remained.

Vigorous and determined, he sprang over the balcony, using the cord in his turn, lowered himself into the court, and rushed out of the house.

The street was deserted—he was alone.

He heard no other noise than the distant rolling of the carriage which was rapidly carrying off the Creole. The notary thought it was some belated vehicle, and attached no importance to this circumstance.

Thus, for him no chance remained of finding Cécily, who carried with her the proofs of his crimes!!!

At this frightful certainty, he fell, thunderstruck, at the door of his house.

He remained there a long time, dumb, immovable, petrified. With hagard eyes, fixed, his teeth compressed, his mouth foaming, tearing mechanically with the nails his breast, he felt his reason totter, and was lost in an abyss of darkness. When he awoke from his stupor, he walked heavily, and with an ill-assumed step; objects trembled in his sight; he felt as if recovering from a fit of intoxication.

He shut with violence the door of the street, and re-entered the court. The rain had ceased.

The wind continued to blow with violence, chasing the heavy-laden clouds, which veiled, without concealing, the light of the moon.

Slightly calmed by the brisk and cold air of the night, Jacques Ferrand, hoping to combat his internal agitation by the rapidity of his walk, plunged into the obscure allées of his garden, marching with rapid strides, and from time to time striking his forehead with his clinched fists.

Walking thus at hazard, he reached the end of an allée near a greenhouse in ruins.

Suddenly he stumbled violently against a mound of earth newly raised. He stooped, and looked mechanically on some linen stained with blood.

He was near the grave where Louise Morel buried her dead child. Her child—who was also the child of Jacques Ferrand.

Notwithstanding his obduracy, notwithstanding the frightful fears which agitated him, Jacques Ferrand shuddered with alarm.

There was something supernatural in this "rapprochement." Pursued by the avenging punishment of his *vice*, chance carried him to the grave of his child—unhappy fruit of his violence and of his lewdness. Under any other circumstances, Jacques Ferrand had trampled on this sepulchre with atrocious indifference, but having exhausted his savage energy in the scene we have related, he was seized with a weakness and sudden alarm. His face was covered with an icy sweat, his trembling knees shook under him, and he fell lifeless across this open tomb.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LA FORCE.

Erreur inexplicable ! erreur injuste !
Erreur cruelle !—WOLFRANG, liv. ii.

PERHAPS we shall be reproached when the time consumed in the following discursion from the scenes and events of our story is reverted to; but it seems to us important that questions relative to our penitentiary system should be brought to the notice, consideration, and perhaps resolution of our legislators. The interior of a prison is a frightful pandemonium—a sad *thermometer* of the state of society, and an instructive study.*

In a word, the varied physiognomies of all classes of prisoners, the relations of family or affection which connects them still to the world, from which the prison walls separate them, have appeared to us worthy of regard.

The reader will, then, excuse us for having grouped around several of the prisoners, personages known in this tale, and other secondary figures, destined to place in active relief, certain critical events necessary to complete this initiation into a *prison life.*

* * * * * * *

Let us enter *La Force.*

There is nothing gloomy, nothing sinister in the aspect of this house of detention.

In the middle of one of the first courts are to be seen some mounds of earth, planted with shrubbery, at the foot of which are already shooting forth some precocious cowslips and snowdrops ; a trellised doorway leads to one of the seven or eight promenades destined for the prisoners.

The vast buildings surrounding this court resemble much a barrack or manufactory, kept with extreme neatness. They are built of white stone, with lofty windows, in order to allow a free circulation of air. The steps and pavement of the yard are of scrupulous cleanliness. On the ground floor, vast saloons, heated during winter, and well aired during summer, serve during the day as a place for conversation, workshops, or refectories for the prisoners. The upper stories are used as immense sleeping apartments, ten or twelve feet in height, with neat and shining floors ; they are furnished with two rows of iron bedsteads, excellent beds, composed of a " paillase," a soft and thick matress, a bolster, sheets of white linen, and a warm woollen covering.

At the sight of these accommodations, uniting all the requisites of comfort and salubrity, a stranger is much surprised, accustomed as he is to suppose all prisons as sorrowful, dirty, unhealthy, and gloomy.

He is mistaken.

That which is sad, dirty, and gloomy will be found in the holes where, like Morel, the jeweller, so many poor and honest workmen languish exhausted, forced to abandon their beds to their infirm wives, and to leave with powerless despair their half starving, naked children, struggling with the cold in the infectious straw.

There is some contrast between the physiognomies of the inhabitants of these two dwellings.

Incessantly occupied with the wants of his family, to whom the day is hardly long enough, seeing a mad perversity reducing his salary, the artisan will be cast down and worn out ; the hour of repose will not be sound to him ; a kind of sleeplike lassitude alone interrupts his daily toil. Then, on awakening from this mournful drowsiness, he will find himself overwhelmed with the same racking thoughts of the present, with the same inquietudes for the morrow.

But if, hardened by vice, indifferent to the past, happy with the present, certain of the future (he can assure himself of it by an offence or crime), regretting his liberty, without doubt, but finding large compensation in the personal well-being he enjoys, certain to carry away with him on his release a good sum of money, gained by moderate and easy labour, esteemed, or, may be, feared by his companions, either for his impudence or perversity, the convict, on the contrary, will be almost always careless and gay.

Once more : what does he want ?

Does he not find in prison a good shelter, good bed, good food, good pay, easy labour, and, above all and before all, *a society to his taste* ; a society, let us repeat, which measures his merit by the magnitude of his offences ?

A hardened criminal, then, knows neither misery, hunger, nor cold. What matters to him the horror he inspires to honest men ?

He does not see them—he knows none.

His crimes are his glory—his influence, his strength with the bandits among whom he will henceforth pass his life. How shall he fear shame ?

Instead of grave and charitable remonstrances, which might force him to blush and to repent, he hears savage plaudits, which encourage him to robbery and murder. Scarcely imprisoned, he meditates new misdeeds.

What is more logical ?

If he is discovered, arrested anew, he will find repose, the personal well-being of the prison, and his joyous and bold companions in crime and debauchery.

Is his corruption less great than that of the others ? does he manifest, on the contrary, the slightest remorse that he is exposed to atrocious railings, infernal shouts, terrible threats ?

In fine—a thing so rare that it has become an exception to the rule—should a condemned come out of this frightful pandemonium with the firm resolution to reform by prodigies of labour, courage, patience, and honesty, has he been able to conceal his past offences ? A meeting with one of his old prison companions would be sufficient to overturn his plan of reformation so carefully designed.

And in this way—

A hardened libéré proposes an *affair* to a repentant libéré ; the latter, in spite of dangerous threats, refuses this criminal association ; immediately an anonymous communication strips the veil from the past life of this unfortunate, who wishes, at every sacrifice, to conceal and expiate a first fault by honourable conduct.

Then, exposed to the contempt, or, at least, the suspicion of those whose interest he had obtained by force of industry and probity, reduced to distress, soured by injustice, carried away by want, yielding, in fine, to these fatal dere-

* Observe—the author is at variance with the penal code of France.

lictions, this man, almost restored, falls back again, and forever, to the bottom of the abyss from whence he had with so much difficlty escaped.

In the following scenes we shall endeavour, then, to show the monstrous and inevitable consequences of *la réclusion en commun* (promiscuous confinement.)

After ages of barbarous proofs and pernicious doubts, it begins to be understood how unreasonable it is to plunge into an atmosphere abominably vitiated people whom a pure and salubrious air might have saved.

How much time shall be required to find out that, to associate gangrened beings is to redouble the intensity of their corruption, which thus becomes incurable!

How long to find out that there is but one remedy to this growing leprosy, which threatens the *body social!*

Solitary confinement!

We should esteem ourselves happy if our feeble voice could be, if not counted, at least heard, among all those which, more imposing, more eloquent than ours, demand, with so just and so impatient an importunity, the complete, absolute adoption of the *solitary system.*

Some day also, perhaps, society will know that evil is an accidental, not organic malady; that criminals are almost always good in substance, but false and wicked through ignorance, selfishness, or negligence of those governing; and that the health of the soul, like that of the body, is invincibly subordinate to the laws of a "hygiène" at once salubrious and preservative.

God gives to all along with healthful organs, energetic appetites, and the desire of comfort; it is for society to modify and satisfy these wants.

The man who only has as his share strength, good-will, and health, has the *right*, sovereign *right*, to a labour justly remunerated, which will assure him, not the superfluities, but the necessaries of life, the means to be healthy and robust, active and industrious, therefore honest and virtuous, because his condition will be happy.

The dismal regions of misery and ignorance are peopled with beings of sorrowful hearts. Cleanse these sewers, spread there the inclination to labour, equitable salaries, just rewards, and soon these sickly faces, these broken hearts, will be brought back to virtue, which is the life and health of the soul.

* * * * * * *

We will conduct the reader to the "parloir" of the prison of *La Force.*

It is an obscure apartment, separated in its whole length into two equal parts by a narrow, railed passage.

One part of this parloir communicates with the interior of the prison; it is destined for the prisoners.

The other communicates with the office; it is destined to strangers admitted to visit the prisoners.

These interviews and these conversations take place through the double grating of iron in the "parloir," in presence of a guardian, who remains inside, and at the extremity of the passage.

The appearance of the prisoners, assembled in the "parloir" on this day, offered numerous contrasts: some were covered with wretched vestments; some seemed to belong to the working class; others, again, to the rich "bourgeoise."

The same contrast of condition was observable among the persons who came to see the prisoners; they were almost all of them women. Generally the prisoners appear less sad than the visiters; for, strange as it may appear, it is proved by experience, there are few sorrows and little shame which resist three or four days *of imprisonment passed in common!*

Those who are the most alarmed at this hideous communion are soon habituated; the contagion reaches them; surrounded by degraded beings, hearing only infamous words, a kind of ferocious emulation drags them on, and, either to impose upon their companions by rivalling their obduracy, or to stupify themselves by this moral intoxication, almost always the newly-arrived show as much depravity and insolent gayety as the habitués of the prison.

Let us return to the parloir.

Notwithstanding the humming noise of a great number of conversations carried on in a low tone, from one side of the "couloir" to the other, prisoners and visiters succeeded, after some practice, in being able to converse among themselves—on the absolute condition not to allow themselves, for a moment, to be distracted or occupied with the conversation of their neighbours, which created a kind of secret in the midst of all this noisy exchange of words, each one being forced to hear, but not to listen, to a word of that which was spoken around him.

Among the prisoners summoned to the parloir by visiters, and the farthest from the place where the guardian was seated, was Nicolas Martial.

To the sad state of dejection in which we left him, at the time of his arrest, had succeeded impudent assurance. Already the contagious and detestable influence of the prison *in common* bore its fruits.

Without doubt, if he had been immediately transferred to a solitary cell, this wretch, still under the blow of his first detection, the thought of his crimes constantly before him, alarmed at the punishment which awaited him, this wretch might have experienced, if not repentance, at least a salutary alarm, from which nothing might have distracted him.

And who knows what effect may be produced on a criminal by an incessant, forced meditation on the crimes which he had committed, and their punishment?

Far from this, thrown into the midst of a crowd of bandits in whose eyes the least sign of repentance is cowardice, or, rather, *treason*, which they cause to be dearly expiated; for, in their savage obduracy, in their senseless distrust, they look upon as a spy every man (if there should be such a one) who, sad and mournful, regretting his fault, does not partake of their audacious thoughtlessness, and shudders at their contact.

Thrown among the bandits, Nicolas Martial, knowing, for a long time and by tradition, the manners and ways of prisons, overcame his weakness, and wished to appear worthy of a name already celebrated in the annals of robbery and murder.

Some old "repris de justice" had known his father, the executed; others, his brother, the galley-slave: he was received and immediately patronized by these veterans in crime, with savage interest.

This paternal reception from murderer to murderer exalted the son of the widow; these praises bestowed on the hereditary perversity of his family intoxicated him. Soon forgetting, in this hideous thoughtlessness, the future which menaced him, he only remembered his past misdeeds but to exaggerate them and glorify himself in the eyes of his companions. The expression, then, of his face, was as impudent as that of the visiter's was uneasy and concerned. This individual was the Père Micou, the receiver of the Passage de la Brasserie, to whose house Madame de Fermont and her daughter, victims of the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand, had been obliged to retire.

The Père Micou knew to what punishment he was subject, for having several times acquired, at a miserable price, the fruits of Nicolas's robberies, and of several others.

The son of the widow being arrested, the receiver found himself almost at the discretion of the bandit, who could point him out as his habitual purchaser. Although this accusation might not be sustained by flagrant proofs, it was not the less very dangerous for the Père Micou: thus, had he immediately executed the orders which Nicolas had sent him by a prisoner, whose time had expired.

"Eh bien! how do you get on, Père Micou?" said the brigand.

"To serve you, my good fellow," answered the receiver, eagerly. "As soon as I saw the person you sent me, right away I—"

"Stop! why do you not *tutoyer** me any more, Père Micou?" said Nicolas, interrupting him, with a sardonic air. "Is it that you despise me because I am in prison?"

"No, mon garçon, I despise no one," said the receiver, who did not care to make public his past familiarity with this wretch.

"Eh bien! then say *thou* to me, as usual, or I shall believe you have no friendship for me, and that would break my heart." "A la bonne heure," said Père Micou, sighing. "I have busied myself with all your little commissions."

"Well spoken, Père Micou: I knew well that you would not forget friends. And my tobacco?"

"I have left two pounds at the office, mon garçon."

"Is it good?" "None better."

"And the gammon?" "Also left there a four-pound loaf of bread: I have added a little surprise you did not expect—half a dozen hard eggs and a fine Holland cheese."

"That is what I call to act like a friend! And wine?"

"There are six bottles of sealed; but, you know, they will only give you one bottle a day."

"What would you have? one ought to be content with that."

"I hope you are satisfied with me, mon garçon?"

"Certainly; and shall be still, and shall be again, Père Micou, for this gammon, this cheese, these eggs, and this wine, will only last the time to swallow them; but, as they say when there is no more, there will come some more, thanks to Papa Micou, who will give me some more sugar-plums, if I am a good boy."

"How! you wish—"

"That, in two or three days, you will renew my little provisions, Père Micou."

"May the devil burn me if I do—it is good for once."

"Good for once! Come, come; ham and wine are good always, you know that well enough."

"It is possible—but I am not obliged to feed you with dainties."

"Ah! Père Micou! it is wrong, it is unjust, to refuse ham to me, who has so often brought you *gras double*."

"Hush! now, malheureux!" said the alarmed receiver.

"No; I'll make the *curieux* (judge) decide; I will tell him. Imagine that the Père Micou—"

"It is good, it is good!" cried the receiver, seeing, with as much fear as anger, Nicolas disposed to abuse the position which their dealings gave him; "I consent—I will replenish your stock of provisions when they are exhausted." "It is just—nothing but just. Neither must you forget to send some coffee to my mother and Calebasse, who are at Saint Lazare; they used to take their cup every morning—they will feel the want of it."

"Still more? but, do you wish to ruin me, 'gredin?'"

"As you please, Père Micou: let us speak no more about it. I will ask the *curieux* if—"

"Agreed, then, for the coffee," said the receiver, interrupting him. "But, may the devil take you! cursed be the day in which I knew you!"

"My old man, as for me, it is just the contrary. At this moment, I am delighted to know you. I venerate you as my foster-father." "I hope that you have nothing more to order?" answered the Père Micou, with bitterness.

"Yes! you shall tell my mother and sister that, if I trembled when I was arrested, I tremble no more, and that I am now as bold as both of them."

"I will tell them. Is this all?"

"Stop! I forgot to ask for two pair of warm woollen stockings—you do not wish me to take cold, do you?"

"I wish you might burst!"

"Thank you, Père Micou, that shall be later; at present, I prefer something else. I wish to pass it calmly—at least, if they do not make me a head shorter, like father, I shall have enjoyed life."

"Your life is very pleasant!"

"It is superb! Since I have been here, I have amused myself like a king. If there had been lamps and guns, there would have been an illumination and a feu-de-joie in my honour, when it was known that I was the son of the famous Martial, the 'guillotiné!'"

"It is touching. Beautiful relationship!"

"Hold! there are many dukes and marquises; why, then, should we not have our nobility among ourselves?" said the brigand, with savage irony.

"Yes, it is *Charlot* (executioner) who gives

* *Tutoyer*, to use thou instead of you.

you your letters of nobility in the 'Place du Palais.'"

"Very sure that it is not Monsieur le Curé. So much the more reason in prison one should be of the nobility of *la haute pègre* (great robbers), otherwise you are looked upon as a nobody. You ought to see how they treat those who are not *nobles de pègre*, and who do their —hold! there is one here named Germain, a small young man, who plays the disgusted, and seems to despise us. Let him take care of his skin. He is a *sournois;* he is suspected of being a *mouton*. If this is so, they will slit his nose, by way of warning."

"Germain? This young man is called Germain?"

"Yes. You know him? He is, then, of *la pègre*, notwithstanding his innocent looks?"

"I do not know him. But if it is the Germain of whom I have heard speak, his account is good."

"How?" "He once escaped a snare which Velu and the Gros-Boiteux laid for him."

"Why did they do it?"

"I don't know. They said that in *Provence* he had *coqué* (denounced) some one of their band."

"I was sure of it. Germain is a *mouton*. Well! they eat mutton. I will tell this to my friends; that will give them an appetite. Ah, ça! The Gros-Boiteux, does he still play tricks on your lodgers?"

"Dieu merci, I am rid of this villain! you will see him here to-day or to-morrow."

"Vive la joie! we shall have a laugh! Here is another one who never looks glum!"

"It is because he is going to meet Germain here that I said his account was good—if he is the same—"

"And why has he been nabbed, the Gros-Boiteux?"

"For a robbery committed with a liberated prisoner, who wished to remain honest and labour. Oh yes! the Gros-Boiteux nicely fixed him; he is so wicked, that 'gueux.' I am sure it was he who forced the trunk of those two women who occupy the cabinet of the fourth floor."

"What women? Ah! yes; two women, the youngest of whom you found so handsome, old brigand."

"Ah, yes; but it is all over with her; for, at this present moment, the mother must be dead, and the daughter not far from it. I shall be in for two weeks' lodgings; but may the devil burn me if I give a rag to bury them! I have had losses enough, without counting the 'douceurs' which you *beg* me to give to you and your family. This would nicely arrange my business. I have luck this year!"

"Bah, bah! you are always complaining, Père Micou; you are as rich as Crésus. When you come to bring me some more provisions, you can give me some news of my mother and Calebasse?"

"Yes; it must be so."

"Ah! I forget, while you are there, buy me also a new cap, of plaid velvet, with a tassel; mine is no longer fit to be worn."

"Ah ça! decidedly—you wish to laugh?"

"No, Père Micou, I want a cap of plaid velvet; it is my notion." "But you are determined, then, to make me sleep on straw?"

"Come, Père Micou, don't get warm; it is yes or no; I do not force you. But enough."

The receiver, reflecting that he was at the mercy of Nicolas, arose, fearing to be assailed with new demands if he prolonged his visit.

"You shall have your cap," said he; "but take care, if you ask me for anything more, I shall give nothing; happen what may, you will lose as much as I."

"Be tranquil, Père Micou; I shall not *make you sing* any more than is necessary for you to preserve your voice; for this would be a pity; you *sing* well."

The receiver went out, shrugging his shoulders with rage, and the guardian reconducted Nicolas into the prison. At the moment the Père Micou left the "parlour," Rigolette entered.

The guardian, a man of forty years, an old soldier of energetic appearance, was dressed in a jacket, cap, and trousers of blue cloth; two silver stars were embroidered on the collar and lappets of his coat.

At the sight of the grisette the face of this man brightened up, and assumed an expression of affectionate benevolence. He had always been struck with the grace, gentility, and touching goodness with which Rigolette consoled Germain when she came to the "parloir" to converse with him. Germain, on his part, was no ordinary prisoner. His reserve, his mildness, and his sadness, inspired a lively interest in the officers of the prison; an interest they were careful not to show him, for fear of exposing him to the bad treatment of his vicious companions, who, as we have said, regarded him with suspicious hatred.

It rained in torrents, but, thanks to her overshoes and umbrella, Rigolette had courageously braved the wind and rain.

"What a horrible day, my poor demoiselle!" said the guardian to her, kindly. "You must have had a good deal of courage to come out such a time as this, at least!"

"When one is thinking, all along the way, of the pleasure they are going to give a poor prisoner, one does not pay much attention to the weather, monsieur!"

"I have no need to ask you who you came to see."

"Surely not. And how is he, my poor Germain?"

"Look here, my dear demoiselle; I have seen many prisoners; they were sad, sad one day, two days, and by degrees they fell in with the rest, and the most sorrowful at first often became the most gay. M. Germain is not so; he appears to grow sadder every day."

"It is this that troubles me."

"When I am on service in the courts, I look at him from the corner of my eye; he is always alone. I have already told you, you should advise him not to act thus, but to speak to his comrades, otherwise he will become their butt. The yards are watched, but—a blow is soon made!"

"Ah! mon Dieu! monsieur! is there still more danger for him?" cried Rigolette.

"Not precisely; but these bandits see he is not one of them, and they hate him because he appears honest and proud." "Yet I have advised him to do what you have told me, monsieur, to endeavour to converse with the least

wicked; but it is too much for him; he cannot overcome his repugnance."

"He is wrong—wrong; a quarrel is soon got up."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! can he not be separated from the others?"

"Since I have seen, for two or three days past, their evil intentions towards him, I have advised him to place himself in what we call *à la pistole*, that is to say, in a room by himself."

"Well?"

"I did not think of one thing. A whole range of cells are comprised in the repairs now going on in the prison, and the others are occupied."

"But these bad men are capable of killing him!" cried Rigolette, with her eyes filled with tears. "And if by chance he had some persons interested in his fate, what could they do for him, monsieur?"

"Nothing more than to obtain what the prisoners can obtain themselves by paying money, a chamber 'à la pistole.'" "Alas! then he is lost, if they hate him in the prison."

"Don't disturb yourself; he shall be watched closely. But I repeat it, my dear demoiselle, counsel him to be a little familiar with them; only the first step costs!" "I will recommend him to do this with all my strength, monsieur; but for a good and honest heart it is hard, do you see, to be familiar with such people."

"Of two evils choose the least. Alons, I go to ask for M. Germain. But, in fact, stop," said the guardian, reflecting; "there are only two visiters left; as soon as they are gone—no more will come to day, for it is now two o'clock—I will send for M. Germain; you can talk more at ease. I even can, when you are alone, let him enter into the 'couloir,' so that you will be separated by one grating instead of two; 'c'est toujours cela.'"

"Ah! monsieur, how kind you are; how much I thank you!" "Hush! let not any one hear you; it will cause jealousy. Seat yourself up there, at the end of the bench, and as soon as this man and woman are gone I will send for M. Germain."

The guardian returned to his post inside of the "couloir;" Rigolette went and seated herself sadly at the extremity of the visiters' bench.

While the grisette awaits the arrival of Germain, we will listen to the conversation of the prisoners who remained in the parloir after the departure of Nicolas Martial.

CHAPTER XIX.

PIQUE-VINAIGRE.

The prisoner who was placed alongside of Barbillon was a man about forty-five years of age, slender make, and with a cunning, intelligent, jovial, and jeering face; he had an enormous mouth, almost entirely without teeth; when he spoke he twisted it from right to left, according to the pretty general custom of those who address the populace of the market-places; his nose was flat, his head immensely large, and almost entirely bald; he wore an old waistcost of gray stuff, pantaloons of an indescribable colour, pieced in a thousand different places; his naked feet, red from the cold, half wrapped up in old linen, were thrust into "sabots" (wooden shoes).

This man, named Fortuné Gobert, nicknamed Pique-Vinaigre, formerly a juggler, and a liberated prisoner for the crime of passing counterfeit money, was accused of "rupture de ban," and robbery committed at night, with burglary and "escalade."

Confined but for a few days, "à la force," already Pique-Vinaigre filled, to the general satisfaction of his prison companions, the post of *conteur* (storyteller). At the present day *conteurs* are rare, but formerly each ward generally had, at the expense of a light individual contribution, its office of *conteur*, who, by his "improvisations," made the interminable winter evenings appear less long, the prisoners retiring to rest at nightfall.

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Pique-Vinaigre excelled, then, in those kind of heroic recitals where weakness, after a thousand crosses, finishes by triumphing over its persecutors. Pique-Vinaigre possessed, besides, an immense fund of irony, which had given him his nickname. He had just entered the parloir.

Opposite to him, on the other side of the rail, was a woman of about thirty-five, with a pale, sweet, and interesting face, poorly, but neatly clad; she wept bitterly, and kept her handkerchief to her eyes.

Pique-Vinaigre looked at her with a mixture of impatience and affection.

"Come, now, Jeanne," said he, "do not be a child; here, now, is sixteen years since we have met; if you keep your handkerchief over your eyes, it is not the way to know each other."

"My brother, my poor Fortuné—I suffocate—I cannot speak." "An't you droll—go! But what is the matter with you?"

This sister—for this woman was was his sister—restrained her sobs, dried her eyes, and regarding him with stupor, answered, "What is the matter? How! I find you again in prison—you, who had already remained fifteen years!" "It is true; to-day it is six months since I came out of the *centrale* of Melun, without going to see you at Paris, because the *capital* was forbidden to me."

"Already retaken! What have you, then, done, mon Dieu! Why did you leave Beaugency, where you were sent under 'surveillance?'"

"Why? You ought to ask me why I went there?" "You are right."

"In the first place, my poor Jeanne, since these gratings are between us both, imagine that I have embraced you, folded you in my arms, as one ought to do when he sees a sister after an eternity. Now let us chat. A prisoner of Melun, who was called the Gros-Boiteux, told me that there was at Beaugency an old galley-slave of his acquaintance, who employed liberated convicts in a manufactory of white lead. Do you know what that is?"

"No, my brother."

"It is a very fine trade; those who are employed in it, at the end of a month or two, have the 'painter's colic;' of three attacked, about one dies. 'Par exemple,' to be just, the two others die also, but at their ease; they take their time; take good care of themselves, and last a year, eighteen months, at the most. After all, the trade is not so badly paid as some

others, and there are some folks born already dressed, who hold out two or three years; but these are the old folks, the centenaries of the *white-leaders*. They die, it is true, but it is not fatiguing."

"And why did you choose a trade so dangerous, my poor Fortuné?"

"And what would you have me do? When I entered Melun for this affair of false money, I was a juggler. As in the prison there was no workshop for my trade, and as I was no stronger than a louse, they put me at making toys for children. It was a manufacturer of Paris who found it advantageous to have made by the prisoners his harlequins, his trumpets of wood, and his swords of *ditto—sabre de bois!* Thus, I tell you, haven't I sharpened, and cut, and carved for fifteen years, these toys! I am sure that I supplied the 'moutards' of an entire 'quartier de Paris'—it was, above all, on the trumpet I excelled; and the rattles, too! With these two instruments one could have put on an edge the teeth of a whole battalion. I pride myself on it. My time out, behold me with the degree of trumpet manufacturer, at two sous each! They allowed me to choose for my residence between three or four places, at forty leagues from Paris: I had for sole resource my knowledge of trumpet-making. Now, in admitting that, from the old men to the babies, all the inhabitants of the town should have had a passion to play *turlututu* on my trumpets: I should have had, even then, trouble enough to pay my expenses; but I could not seduce a whole village into blowing trumpets from morning to night. They would have taken me for an 'intriguant.'"

"Mon Dieu! you always laugh."

"That is better than to cry. Finally, seeing that at forty leagues from Paris my trade as a juggler would be of no more resource to me than my trumpets, I demanded a 'surveillance' at Beaugency, wishing to engage myself in the whitelead factory. It is a pastry which gives you an indigestion of *miserere*; but, until one dies from it, one has a living; it is always something gained, and I like that trade as well as that of a robber: to steal I am not brave nor strong enough, and it was by pure chance I have committed the act of which I shall speak directly."

"You would have been brave and strong if you had only had the *idea* not to steal any more."

"Ah! you believe that, do you?"

"Yes, at the bottom you are not wicked; for, in this dangerous affair of the false money, you have been dragged into it in spite of yourself, almost forced—you know it well."

"Yes, my girl—but, do you see, fifteen years in a prison, that spoils a man like my old pipe which you see, whenever it comes in the jail white as a new pipe; on coming out of Melun, then, I felt myself too cowardly to steal."

"And you had the courage to follow a deadly calling? Hold, Fortuné! I tell you that you wish to make yourself worse than you are."

"Stop a moment, then: all *gringalet* that I was, I had an idea, may the devil burn me if I know why! that I would not care for the colic, that the malady would find too little in me to feed on, and that it would go elsewhere; in fine, that I would become one of the old white-leaders. On leaving the prison I began by squandering my savings, augmented, understand, by what I had gained by relating stories at night in our ward."

"As you used to tell us in old times, my brother? It used to amuse our mother so much, do you remember?"

"Pardieu! good woman! And she never suspected before she died that I was at Melun?"

"Never: to her last moments she thought you had gone to the islands."

"What could I do, my girl? My 'bêtises' were the fault of my father, who brought me up to play the clown, to assist him in his juggling, to eat flax and spit fire; that was the cause that I had not the time to associate with the sons of peers of France, and that I made bad acquaintances. But, to return to Beaugency, once out of Melun, I spent my money as I had a right. After fifteen years in a cage one must have a little air, and amuse ones' self so much the more, as, without being too greedy, the white lead might give me a last indigestion; then, what good would my pension money be to me? I ask you. Finally, I arrived at Beaugency almost without a sous: I asked for *Velu*, the friend of Gros-Boiteux, the chief of the factory, Serviteur! no more manufactory of white lead than you could put under your hand; eleven persons had died there in one year; the old galley-slave had shut up shop. Here I was in this village, with my talents for making wooden trumpets for my dinner, and my convict's passport for my sole recommendation. I asked for employment suited to my strength, and, as I had no strength, you can comprehend how I was received; robber here, gueux there, jail bird! in fine, as soon as I made my appearance anywhere, every one clapped their hands on their pockets; I could not, then, prevent myself from starving with hunger in a hole which I was not to leave for five years. Seeing this, I broke my 'parole' to come to Paris to use my talents. As I had not the means to come in a carriage and four, I came begging all along the road; avoiding the 'gendarmes' as a dog does a kick. I was lucky—I arrived without difficulty at Auteuil. I was worried, I was as hungry as the devil; I was dressed, as you see, without profuseness." And Pique-Vinaigre cast a merry glance at his rags. "I had not a sou; I could at any moment be arrested as a vagabond. Ma foi, an opportunity offered, the devil tempted me, and, in spite of my cowardice—"

"Enough, my brother, enough," said his sister, fearing that the guardian, although at this moment some distance off, might hear the dangerous confession.

"You are afraid that some one will listen," answered he: "be tranquil, I do not conceal it; I was taken in the act; there are no means to deny it; I have confessed all, I know what I have to expect; my account is good."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" answered the poor woman, weeping, "with what sang froid you speak of this."

"If I were to speak of it with sang froid, what should I gain? Come, be reasonable, Jeanne; must *I* console *you?*" Jeanne wiped her tears, and sighed.

"But, to return to my affair," said Pique-Vinaigre: "I arrived near Auteuil in the dusk of

the evening. I could go no farther; I did not wish to enter Paris but at night; I seated myself behind a hedge to repose and reflect upon my plans of 'campagne.' From the intensity of my thoughts I fell asleep; a noise of voices awoke me; it was quite dark; I listened, it was a man and woman talking on the road, on the other side of my hedge; the man said to the woman, 'Who do you think would rob us? have we not left the house alone a hundred times?' 'Yes,' answered the woman, 'but then we did not leave a hundred francs in our commode.' 'Who knows it, fool?' said the husband. 'You are right,' replied the woman, and they passed on. Ma foi, the chance appeared too favourable for me to lose—there was no danger.

"I waited until they had got to a little distance to come out from behind my hedge; I looked around: at twenty steps off I saw a small cottage; that must be the house with the hundred francs; there was no other 'bicoque' on the road but this one; Auteuil was five hundred steps off. I said to myself, 'Courage, my old boy, there is no one there; it is night, if there is no dog (you know I always was afraid of dogs), the affair is done.' Luckily there was no dog. To be still more sure, I knocked against the door—nothing; that encouraged me. The shutters of the ground floor were closed: I passed my stick between the two, I forced them, I entered through the window into a chamber; there was some fire in the fireplace; this served as a light; I saw a commode from whence the key had been taken; I took the tongs, I forced the drawers, and under a heap of linen I found the treasure, wrapped up in an old woollen stocking; I did not amuse myself by taking anything else; I jumped out of the window and I fell—guess where? There's luck!"

"Mon Dieu! say, then!"

"On the back of the guard champêtre, who was going to the village."

"What a misfortune!"

"The moon had risen, the guard saw me coming out of the window; he seized me. He was a comrade who could have eaten ten such as me. Too cowardly to resist, I resigned myself to my fate. I still held the stocking in my hand; he heard the money jingle, he took it all, put it in his bag, and compelled me to follow him to Auteuil. He went to the mayor's, with the usual accompaniments of boys and gendarmes; they waited for the proprietors to return, they make their declaration. I could not deny it; I confessed all, signed the 'procés verbal,' they put on the handcuffs, and 'en route.'"

"And here you are in prison again, perhaps, for a long time?"

"Listen, Jeanne, I do not wish to deceive you, my girl, so I will tell you at once."

"What more now, mon Dieu!"

"Come, take courage!" "But speak! then!"

"Well! there is no more prison for me."

"How is that?"

"On account of the repetition, burglary, and the 'escalade' in an inhabited house, the lawyer told me, 'It is an account made *comme des petits patés*.' I shall have fifteen or twenty years at the galleys and a berth in the pillory to boot."

"To the galleys! but you are so weak you will die there!" cried the unhappy woman, bursting into tears.

"And if I had enrolled myself among the *white leaders?*"

"But the galleys, mon Dieu! the galleys!"

"It is a prison in the open air, with a red cap instead of a brown one, and, besides, I have always been curious to see the ocean. What a *badaud** of a Parisian I am, heiu?"

"But the pillory, malheureux! To be exposed there to the contempt of all the world, oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! my poor brother." And the unfortunate woman began again to weep.

"Come, come, Jeanne, be reasonable. It is a bad quarter of an hour to pass, but I believe one is seated. And, besides, am I not accustomed to a crowd? When I played juggler I always had people around me; I will imagine that I am at my old trade, and if it has too much effect upon me I will close my eyes; it will absolutely be the same as if they did not see me."

Speaking with so much stoicism, this unfortunate man wished less to appear insensible of his criminal actions than to console and satisfy his sister by this apparent indifference. For a man accustomed to prison *manners*, and with whom all shame is necessarily dead—even the galleys were only a change of condition, a *change of caps*, as Pique-Vinaigre said, with frightful truth.

Many of the prisoners of the central prisons even prefer the galleys on account of the lively, animated life which is led there, committing often *attempts at murder* to be sent to Brest or Toulon. This can be imagined: before they enter the galleys they have almost as much work, according to their declaration. The condition of the most honest workman of the forts is not less rude than that of the "forçats." They enter the workshop, and leave it, at the same hour, and the beds on which they repose their limbs, exhausted by fatigue, are often no better than those of the galleys.

They are free? some one will say.

Yes, free one day, Sunday, and this is also a day of repose for the "forçat."

But they have not the shame, the contempt?

And what is shame for these poor wretches, who, each day, bronze the soul in this infamy, in this mutual school of perdition, where the most criminal are the most distinguished? Such are the consequences of the present system of punishment. Incarceration is very much sought after.

The galleys—often demanded.

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"Twenty years in the galleys, mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" repeated the poor sister of Pique-Vinaigre.

"But be comforted, Jeanne; they will only pay me in my own coin; I am too feeble to be placed at hard labour. If there is not a manufactory of trumpets and wooden swords, as at Melun, they will give me easy work, and employ me in the infirmary. I am not refractory; I am good-natured; I will tell stories as I do here, I will make myself *adored by my chiefs, esteemed by my comrades*, and I will send you some cocoa nuts nicely carved, and some straw boxes

* *Badaud* is a nickname given to the inhabitants of Paris because they are apt to admire anything that seems wonderful.

for my nephews and nieces; in fine, the cork is drawn, we must drink."

"If you had only written that you were coming to Paris, I would have tried to conceal and lodge you while you were waiting for work."

"Pardieu! I reckoned to go to your house, but I prepared to come with my hands full; for, besides, from your appearance I see that you do not ride in your carriage. Ah çà! and your children and husband?"

"Do not speak to me about him."

"Always a 'bambocheur;' it is a pity, for he is a good workman."

"He does me much harm—va—I have had trouble enough of my own, without having yours added to them."

"How? your husband—"

"Has left me for three years past, after having sold all our furniture, leaving me with the children, without anything, my straw bed excepted."

"You did not tell me this!"

"For what good? it would have grieved you."

"Poor Jeanne! And how have you managed, all alone with your three children?"

"Dame! I had much trouble; I worked by the job as a fringe-maker, as well as I could; my neighbours helped me a little, taking care of my children when I went out; and then I, who do not always have luck, had it for once in my life, but it did not profit me, on account of my husband."

"How is that?"

"The lace-maker had spoken of my troubles to one of his customers, informing him how my husband had left me without anything, after having sold all my furniture, and that in spite of it I worked with all my strength to bring up my children; one day, on returning home, what do I find? my room newly furnished, a good bed, linen, and so on; it was the charity of my lace-maker's customer."

"Good customer! Poor sister! Why the devil did you not write me about your poverty! Instead of spending my earnings, I would have sent you some money!"

"I, free, to ask from you, a prisoner?"

"Exactly; I was fed, warmed, lodged at the expense of the government; what I earned was so much gained: knowing that my brother-in-law was a good workman, and you a good manager, I was easy, and I fiddled away my money with my eyes shut and my mouth open."

"My husband was a good workman, it is true, but he became dissipated; in fine, thanks to this unexpected succour, I took fresh courage; my eldest daughter began to earn something; we were happy, except for the sorrow of knowing that you were at Melun. Work was plenty, my children were properly dressed, they wanted scarcely anything; that made me take heart! at length, I had even saved thirty-five francs, when, suddenly, my husband returned. I had not seen him for a year; finding me comfortably fixed and well clad, he made no bones about it, he took the money, settled himself at home, got drunk every day, and beat me when I complained."

"The scoundrel!"

"This is not all: he had lodged in a cabinet of our apartment a bad woman with whom he lived; I had to submit to that. For the second time, he began to sell little by little the furniture I had. Forseeing what would happen, I went to a lawyer who lived in the house, and asked him what I should do to prevent my husband from placing me and my children on straw again."

"It was very plain, you ought to have thrust him out of doors."

"Yes, but I had not the right. The lawyer told me that my husband could dispose of everything as chief of the community, and remain in the house without doing anything; that it was a shame, but that I must submit; that the circumstance of his mistress, who lived under one roof, gave me the right to demand the separation of 'corps et biens,' as it is called; so much the more as I had proofs my husband beat me; that I could plead against him, but that it would cost me at least four or five hundred francs to obtain my divorce. You may judge; it is almost all that I could earn in a year! Where could I borrow such a sum? And, besides, it is not only to borrow—but to return. And five hundred francs—all at once—it is a fortune."

"There is, however, a very simple way to amass five hundred francs," said Pique Vinaigre, with bitterness; "it is to hang up the stomach for a year—to live on air and work just the same. It is astonishing that the lawyer did not give you this advice."

"You are always joking."

"Oh! this time, no!" cried Pique-Vinaigre, with indignation; "for it is infamous that the law should be too dear for poor folks. For look at you, good and worthy mother of a family, working with all your might to bring up your children honestly. Your husband is an arrant scoundrel; he beats you, abuses you, robs you, and spends at the tavern the money you earn; you apply to justice, that it may protect you, and keep from the clutches of this rascal, your bread and that of your children. The people of the law tell you: 'Yes, you are right, your husband is a bad fellow, justice shall be done you; but this justice will cost you five hundred francs.' Five hundred francs! that will support you and your family for a whole year! Now, do you see, Jeanne! all this proves what the proverb says, that there are only two kinds of people; those who are hung and those who deserve to be."

Rigolette, alone and pensive, having no one else to listen to, had not lost a word of this conversation, and sympathized deeply in the misfortunes of this poor woman. She promised herself to mention this to Rodolphe as soon as she should see him, not doubting that he would assist her.

CHAPTER XX.

COMPARISON.

Rigolette, feeling a lively interest in the sad fate of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, did not take her eyes from her, and was endeavouring to approach a little nearer, when, unfortunately, a new visiter entering, asked for a prisoner, and seated himself on the bench between Jeanne and the grisette. She, at the sight of this man, could not restrain a movement of surprise, almost of fear.

She recognised one of the two bailiffs who had come to arrest Morel, putting in execution the judgment obtained against the jeweller by Jacques Ferrand.

This circumstance, recalling to Rigolette's mind the untiring persecutor of Germain, redoubled her sadness, from which her attention had been slightly withdrawn by the touching and painful communications of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre. Retreating as far as she could from her new neighbour, the grisette leaned against the wall, and abandoned herself to her sad thoughts.

"Hold, Jeanne," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, whose jovial face had become suddenly clouded, "I am neither strong nor brave; but if I had been there while your husband was causing you so much misery, very playful things would not have passed between us. But you did not act rightly—you—"

"What could I do? I have been obliged to suffer what I could not prevent! As long as there was anything to be sold, my husband sold it, so that he might go to the tavern with his mistress—everything, even to my little girl's Sunday frock."

"But your daily earnings, why did you give them to him? Why did you not hide them?"

"I did hide them; but he beat me so much that I was obliged to give them up. It was not on account of the blows that I yielded, but because I said to myself, in the end he will wound me so seriously that I shall not be able to work for some time; suppose he breaks my arm; then what will become of me—who will take care of, and feed my children? If I am forced to go to the hospital, they will die of hunger then. Thus you can imagine, my brother, I preferred to give my money to my husband, not on account of the beating, but that I might not be wounded, and remain *able to work*."

"Poor woman, va! They talk of martyrdom—it is you who are a martyr!"

"And yet I have never harmed any one; I only ask to work to take care of my children; but what would you? there are the happy and unhappy, as there are the good and the wicked."

"Yes, and it is astonishing how happy the good are! But have you finally got rid of that scoundrel of a husband?"

"I hope so, for he did not leave me until he had sold my bedstead and the cradle of my two little children. But I think he wished to do something worse."

"What do you mean?"

"I say him, but it was rather this bad woman who urged him; it is on that account I speak of it. 'Enfin,' one day he said to me, 'when in a family there is a pretty girl of fifteen like ours, it is very stupid not to make use of her beauty.'"

"Ah! good! I understand. After having sold the clothes, he wished to sell the body!"

"When he said that, do you see, Fortuné, my blood only made one turn; and, to be just, I made him blush with shame at my reproaches; and as this bad woman wished to meddle in our quarrel by asserting that my husband could do with his daughter as he pleased, I treated her so badly, the wretch, that my husband beat me, and since that time I have not seen them."

"Look here, Jeanne, there are folks condemned to ten years' imprisonment who would not have done like your husband, at least they only despoil strangers."

"At the bottom, he is not wicked, look you; it is bad company at the taverns which has ruined him."

"Yes, he would not harm a child; but to a grown person it is different."

"What would you have? One must take life as the 'bon Dieu' sends it to you. At least, my husband gone, I had no longer any fear of being lamed by any blow; I took fresh courage. Not having anything to purchase a mattress with, for before all one must eat and pay rent, and my poor daughter Catherine and myself could hardly earn together forty sous a day, my two other children being too young to work—for want of a mattress we slept upon a straw bed, made with straw that we picked up at the door of a packer in our street."

"And I have squandered my earnings."

"How could you know my trouble, since I did not tell you? Well, we doubled our work, Catherine and I. Poor child, if you knew how virtuous, and industrious, and good she is! always with her eyes on mine to know what I wish her to do; never a complaint, and yet—she has already seen so much misery, although only fifteen! Ah, ça! it is a great consolation, do you see, Fortuné, to have such a child," said Jeanne, wiping her eyes.

"It is just your own picture, I see; you should have this consolation at least."

"I assure you, 'va,' that it is more on her account that I complain than on my own; for, do you see, since two months she has not stopped working for a moment; once every week she goes out to wash at the boats near the Pont-au-Change, at three sous the hour, the few clothes my husband left us: all the rest of the time at the stake like a poor dog. True, misfortune came to her too soon; I knew well enough that it must come; but at least there are some who have one or two years of tranquillity. That which has also caused me much sorrow in all this, do you see, Fortuné, is, that I could give you no assistance in anything: yet I will try."

"Ah, ça! do you think I would accept? On the contrary, I ask a sou for each pair of ears that listens to my stories; I will ask two, or they will have to do without the fables of Pique-Vinaigre, and that will help you a little in your housekeeping. But why don't you go into lodgings? Then your husband can't sell anything."

"In lodgings? Why, only reflect, we are four, they would ask us at least twenty sous a day; how much would remain for our living? while our chamber only costs us fifty francs a year."

"Allons—it is true, my girl," said Pique-Vinaigre with bitter irony; "work, break your back to fix up your room a little; as soon as you get something, your husband will rob you again, and some fine day he will sell your daughter as he has sold your clothes."

"Oh! as for that, par exemple, he shall rather kill me—my poor Catherine!"

"He will not kill you, and he will sell your poor Catherine. He is your husband, is he not? He is the *chief of the community*, as your lawyer told you, as long as you are not separated by law; and as you have not five hundred francs to give for that, you must be resigned; your husband has the right to take his daughter from you, and where he pleases. Once he and his mistress have a hankering after this poor little child, they will have her."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! But if this infamy was possible, would there be no justice?"

"Justice!" said Pique-Vinaigre with a burst of sardonic laughter, "is like meat; it is too dear for the poor to eat. Only, understand me, if it is in question to send them to Melun, to put them in the pillory, or throw them into the galleys, it is another affair; they give them this justice *gratis*. If they cut their throats, it is again *gratis*—always *gratis*. Ta-a-a-ake your tickets!" added Pique-Vinaigre, imitating a mountebank; "it is not ten sous, two sous, one sou, a 'centime,' that it will cost you. No, messieurs, it will cost you the trifle of nothing at all; it suits every one's pockets; you have only to furnish the *head*—the cutting and curling are at the expense of government. Here is justice *gratis*. But the justice which would prevent an honest mother of a family from being beaten and despoiled by a vagabond of a husband, who wishes to, and can make money out of his daughter, this kind of justice costs five hundred francs; and you must give it up, my poor Jeanne."

"Hold, Fortuné," said the unhappy mother, bursting into tears, "you kill me!"

"And does it not kill me to think of your lot, and that of your family, and seeing that I can do nothing? I seem always gay; but do not be deceived; I have two kinds of gayety, Jeanne; my gayety gay, and my gayety sad. I have neither the strength nor courage to be bad, angry, or malicious, as others are; that always passes over with me in words more or less farcical. My cowardice and my weakness of body have prevented me from becoming worse than I am. It needed the chance of this lonely hut, where there was neither a cat, nor, above all, a dog, to have urged me to steal. And then, again, it chanced to be a fine moonlight night; for alone, and in the dark, I am as cowardly as the devil!"

"That is what I have always said, my poor Fortuné, that you are better than you think. Thus I hope the judges will have pity on you."

"Pity on me? a returned criminal? reckon on it! After that, I don't wish it; to be here, there, or elsewhere, all the same to me; and then, you are right, I am not wicked; and those who are, I hate them, after my fashion, by making fun of them; you must think that, from relating stories where, to please my audience, I make it come out that those who torment others from pure cruelty receive, in the end, their pay, I become accustomed to feel as I relate."

"Do these people like stories, my brother? I should not have thought it."

"A moment! If I tell them a story where a fellow who robs, or who kills to rob, is strung up at the end, they will not let me finish; but if it is concerning a woman or child, or, for example, a poor devil like me, who would be thrown to the ground if he was only blown upon, and let him be ill treated by a *bluebeard*, who persecutes him solely for the pleasure of persecuting him, for *honour*, as they say; oh! then they shout with joy when, at the end, the *bluebeard* receives his pay. I have, above all, a history called *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*, which created the greatest sensation at the Centrale de Melun, and which I have not yet related here. I have promised it for to-night; but they must subscribe largely to my money-box, and you shall profit by it. Without extra charge, I will write it out for your children. *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*, it will amuse them; very religious people would read this history; so be easy."

"In fine, my poor Fortuné, what consoles me a little is, to see that you are not as unhappy as the others, thanks to your character."

"I am very sure if I were like a prisoner of our ward, I should be hateful to myself. Poor fellow! I am much afraid that before the end of the day he will bleed from one side or the other; it grows red-hot for him; there is a bad plot formed against him for to-night."

"Ah! mon Dieu! they wish to do him harm? you will have nothing to do with it, at least, Fortuné?"

"Not such a fool! I might be spattered. As I went backward and forward among them, I heard them muttering. They spoke of a gag, to prevent him from crying out; and then, to hinder any one from seeing the execution, they mean to make a circle around him, pretending to listen to one of them, who should be reading a paper or something else."

"But why do they wish to injure him thus?"

"As he is always alone, and speaks to no one, because he seems disgusted with them, they imagine he is a spy, which is very stupid; for, on the contrary, he would keep company with every one, if he wished to spy. Besides, he has the air of a gentleman, and that eclipses them. It is the *captain* of the ward, called the *squelette ambulant* (walking skeleton), who is at the head of this plot. He is like a real *no-bones* after this poor Germain—their intended victim is so named. Ma foi, let them make their own arrangements—it is their business; I can do nothing. But you see, Jeanne, what good comes from being sad in prison; right away you are suspected. Thus I have never been suspected, not I. Ah ça! my girl—enough talk; go and see if I am at your house; you lose too much time by coming here. I can only talk; with you, it is different; therefore, good-night. Come here from time to time; you know I shall be glad to see you."

"My brother, still a few moments, I beg you."

"No, no; your children are expecting you. Ah ça! you do not tell them, I hope, that their uncle is a boarder here?" "They think you are at the islands, as my mother did formerly. In this way, I hope, I can talk to them of you."

"Very good. Ah ça! go! go quickly!"

"Yes, but listen, my poor brother. I have not much, yet I will not leave you thus. You must be cold—no stockings, and this wretched waistcoat! I will fix something for you, with Catherine's aid. Dame! Fortuné, you know that it is not the will to do something for you that is wanting."

"What? what? clothes? but I have my trunks full. As soon as they arrive, I shall have wherewithal to dress myself like a prince. Come, laugh, then, a little! No? Well! seriously my girl, I do not refuse, while waiting for *Gringalet* and *Coupe en Deux* to fill my money-box. Then I will return it. Adieu, my good Jeanne; the next time you come, may I love my name of Pique-Vinaigre, if I do not make you laugh. 'Allons,' go away; I have already kept you too long."

"But, my brother, listen then!"

"My good man! eh! my good man!" cried Pique-Vinaigre to the guardian, who was seated at the other end of the "couloir," "I have finished my conversation; I wish to go in; talked enough."

"Ah! Fortuné, it is not kind to send me away thus," said Jeanne.

"On the contrary, it is very right. Come, adieu; keep up your courage, and to-morrow morning say to the children that you have dreamed of their uncle, who is at the islands, and that he begged you to embrace them. Adieu."

"Adieu, Fortuné," said the poor woman, all in tears at seeing her brother enter the prison.

Rigolette, since the bailiff had seated himself alongside of her, had not been able to hear the conversation of Pique-Vinaigre and Jeanne; but she had not taken off her eyes from them, thinking how to find out the address of this poor woman, so as to be able, according to her first idea, to recommend her to Rodolphe. When Jeanne rose from the bench to leave the "parloir," the grisette approached her, saying, timidly, "Madame, just now, without wishing to listen to you, I heard that you were a lace-fringe maker?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Jeanne, a little surprised, but prepossessed in favor of Rigolette by her pleasing manners and charming face.

"I am a dress-maker," answered the grisette. "Now that fringes and lace are in just the fashion, I have sometimes some customers who ask me for trimmings after their own taste; I have thought that perhaps it would be cheaper to apply to the makers; and, besides, I could give you more than your employer does."

"It is true, mademoiselle, by buying the silk on my own account, I should gain something. You are very kind to think of me. I am quite surprised."

"Hold, madame; I will speak to you frankly. I await the person I came to see; having no one to talk with, just now, before this gentleman placed himself between us, without wishing it, I assure you, I have heard you talk to your brother of your sorrows, of your children; I said to myself, poor folks ought to assist each other. The idea struck me that I might be of some use to you, since you are a fringe-maker. If, indeed, what I have proposed suits you, here is my address; give me yours, so that when I shall have a little order to give you I shall know where to find you."

And Rigolette gave one of her cards to the sister of Pique-Vinaigre. She, quite touched at the proceedings of the grisette, said gratefully,

"Your face has not deceived me, mademoiselle; and, besides, do not take it for pride, but you have a resemblance to my eldest daughter, which made me look at you twice on entering. I thank you much; if you employ me, you shall be satisfied with my work; it shall be done conscientiously. I am called Jeanne Duport. I live in the Rue de la Barillerie, No. 1." "No. 1. It is not difficult to remember. Thank you, madame."

"It is for me to thank you, my dear demoiselle; it is so kind in you to have thought at once of serving me! Once more I express my surprise."

"Why it is very plain, Madame Duport," said Rigolette, with a charming smile. "Since I look like your daughter Catherine, that which you call my kindness ought not to surprise you."

"How kind, dear demoiselle! Thanks to you, I go away from here less sad than I thought; and then, perhaps, we may meet here again, for you come, like me, to see a prisoner."

"Yes, madame," answered Rigolette, sighing.

"Then, adieu. I shall see you again; at least I hope so, Mademoiselle Rigolette," said Jeanne Duport, after having cast her eyes on the address of the grisette.

"'Au revoir,' Madame Duport."

"At least," thought Rigolette, resuming her seat, "I know now the address of this poor woman; and certainly M. Rodolphe will interest himself for her when he knows how unfortunate she is, for he has always told me, 'If you know any one much to be pitied, address yourself to me.'"

And Rigolette, taking her place, awaited with impatience the end of the conversation of her neighbour, in order to be able to ask for Germain.

* * * * * * *

Now a few words on the preceding scene.

Unfortunately, it must be confessed, the indignation of the brother of Jeanne Duport was legitimate. Yes; in saying the law was *too dear* for the poor, he said the truth.

To plead before the civil tribunals is to incur enormous expenses, quite out of the reach of artisans, who barely exist on their scanty wages.

Let a mother or father of a family belonging to this ever-sacrificed class wish to obtain an obliteration of the conjugal tie; let them have all right to obtain it; will they obtain it?

No; for there is no workman in a condition to spend four to five hundred francs for the onerous formalities of such a judgment.

Yet the poor have no other life than a domestic one; the good or bad conduct of the head of an artisan's family is not only a question of morality; it is a question of *bread*. The fate of a woman of the people, such as we have endeavoured to paint, does it, then, deserve less interest, less protection than that of a rich woman, who suffers from the bad conduct or infidelities of her husband?

Nothing is more worthy of pity, doubtless, than the griefs of the heart. But when to these griefs is added, for an unfortunate mother, the misery of her children, is it not monstrous that the poverty of this woman places her without the law, and leaves her and her family without defence against the odious treatment of a drunken and worthless husband?

Yet this monstrosity exists.

And a liberated convict can, in this circumstance as in others, deny, with right and reason, the impartiality of the institutions in the name of which he is condemned.

Is it necessary to say what there is in this dangerous to society, to justify such attacks?

What shall be the influence, the moral authority of those laws whose application is absolutely subordinate to a question of money?

Civil justice, like criminal justice, ought it not to be accessible to all?

When people are too poor to be able to invoke the benefits of a law eminently preservative and tutelary, ought not society to assure the application, through respect for the honour and repose of families?

But let us leave this woman, who will remain all her life the victim of a brutal and perverted husband, because she is too poor to obtain a matrimonial separation by law.

Let us speak of the brother of Jeanne Duport. This man left a den of corruption to enter the world again; he has paid the penalty of his crime by expiation. What precautions has society taken to prevent his falling back into crime?

None.

Has any one, with charitable foresight, rendered possible his return to well doing, in order to be able to punish, as one should punish, in a becoming manner, if he shows himself incorrigible?

No.

The contagious influence of your jails is so well known, and so justly dreaded, that he who comes out from them is everywhere an object of scorn, aversion, and alarm. Were he twenty times an honest man, he will scarcely find occupation anywhere.

And what is more: your withering "surveillance" banishes him to small localities, where his past life must be well known; and here he will have no means of exercising the exceptionable employment often imposed on the prisoners by the contractors of the maison centrales. If the liberated convict has the courage to resist temptation, he abandons himself to some of those murderous occupations of which we have spoken, to the preparation of certain chemical productions, by which one in ten perish; or, if he has the strength, he goes to get out stone in the forest of Fontainebleau, an employment which he survives, average time, six years!

The condition of a liberated convict is, then, much worse, more painful, more difficult, than it was before his first criminal action: he lives surrounded by shackles and dangers; he is obliged to brave repulses and disdain—often the deepest misery.

And if he succumbs to all these frightful temptations to criminality, and commits a second crime, you show yourselves ten times more severe towards him than for his first fault.

That is unjust; for it is almost always the necessity you impose on him which conducts him to a second crime. Yes; for it is shown that, instead of correcting him, your penitentiary system depraves. Instead of ameliorating, it makes worse. Instead of curing slight moral affections, it renders them incurable. Your aggravation of punishment, applied without pity to the backslider, is, then, iniquitous, barbarous, since this backsliding is, thus to express it, a forced consequence of your penal institutions.

The terrible punishment which awaits this *twice guilty* would be just and excusable if your prisons improved the morals, purified the prisoners, and if, at the expiration of the sentence, good conduct was, if not easy, at least generally possible.

If any one is surprised at these contradictions of the law, what would he be when he compares certain offences to certain crimes?

Either on account of their inevitable consequences, or on account of the disproportion which exists in their punishment. The conversation of the prisoner whom the bailiff came to see will offer to us one of these afflicting contrasts.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAITRE BOULARD.

The prisoner who entered the "parloir" at the moment that Pique-Vinaigre left it, was a man of about thirty years of age, with red hair, and a jovial, fat, and rubicund face; his middling stature rendered still more remarkable by his enormous "embonpoint." This prisoner, so rosy and stout, was wrapped up in a long and warm riding coat of gray swan's down, with gaiter trousers of the same material. A kind of hooded cap of red velvet, called à la Périnet Leclerc, completed the costume of this personage, who wore excellent furred slippers. Although the fashion of trinkets was over, the golden watchchain sustained a goodly number of fine gold seals and rings. Finally, several rings, enriched with precious stones, sparkled on the fat red fingers of this prisoner, named "Maître Boulard, huissier," accused of breach of trust.

His visiter was, as we have said, Pierre Bourdin, one of the officers charged with the arrest of Morel the jeweller. This bailiff was ordinarily employed by Maître Boulard, huissier of M. Petit Jean, an assumed name of Jacques Ferrand.

Bourdin was rather smaller, but quite as fat as the huissier, patterned after his patron, whose magnificence he admired? Having, like him, a partiality for jewels, he wore on this day a superb topaz pin, and a long chain of gold suspended from his neck, was entwined among the buttonholes of his waistcoat.

"Good-day! faithful Bourdin; I was quite sure you would not be missing at the roll call," said Maître Boulard, joyously, in a little cracked voice, which singularly contrasted with his fat body and his blooming face. "Missing at roll call!" answered the bailiff; "I am incapable of such an act, *my general!*" It was thus that Bourdin, with a pleasantry at once familiar and respectful, called the huissier, under whose orders he acted; this military form of speech being often used among certain classes of "employés" and civil practitioners.

"I see, with pleasure, that friendship remains faithful to the unfortunate," said Maître Boulard, with cordial gayety; "yet I began to be uneasy. Here are now three days since I wrote you, and no Bourdin."

"Imagine, my general, that is quite a history. You recollect well the handsome vicomte of the Rue de Chaillot?" "Saint Rémy?"

"Exactly! You know how he laughed at our writs?" "It was quite indecent."

"To be sure it was. We two, Malicorne and I, were quite stupified at it, if that were possible."

"It is impossible, brave Bourdin."

"Happily, my general; but here is the fact; this handsome vicomte has got new titles."

"Has he become a count?"

"No! from a cheat he has become a robber."

"Ah! ah!"

"They are at his heels for some diamonds he has stolen; and, by way of parenthesis, they belong to the jeweller who employed this vermin of a Morel, the lapidary whom we went to nab in the Rue du Temple, when a tall slim jockey, with black mustaches, paid for this starved rat, and came near pitching us headforemost down the stairs, Malicorne and me."

"Ah! yes, yes; I recollect. You told me that, my poor Bourdin; it was very funny. The best of the farce was that the portière of the house emptied on your backs a saucepan of boiling soup."

"Saucepan included, general, which broke like a bomb at our feet. The old sorceress!"

"That will be taken into your account of services and rounds. But this handsome vicomte?"

"I tell you, then, that Saint Rémy was prosecuted for a robbery, after having made his ninny of a father believe that he had blown his brains out. An agent of the police, one of my friends, knowing that I had for a long time tracked this vicomte, asked me if I could not put him on the scent. I had known too late, at the time of our last writ, which he had escaped, that he was burrowed in a farm at Arnouville, at five leagues from Paris. But when we arrived there it was too late; the bird had flown!"

"Besides, he had the following day paid this bill of exchange; thanks to a certain great lady, they say. Yes general; but, no matter; I knew the rest. He had once been concealed there; he might well enough be concealed there a second time. That is what I said to my friend the agent of police. He proposed to me to lend a hand, as an amateur, and conduct him to the farm. I had nothing to do—it was a nice party to the country—I accepted." "Well! the vicomte?"

"Not to be found. After having at first wandered around the farm, and having afterward introduced ourselves there, we returned as wise as we went; and this is the reason I have not been able to render myself sooner to your orders, my general."

"I was very sure there was an impossibility on your part, my good fellow."

"But, if it is not improper, tell me, how the devil did you get here?"

"Vulgar people, my dear—a herd of 'canailles,' who, for the miserable sum of sixty thousand francs, of which they pretend I have despoiled them, have carried a complaint against me for an abuse of confidence, and forced me to give up my commission."

"Really! general? ah well! this is a misfortune! how—shall we work no more for you?" I am on half pay, my good Bourdin; here I am on an allowance."

"But who is, then, so savage?"

"Just imagine that one of the most severe against me is a liberated robber, who gave me to collect a bill of seven hundred miserable francs, for which it was necessary to prosecute. I did prosecute; I was paid, and I pocketed the money; and because, in consequence of speculations which did not succeed, I have spent this money, as well as that of many others, all this 'canaille' have made such a brawling, that a writ was issued to arrest me, and thus you see me here, my good fellow; neither more nor less than a malefactor."

"Take care that don't cause you to sweat, my general."

"Mon Dieu! yes; but what is most curious is, this convict has written to me, some days since, that this money being his sole resource for rainy days, and that these days had now arrived (I do not know what he means by that), I was responsible for the crimes he might commit to escape starvation."

"It is charming, on my word!"

"Is it not? nothing more convenient. The droll fellow is capable of giving that as an excuse. Happily, the law knows no such accomplices."

"After all, you are only accused of an abuse of confidence, is it not, my general?"

"Certainly! do you take me for a thief, Maître Bourdin?" "Ah! 'par exemple,' general. I meant to say there was nothing serious in all this; after all, there is not enough to whip a cat."

"Have I a despairing look, my good fellow?"

"Not at all; I never saw you look more cheerful. Indeed, if you are condemned, you will only have two or three months imprisonment, and twenty-five francs fine. I know my code."

"And these two or three months, I shall be allowed, I am sure, to pass them at my ease in a 'maison de santé.' I have a deputy in my sleeve."

"Oh! then your affair is sure."

"Hold, Bourdin, I can hardly keep from laughing; these fools who have sent me here will gain much by it! They shall never see a sou of the money they claim. They force me to sell my commission—all the same. I am aware of the duty I owe my predecessor. You see it is these *Gogos* who will be the geese of the farce, as *Robert Macaire* says."

"That produces the same effect on me, general; so much the worse for them."

"Ah ça! my good fellow, let us come to the subject which made me beg you to come here; it is touching a delicate mission, concerning a female," said Maître Boulard, with a mysterious air.

"Ah! rogue of a general, I recognise you there! What is it? count on me."

"I interest myself particularly for a young 'artiste' of the 'Folies-Dramatiques;' I pay her board, and, in exchange, she pays me in return, at least I think so; for, my good fellow, you know, often the 'absent are always in the wrong.' Now, I am the more tenacious to know if *I am wrong*, as Alexandrine—she is called Alexandrine—has sent for some money. I have never been stingy with the fair sex; but, listen, I do not wish to be made a fool of. Thus, before playing the generous with this dear friend, I wish to know if she deserves it by her fidelity. I know there is nothing more *rococo*, more absurd, than fidelity; but it is a weakness I have. You will render me, then, a friendly service, my dear comrade, if you can for a few days have a supervision over my love, and let me know how to act, either by talking with the portière of Alexandrine, or—"

"Sufficient, my general," answered Bourdin, interrupting the "huissier." "This is nothing worse than watching, spying, and following a creditor. Have confidence in me; I shall find out if Mademoiselle Alexandrine sticks a penknife in the contract, which appears to me quite improbable; for, without flattery, my general, you are too handsome a man, and too generous not to be valued."

"I ought to be a handsome man; I am absent, my dear comrade, and it is a great wrong; in fine, I count on you to know the truth."

"You shall know it, I will answer for it."

"Ah! my dear comrade, how can I express my gratitude?"

"Come, come, now, my general."

"It is understood, my good Bourdin, that in this affair, your fees shall be the same as for an arrest."

"My general, I will not allow it; so long as I acted under your orders, have you not always allowed me to grind the debtors to the quick, treble the fees of arrest, costs which you have afterward prosecuted to payment with as much activity as if they had been due to yourself?"

"But, my dear comrade, that is different; and in my turn I will not allow—"

"My general, you will humiliate me, if you do not allow me to offer you this as a feeble proof of my gratitude."

"Very well; I shall struggle no longer with your generosity. Besides, your devotion will be a sweet recompense for the *moelleux* that I have always maintained in our business affairs."

"That is what I expect, my general; but can I not serve you in any other way? you must be horribly situated here, you, who like to be so much at your ease! You are *à la pistole*, I hope?"

"Certainly, and I arrived just in time, for I have the last vacant room. I have arranged myself as well as I can in my cell; I am not very badly off; I have a stove; I sent for a good arm-chair; I make three long repasts; I digest; I walk and sleep. Saving the inequietudes which Alexandrine causes me, you see I am not much to be pitied."

"But for you who are so *gourmand*, general! the resources of the prison are so meager?"

"And the provision merchant who lives in this street, has he not been created, as it were, for my service? I have an open account with him, and every day he sends me a nice little basket; and while on this subject, and you are ready to do me a favour, beg the 'marchande,' this good little Madame Michonneau, who, by parenthesis, is not so bad—"

"Ah! rogue—rogue of a general!"

"Come, my dear comrade, no evil thoughts," said the huissier, with a shade of fatuity, "I am only a good customer and neighbour. Pray the dear Madame Michonneau to put into my basket to-morrow a 'paté' of pickled tunny fish; it is now in season; it will be good for my digestion, and make me drink."

"Excellent idea!"

"And then, let Madame Michonneau send a hamper of Burgundy, Champagne, and Bordeaux, just like the last—she knows what that means; and let her add two bottles of her old Cognac of 1817, and a pound of pure Mocha, fresh ground and burned."

"I will just note down the date of the brandy so as not to forget it," said Bourdin, taking his notebook from his pocket.

"Since you are writing, my dear comrade, have the goodness to note down to ask at my house for my *eider down*."

"All this shall be executed to the letter, my general. Be easy; I feel now a little more assured as to your good living. But your walks, do you take them pell-mell with these brigands of prisoners?"

"Yes, and it is very gay, very animated; I come out of my room after breakfast; I go sometimes into one court, sometimes into another; and, as you say, I mix with the 'canaille.' I assure you that, at the bottom, they appear to be very good fellows; some of them are very amusing. The most abandoned assemble in what they call the *Fosse aux Lions*. Ah! my dear comrade, what patibulary-looking faces! There is one among them who is named *Le Squelette;* I have never seen his fellow."

"What a singular name!"

"He is so thin, or, rather, so fleshless, that it is no nickname; I tell you, he is frightful; and with all this, he is prevost of his ward; he is by far the greatest villain of them all. He comes from the galleys, and he has again robbed and murdered; but his last murder is so horrible, that he knows very well he will be condemned to death to a certainty, but he laughs at it like *de colin-tampon*" (a kind of Swiss march).

"What a bandit!"

"All the prisoners admire, and tremble before him. I put myself at once in his good graces, by giving him some cigars; thus he has taken me into his friendship, and teaches me *argot* (slang). I make progress.

"Ah! ah! what a good farce! my general learning *argot!*"

"I tell you I amuse myself like a hunchback. These jockeys adore me; some of them even say *thou*. I am not proud, like a little gentleman called Germain, a barefoot, who has not the means to be *à la pistole*, and who pretends to play the disdainful, the grand seigneur with them."

"But he must have been delighted to find a man so much at home as you are to talk with, if he is so highly disgusted with the others?"

"Bah! he did not seem to remark who I was; but had he remarked it, I should have been very guarded to respond to his advances. He is the butt of the prison. They will play him, sooner or later, a bad turn, and I have not, 'pardieu,' any desire to partake of the aversion of which he is the object."

"You are very right."

"That would spoil my recreation; for my promenade with the prisoners is a real promenade. Only these brigands have not a great opinion of me, *morally*. You comprehend—my accusation of a simple abuse of confidence—it is a sad thing for such a gentleman. Thus they look upon me as no *great things*, as Arnal says."

"In effect, alongside of these matadores (bull-slayers) of crime, you are—"

"A real paschal lamb, my dear comrade. Ah, ça! since you are so obliging, do not forget my commissions."

"Do not be uneasy, my general.

"1st. Mademoiselle Alexandine;

"2d. The 'paté,' and the hamper of wine;

"3d. The old Cognac of 1817, the ground coffee, and the eider down.

"You shall have all. Anything more?"

"Ah! yes, I forgot. Do you know where M. Badinot lives?"

"The broker? yes."

"Will you tell him that I always reckon on his obliging disposition to find me a lawyer who is prepared for my cause—that I shall not regard a cool thousand?" "I will see M. Badinot, be assured, my general; this evening all your commissions shall be executed, and to-morrow you will receive what you have demanded. Adieu, and good courage, my general."

"'Au revoir,' my comrade."

And the prisoner left the "parloir" on one side, the visiter on the other.

* * * * * * * *

Now compare the crime of Pique Vinaigre, a robber, to the offence of Maître Boulard, the huissier.

Compare the point of departure from virtue of the two, and the reasons, the necessities which have pushed them on to crime.

Compare, finally, the punishment that awaits them.

Coming out of prison, inspiring everywhere fear and indifference, the liberated convict could not follow, in the residence appointed him, the trade he knew; he hoped to be able to work at an occupation dangerous for his life, but suitable for his strength; this resource failed him.

Then he breaks his "ban," returns to Paris, contriving to conceal his former life and find some work.

He arrives, exhausted with fatigue, dying with hunger; by chance he discovers that a sum of money is deposited in a neighbouring house; he yields to temptation, he forces a window, opens a desk, steals one hundred francs, and flies. He is arrested, is a prisoner. He will be tried, condemned. As a recidivator, fifteen or twenty years of hard labour and the pillory is what awaits him. He knows it. This formidable punishment he deserves.

Property is sacred. He who, at night, breaks open your doors to take your goods ought to undergo a severe penalty. In vain shall the culpable plead the want of work, poverty, his position so difficult and intolerable, the wants which this position, this condition of a liberated convict imposes on him. So much the worse; there is but one law. Society, for its peace and safety, will and ought to be armed with boundless power, and without pity repress these audacious attacks upon others.

Yes, this wretch, ignorant and stupid, this corrupted and despised recidivator, has merited his fate.

But what shall he then deserve who, intelligent, rich, educated, surrounded by the esteem of all, clothed with an official character, will steal—not to eat, but to satisfy some fanciful caprice, or to try the chance of stock-jobbing? Will steal, not a hundred francs, but a hundred thousand francs—a million? Will steal, not at night, at the peril of his life, but tranquilly, quite at his ease, in the sight of all? Will steal, not from an unknown who has placed his money under the safeguard of a lock, but from a client, who has placed from necessity his money under the safeguard of the public officer, whom the law points out—imposes on his confidence?

What terrible punishment will he deserve, then, who, instead of stealing a small sum almost from necessity, will steal "par luxe" a considerable amount? Would it not be a crying injustice not to apply to him a similar punishment to that bestowed on the recidivator, pushed to extremities by misery, to theft by want?

Get along! says the law.

How! apply to a man well brought up the same punishment as to a vagabond? Fi donc! To compare an offence of good society with a vulgar burglary? Fi donc!* (A'n't you ashamed.)

* * * * *

Thus, for the public defaulting officer: Two months' imprisonment.

For the liberated recidivator:—twenty years hard labour, and the pillory.

What can be added to these facts? They speak for themselves.

What sad and serious reflections they give birth to.

* * * * *

Faithful to his promise, the old guardian had called for Germain.

When the huissier Boulard re-entered the prison, the door of the "couloir" opened, Germain entered, and Rigolette was no longer separated from her poor protégé but by a slight wire railing.

* The reflections of M. Sue on the absurdity of the penal laws of France we now omit; they are more particularly interesting to his own countrymen, and all such have doubtless read the original.

CHAPTER XXII.

FRANCOIS GERMAIN.

The features of Germain were wanting in regularity, but a more interesting face could scarcely be seen; his bearing was exalted; his figure graceful; his dress plain, but neat (gray trousers and a black frock-coat closely buttoned), showed none of that slovenly carelessness so peculiar to prisoners; his white and clean hands bore witness of a care for his person which had still more increased the aversion of the other prisoners; for moral perversity is almost always joined to personal filthiness.

His brown hair, naturally curled, which he wore long and parted on the side, according to the fashion of the times, hung around his pale and dejected face; his eyes, of a beautiful blue, announced frankness and kindness; his smiles, at once sad and sweet, expressed benevolence and habitual melancholy; for, although very young, this unfortunate youth had experienced many trials.

In a word, nothing could be more touching than his appearance, suffering, affecting, resigned; as also nothing more honest, more loyal, than the heart of this young man.

The cause even of his arrest (in despoiling it of the calumnious aggravations due to the hatred of Jacques Ferrand) proved the kind-heartedness of Germain, and accused him only of a moment's thoughtlessness or imprudence, culpable, doubtless, but pardonable, if one reflects that the son of Madame Georges was able to replace in the desk of the notary the sum taken to save Morel the lapidary. Germain blushed slightly when, through the grating of the "parloir," he perceived the fresh and charming face of Rigolette.

She, according to her custom, wished to appear gay, to encourage and cheer the spirits of her protégé; but the poor child badly concealed the sorrow and emotion that she had always felt since he had been imprisoned. Seated on a bench on the other side of the railing, she held on her lap her straw "cabas."

The old guardian, instead of remaining in the "couloir," went and seated himself near a stove at the extremity of the room. In a few moments he fell asleep.

Germain and Rigolette could then talk at their ease.

"Come, Monsieur Germain," said the grisette, approaching her face as close as she could to the grating, the better to examine the features of her friend; "let me see if I am satisfied with your face. Is it less sorrowful? Hum! hum! so, so; take care; you will make me angry." "How kind you are to come again to-day!" "Again! what! that is a reproach." "Ought I not, in truth, reproach you for doing so much for me—for me, who can do nothing but thank you?"

"An error, monsieur; for I am also as happy from my visits as you are. So I must, in my turn, thank you. Ah! ah! there is where I have caught you, Monsieur the Unjust. Thus I have half a mind to punish you for your wicked ideas, by not giving you what I have brought." "Another kindness! how you spoil me! oh! thank you. Pardon me, if I repeat so often this word, which you dislike! but you leave me nothing else to say."

"In the first place, you do not know what I have brought."

"What is that to me?" "Well, you are polite!"

"Whatever it may be, does it not come from you? Your touching kindness, does it not fill me with gratitude, and—"

Germain could not finish, but cast down his eyes.

"And of what?" asked Rigolette, blushing.

"And of—and of devotion," stammered Germain.

"Why not add respect at once, like at the end of a letter," said Rigolette, impatiently. "You deceive me; it was not that which you intended to say. You stopped short."

"I assure you—"

"You assure me! you assure me! I see you blush through the grating. Am I not your little friend, your neighbour? Why do you conceal ceal anything? Be frank, then, with me; tell me all," added the grisette, timidly; for she only waited for an avowal from Germain to tell him naïvely, honestly, that she loved him. An honest and generous love, which the misfortunes of Germain had called into existence.

"I assure you," answered the prisoner, with a sigh, "that I conceal nothing from you!"

"Fy, the false man!" cried Rigolette, stamping her foot. "Well, you see this large cravat of white wool that I brought for you?" and she took it from her "cabas." "To punish you for your dissimulation, you shall not have it. I knit it for you. I said to myself, it must be so cold, so damp, in those large courts of the prison, that at least he will be protected nicely with this; he is so chilly."

"How, you?"

"Yes, monsieur; you are liable to cold," said Rigolette, interrupting him. "Perhaps I recollect it well! that did not, however, prevent you hindering me (out of delicacy) from putting any more wood in my stove when you passed the evening with me. Oh, I have a good memory."

"And I also—only too good!" said Germain, in an agitated voice, passing his hand over his eyes.

"Come, now, there you are becoming sad again, although I forbid it." "How, do you wish me not to be touched, even to tears, when I think of all that you have done for me since my detention here? And this new attention, is it not charming? Do I not know that you encroach upon your nights to make time to come and see me? On my account you impose upon yourself extra labour." "That is it! Pity me, then, quickly, because every two or three days I take a fine walk to come and visit my friends, I, who adore a walk. It is so amusing to look at the shops along the streets!"

"And to come out on such a day; such a wind!"

"A reason the more; you have no idea what funny figures you meet! Some holding on their hats with both hands, so that the wind shall not carry them off; others, while their umbrellas turn wrong side out, like a tulip, are making incredible grimaces, shutting their eyes, while the rain beats in their faces. Ah, this morning, during my whole walk, it was a real comedy! I promised myself to make you laugh by telling it to you. But you will not even force a smile."

"It is not my fault; pardon me, but the kind interest you have manifested for me touches my very heart. You know it; my emotions are never gay; they are stronger than—"

Rigolette, not wishing to let him observe that, notwithstanding her prattle, she was very near partaking his agitation, hastened to change the conversation, and replied,

"You say that your feelings are stronger than you; but there is another thing that you will not master, although I have begged and supplicated you," added Rigolette. "Of what do you speak?"

"Of your obstinacy in always keeping yourself apart from the other prisoners; in never speaking to them. The guardian has just told me again that, for your own interest, you should associate with them. I am sure you will not do it. You are silent. You see well it is always the same thing! You will not be contented until these frightful men have done you some harm!"

"You do not know the horror with which they inspire me. You do not know all the personal reasons that I have to fly and execrate them and their fellows!" "Alas! yes; I think I know them—these reasons. I have read the papers which you wrote for me, and which I went to your lodgings to get after your imprisonment. There I have learned the dangers you have incurred since your arrival in Paris, because you would not associate yourself in crime with the scoundrel who brought you up. It was on account of the trap set for you that you left the Rue du Temple, only telling *me* where you were going to reside. In those papers I have also read something else," added Rigolette, blushing anew, and casting down her eyes; "I have read some things—that—"

"Oh! that you should have been always ignorant of, I swear it," cried Germain, quickly, "but for the misfortune which has fallen upon me—Ah! I interest you; be generous; pardon me these follies; forget them. In happier times I allowed myself these dreams, as wild as they were."

Rigolette had a second time endeavoured to extract an avowal from the lips of Germain, by making allusion to passages filled with tenderness and passion, which he had formerly written and dedicated to the recollections of the grisette; for, as we have said, he had always felt for her a lively and sincere affection; but to enjoy the cordial intimacy of his sweet neighbour, he had concealed this love under the mask of friendship.

Rendered by misfortune still more suspicious and timid, he could not imagine that Rigolette loved him *with love;* he a prisoner, he withering under a terrible accusation, while before these misfortunes she had never evinced any attachment stronger than that of a sister.

The grisette, seeing herself so little understood, suppressed a sigh, waiting, hoping for a better occasion to unfold to Germain the wishes of her heart. She answered, then, with embarrassment: "Mon Dieu! I can well comprehend that the society of these bad people causes you horror, but that is no reason for you to brave useless dangers."

"I assure you that in order to follow your advice, I have several times tried to address some of them who seemed the least criminal; but if you knew what language! what men!"

"Alas! it is true, it must be terrible."

"What is still more terrible is, to find I become more and more accustomed, habituated to the frightful conversations which, in spite of myself, I hear all the day; yes, now I listen with a sad apathy to the horrors which, during my first

days here, aroused my indignation; thus, I began to doubt myself," cried he, with bitterness.

"Oh! Monsieur Germain, what do you say?"

"By constantly living in these horrible places, our minds become accustomed to criminal thoughts, as our hearing becomes habituated to the gross words which resound continually around us. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! I comprehend now that one can enter here innocent, although accused, and leave it perverted."

"Yes, but not you—not you?"

"Yes, I, and others a thousand times better than I. Alas! those who, before conviction, condemn us to this odious association, are ignorant of its mournful and fatal effects. They are ignorant that almost in all cases the air which is breathed here becomes contagious—fatal to honour!"

"I pray you, do not talk thus; you cause me too much sorrow." "You ask me the cause of my growing sadness, there you have it. I did not wish to tell you; but I have only one way of acknowledging your pity for me."

"My pity—my pity?"

"Yes, it is to conceal nothing from you. Ah well! I acknowledge it with affright. I no longer recognise myself. I have good reason to despise, to fly these wretches. Their presence, their contact affects me, in spite of myself. One would say that they have the fatal power to vitiate the atmosphere they breathe. It seems to me that I feel the corruption entering through every pore. If they absolve me from the fault I have committed, the sight, the acquaintance of honest men will fill me with confusion and shame. I have not yet had the enjoyment of pleasant companions; but I dread the day when I shall find myself among honourable people, because I have the consciousness of my weakness."

"Of your weakness?" "Of my cowardice!"

"Of your cowardice? but what unjust ideas you have of yourself! mon Dieu!"

"Ah! is it not to be cowardly and culpable to compound with one's duty and probity? And that I have done." "You! you!"

"I! on entering here, I did not extenuate the magnitude of my fault, all excusable as it was, perhaps. Well! now it appears to me less, from hearing these robbers and these murderers speak of their crimes with obscene jests or ferocious pride. I surprise myself sometimes envying them their audacious indifference, and upbraiding myself bitterly for the remorse with which I am tormented for so slight an offence, compared to their misdeeds."

"But you are right! your deed, far from being blameable, is generous; you were sure of being able to return the money which you took only for a few hours, in order to save a whole family from ruin, from death, perhaps."

"No matter; in the eyes of the law, in the eyes of honest men, it is a robbery. Doubtless it is less criminal to steal for such a purpose, than for any other; but, 'voyez vous,' that is a fatal symptom, to be obliged, in order to excuse one's self in one's eyes, to look around for a reason. I am no longer the equal of men without a stain. Behold me already forced to compare myself with the degraded men with whom I live. Thus, in time, I well see, conscience is blunted, becomes hardened. To-morrow, I will commit a robbery, not with the certainty of being able to restore what I took for a laudable object, but I will steal from cupidity, and I will doubtless think myself innocent in comparison with those who murder to rob. And yet, at this present moment, there is as great a distance between me and an assassin, as there is between me and an irreproachable man. Thus, because there are beings a thousand times more degraded than I am, my degradation is to be excused in my eyes! Instead of being able to say as formerly, I am as honest as the most honest men, I will console myself by saying, I am the least degraded of the wretches among whom I am condemned now to live!"

"Not always? Once out of this?"

"No matter; even if acquitted, these people know me; when they leave the prison, if they meet me, they will speak to me as their old jail companion. If any one is ignorant of the accusation which brought me to the assizes, these wretches will threaten to divulge it. Thus you well see, cursed and now indissoluble links unite me to them, while, shut alone in my cell until the day of my trial, unknown by them as they would have been unknown to me, I should not have been assailed by these fears, which may paralyze the best resolutions. And then, alone, in thinking of my fault, it would have been magnified instead of being diminished; the graver it appeared to me, the greater would have been my future expiation. Thus, the more I should have felt the need of my own pardon, the more in my poor sphere I should have tried to do good. For it needs a hundred good actions to atone for a single bad one. But shall I ever dream of expiating that which at this moment scarcely causes me any remorse? Hold! I feel it, I obey an irresistible influence, against which I have struggled for a long time with all my strength. I was educated for crime, I yield to my destiny; after all, isolated, without family, what matters it that my destiny should be accomplished, be it honest or criminal? And yet, my intentions were good and pure. When they wished to make me guilty, I experienced a profound satisfaction in saying to myself, I have never been wanting in honour, and that, perhaps, was more difficult for me than all the rest. And now—oh! it is frightful—frightful," cried the prisoner, sobbing in so heart-rending a manner that Rigolette, deeply affected, could not restrain her tears.

* * * * *

Let us say, however, that Germain, thanks to his sterling probity, had struggled for a long time victoriously, and that he felt the approaches of the malady more than he experienced its reality.

His fear of seeing his fault become of less gravity in his own eyes, proved that he still felt all its enormity; but the trouble, apprehension, and doubts which cruelly agitated his virtuous and generous mind, were not the less alarming symptoms.

Guided by the rectitude of her understanding, by her woman's sagacity, and by the impulses of her love, Rigolette divined that which we have just said. Although well convinced that her friend had not yet lost any of his probity, she feared that, notwithstanding the excellence of his nature, Germain might at some future period become indifferent to that which then tormented him so cruelly.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RIGOLETTE.

"Si assuré que soit le bonheur dont on jouit, on serait quelquefois tenté de desirer des *malheurs impossibles*, pour contempler avec reconnaissance et veneration la noble grandeur de certains dévouemens."—WOLFRANG—*L'Esprit-Saint*, liv. ii.

RIGOLETTE, wiping her eyes, and addressing Germain, who was leaning against the grating, said to him with a touching, serious, almost solemn accent, and in a manner he had never seen her assume, "Listen to me, Germain: I shall express myself perhaps badly; I do not speak so well as you; but what I shall tell you will be as truly sincere. In the first place, you were wrong to complain of being isolated, abandoned."

"Oh! do not think that I ever forget that which your pity for me inspires you to do!"

"Just now, I did not interrupt you when you spoke of *pity;* but since you repeat this word, I must say that it is not pity at all which I feel for you. I am going to explain this as well as I can. When we were neighbours, I loved you as a brother, as a good companion; you rendered me some little services, I rendered you others; you made me partake of your Sunday amusements, I tried to be very lively, very agreeable, in order to thank you: we were quits." "Quits? oh! no—I—"

"Let me speak in my turn. When you were forced to leave the house where we dwelt, your departure caused me more regret than that of my other neighbours." "Can it be true?"

"Yes, because they were men without care, whom certainly I ought to miss less than you; and, besides, they did not yield themselves to be my acquaintances until I had told them a hundred times that they could be nothing else; while you—you have at once imagined what we ought to be to each other. Notwithstanding this, you have passed with me all the time you had to spare; you taught me to write; you gave me good advice, a little serious, because it was good; in fine, you have been the most attentive of my neighbours, and the only one who asked nothing of me for the trouble. This is not all: on leaving the house you gave me a great proof of confidence. To see you confide a secret so important to a little girl like me, dame! that made me proud. Thus, when I was separated from you, my thoughts were oftener of you than of my other neighbours. What I tell you now is true; you know I never tell a falsehood."

"Can it be possible you should have made this distinction between me and the others?"

"Certainly, I have made it, otherwise I should have a bad heart. Yes, I said to myself, 'No one can be better than M. Germain; only he is a little too serious; but never mind, if I had a friend who wished to marry to be very, very happy, certainly I should advise her to marry M. Germain; for he would be the paradise of a nice little housekeeper.'"

"You thought of me for another!" Germain could not prevent himself from saying mournfully.

"It is true; I should have been delighted to see you make a happy marriage, since I loved you as a valued friend. You see I am frank; I tell you everything." "And I thank you from the bottom of my heart; it is a consolation for me to learn that among your friends I was he whom you preferred."

"This was the situation of things when your troubles came. It was then that I received the good and kind letter in which you informed me of what you called your fault; fault! which I think—who am not a scholar—is a good and praiseworthy action; it was then that you asked me to go for those papers which informed me that you had always loved me, without daring to tell me so. These papers, in which I read"—and Rigolette could not restrain her tears—"that, thinking of my future, which sickness, or the want of work might render so painful, you left me, if you should die a violent death, as you feared—you left me the little which you had acquired by force of industry and economy—"

"Yes; for if I were alive, and you found yourself without work or sick, it is to me, rather than any one else, that you would address yourself—is it not so? I count on it! speak! speak! I am not mistaken, am I?"

"It is very plain; to whom would you have me apply?" "Oh! hold; these are words which do good, which are a balm for many sorrows!" "I cannot express to you what I felt on reading—what a sad word—this *will*, of which each line contained a 'souvenir' of me, or a thought for my welfare; and yet I was not to know these proofs of your attachment until you were no longer in existence. Dame! what would you? after such generous conduct one is astonished that love should come all at once! yet it is very natural, is it not, Monsieur Germain?"

The young girl said these last words with a naïveté so touching and so frank, fixing her large black eyes on those of Germain, that he did not understand her at first, so far was he from thinking himself beloved by Rigolette. Yet these words were so pointed, that their echo resounded from the bottom of the prisoner's heart; he blushed, then became pale, and cried, "What do you say? I fear—oh! mon Dieu—I am mistaken—per—I—"

"I say that from the moment in which I found you were so kind to me, and in which I saw you so unhappy, I have loved you otherwise than as a brother, and that if now one of my friends wished to marry," said Rigolettte, smiling and blushing, "it is no longer you I should recommend to her, Monsieur Germain."

"You love me! you love me!"

"I must then tell you myself, since you ask me."

"Can it be possible!"

"It is not, however, my fault, for having twice put you in the way to make you comprehend it. But no, monsieur does not wish to understand a hint; he forces me to confess these things to him. It is wrong, perhaps; but as there is no one here but you to scold me for my effrontery, I have less fear; and, besides," added Rigolette, in a more serious tone, and with deep emotion, "just now you appeared to me so much afflicted, so despairing, that I did not mind it; I have had the self-love to believe that this avowal, made frankly and from the bottom of the heart, would prevent you from being so unhappy for the future. I thought, until now I have had no luck in my efforts to amuse or console him; my dainties take away his appetite, my gayety makes him weep; this time at least—ah! mon Dieu! what is the matter?" cried Rigolette, on seeing Germain conceal his face in his hands. "There, tell me now if this is not cruel!" cried she; "no matter what I say or what I do, you remain still unhappy; it is to be too wicked and

by far too egotistical also. One would say there was no one but you who suffered."

"Alas! what misery is mine!" cried Germain, with despair. "You love me, when I am no longer worthy of you!"

"No longer worthy of you? There is no good sense in what you say now. It is as if I had said formerly, that I was not worthy of your friendship, because I had been in prison; for, after all, I have also been a prisoner; am I any less an honest girl?" "But you were sent to prison because you were a poor abandoned child, while I—mon Dieu! what a difference!"

"In fine, as to the prison, we have nothing to reproach ourselves for. It is rather I who am presumptuous; for, in my situation, I ought only to think of marrying some workman. I am a foundling; I possess nothing but my little chamber and my good courage; yet I come boldly and propose to you to take me for a wife."

"Alas! formerly this had been the dream, the happiness of my life! but now—I, under the weight of an infamous accusation, I should abuse your admirable generosity—your pity, which carries you away, perhaps! no—no"

"But, mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Rigolette, with impatience; "I tell you it is not a pity, it is love. I only think of you! I sleep no more—I eat no more. Your sad and melancholy looks follow me everywhere. Is that a pity? Now, when you speak to me, your voice, your look, go to my heart. There are a thousand things in you which now please me, and which I had not remarked. I love your face, I love your eyes, I love you, I love your mind, I love your good heart; is this still pity? Why, after having loved you as a friend, do I love you as a lover? I do not know! why was I lively and gay when I loved you as a friend? Why am I all changed since I love you as a lover? I do not know. Why have I waited so long to find you both handsome and good? to love you at once with my eyes and my heart? I do not know; or rather, yes, I do know: it is because I have discovered how much you loved me without ever telling it; how much you were generous and devoted. Then love mounted from my heart to my eyes, like as a soft tear mounts there when one is affected."

"Really, I think I am in a dream on hearing you talk thus." "And I, then! I never should have thought it possible that I could dare to tell you all this; but your despair compelled me! Ah, well! monsieur, now that you know that I love you as my friend, as my lover, as my husband, will you still say it is a pity?

The generous scruples of Germain were dispelled in a moment before this avowal, so artless and courageous. A joy unlooked for tore him from his sorrowful meditations.

"You love me!" cried he. "I believe you; your voice, your look, all tells me! I do not wish to ask myself how I have deserved such happiness, I abandon myself to it blindly. My life, my whole life, will not suffice to pay my debt to you! Ah! I have already suffered much, but this moment compensates all!"

"At length you are consoled. Oh! I was very sure, very sure I should succeed!" cried Rigolette, with a burst of charming joy.

"And is it in the midst of the horrors of a prison, and is it when everything oppresses me, that such a felicity—" Germain could not finish. This thought recalling the reality of his position, his scruples for a moment forgotten, returned more cruel than ever, and he resumed with despair: "But I am a prisoner; I am accused of robbery; I shall be condemned perhaps; and I would accept your valorous sacrifice! I would profit by your generous exaltation! Oh, no! no! I am not infamous enough for this!"

"What do you say?"

"I may be condemned to years of imprisonment."

"Well!" answered Rigolette, with calmness and firmness, "they will see that I am a virtuous girl; they will not refuse to marry us in the chapel of the prison." "But I may be confined far from Paris."

"Once your wife, I will follow you; I will establish myself in the place where you may be; I will work there, and I will come to see you every day!"

"But I shall be disgraced in the eyes of all."

"You love me more than all; is it not so?"

"Can you ask me?"

"Then what matters it to you? Far from being disgraced in my eyes, I shall regard you as the martyr of your good heart."

"But the world will condemn, calumniate your choice."

"The world! we will be the world to each other; and then let them talk."

"Finally, on coming out of the prison, my living will be precarious, miserable. Repulsed on all sides, perhaps I shall find no employment; and then, it is horrible to think of; but if this corruption which I dread should, in spite of myself, gain on me, what a future for you?"

"You will not be corrupted; no, for now you know I love you, and this thought will give you strength to resist bad examples. You will think that even if every one should repulse you on your leaving the prison, your wife will receive you with love and gratitude, very certain that you are still an honest man. This language astonishes you, does it not?" "It astonishes *me*." "I do not know where I find what I say to you. It is from the bottom of my heart, assuredly, and that ought to convince you; otherwise, if you disdain an offer which is made from the heart, if you do not wish the attachment of a poor girl who—"

Germain interrupted Rigolette with warmth.

"Well! I accept—I accept; yes, I feel that it is sometimes cowardly to refuse certain sacrifices; it is to acknowledge that one is unworthy of them. I accept, noble and courageous girl."

"True? very true? this time?"

"I swear it to you; and, besides, you have spoken words which have struck me—which have given me the courage I wanted." "What happiness! and what have I said?" "That for you I ought to remain an honest man. Yes, in this thought I will find the strength to resist the detestable influences which surround me. I will brave the contagion, and I will know how to preserve worthy of your love this heart, which belongs to you!"

"Ah! Germain, how happy I am! if I have done anything for you, how you recompense me!"

"And then, do you see, although you excuse my fault, I will not forget its gravity. My task, for the future, shall be doubled—to atone for the past, and deserve the happiness I owe to you. For that I will do good; for, however poor one may be, the occasion is never wanting."

"Alas! mon Dieu! it is true; those who are

more unfortunate than one's self can always be found."

"In default of money—"

"One gives tears, that which I did for the poor Morels. And it is holy alms: *the charity of the heart is worth more than that which gives bread.*"

"In fine, you accept; you will not retract?"

"Oh! never, never, my friend, my wife; yes, my courage returns; I seem to emerge from a dream; I doubt myself no longer; I wronged myself—happily, I wronged myself. My heart would not beat as it does beat if it had lost its noble energy."

"Oh! Germain, how handsome you look while thus speaking! How you reanimate me, not for myself, but for you! Now, you promise, do you not, that, now you have my love to shield you, you will no longer fear to speak to these wicked men in order not to excite their anger against you?"

"Be comforted. On seeing me sad and dejected, they, doubtless, accused me of being a prey to my remorse; and in seeing me joyous and gay, they will think that I have acquired their recklessness."

"It is true; they will suspect you no more, and I shall be happy. So, no imprudence; now you belong to me. I am your little wife?"

At this moment the guardian stirred; he awoke.

"Quick!" whispered Rigolette, with a smile full of grace and maiden tenderness; "quick, my husband, give me a sweet kiss on my forehead, through the grating; it will be our betrothment."

And the young girl leaned her face against the iron bars. Germain, profoundly affected, touched with his lips, through the grating, the pure and white forehead.

A tear from the prisoner fell there like a humid pearl.

Oh! touching baptism of this chaste, melancholy, and charming love!

* * * * * * * *

"Ho! ho! already three o'clock!" said the guardian, rising from his seat; "and visiters ought to leave at two. Come, my dear demoiselle," added he, addressing the grisette, "it is a pity, but you must part."

"Oh! thank you, thank you, monsieur, for allowing us to talk alone. I have given Germain good courage; he will no longer look so sorrowful, and thus he will have nothing more to fear from his wicked companions. Is it not so, my friend?"

"Be tranquil," said Germain, smiling; "I shall be for the future the gayest in the prison."

"Very good; then they will pay no more attention to you," said the guardian.

"Here is a cravat which I have brought for Germain, monsieur," cried Rigolette; "must I leave it at the office?" "It is the rule; but, after all, while I have already transgressed orders, a little thing more or less—come, make the day complete; give him quickly the present yourself." And the guardian opened the door of the "couloir."

"This good man is right; the happiness of the day will be complete," said François Germain, on receiving the cravat from the hands of Rigolette, which he tenderly pressed. "Adieu, and 'à bientôt.' Now I have no longer any fear to ask you to come and see me as soon as possible."

"Nor I to promise it. Adieu, good Germain."

"Farewell, my dear little friend."

"And be sure to make use of my cravat; take care you do not catch cold; it is so damp!"

"What a handsome cravat! When I think that you made it for me! oh! I will always keep it," said Germain, carrying it to his lips.

"Ah, ça! now you will have some appetite, I hope. Do you wish that I should make my little dish for you?" "Certainly, and this time I will do it honour."

"Do not be uneasy, then, Monsieur Glutton; you shall give me your opinion. Come, once more, adieu. Thank you, monsieur the guardian; to-day I go away very happy and gratified. Adieu, Germain."

"Adieu, my little wife; 'à bientôt.'"

"'A toujours!'"

Some moments after, Rigolette having put on her "socques,"* left the prison with a lighter heart than when she entered it.

During the conversation of Germain and the grisette, other scenes were passing in one of the courts of the prison, where we shall now conduct the reader.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LA FOSSE AUX LIONS.

If the material aspect of a vast house of detention, constructed with every reference to comfort and salubrity claimed by humanity, presents, as we have said, nothing gloomy or sinister, the sight of the prisoners causes a contrary impression.

A person is commonly touched with sadness and pity when he finds himself in the midst of a crowd of female prisoners, in thinking that these unfortunates are most always forced to crime less from their own will than by the pernicious influence of the first who betrayed them.

And then, again, women the most criminal preserve, at the bottom of the heart, two holy ties which the violent action of passions the most detestable, the most impetuous, never break entirely—*Love and Maternity!* To speak of love and maternity, is to say that, with these poor creatures, a soft and pure emotion can still light up here and there the profound gloom of a wretched corruption.

But with men such as the prison makes them, and casts into the world, there is nothing similar. It is crime of one cast: it is a lump of brass which only becomes red in the fire of infernal passions.

Thus, at the sight of the criminals who encumber the prisons, one is at first seized with a shudder of alarm and horror.

Reflection alone leads you to thoughts more compassionate, but of great bitterness.

Yes, of great bitterness; for one reflects that the vicious population of jails and galleys, the bloody harvest of the executioner, springs up from that mire of ignorance, of misery, and of stupidity. To comprehend this alarming and horrible proposition, let the reader follow us into the Fosse aux Lions.

One of the courts of "La Force" is thus called.

There are ordinarily placed the prisoners most dangerous for their previous ferocity, or for the gravity of the accusations which rest upon them.

Nevertheless, it had been found necessary to add to their number temporarily, in consequence

* A kind of sandals very much used by French women.

of the repairs now going on in the prison, several other prisoners.

These, although equally under the jurisdiction of the Court of Assizes, were almost honest people compared to the habitual inmates of the Fosse aux Lions.

The gloomy, dark, and rainy sky cast a mournful light on the scene we are going to describe. It took place in the middle of the court, which was a vast quadrangle, formed by high white walls, pierced here and there by some grated windows.

At one of the ends of this court was seen a narrow wicket door; at the other, the entrance to the "chauffoir," a large paved hall, in the middle of which was a "calonfere" of cast iron, surrounded by wooden seats, on which were stretched several prisoners, talking among themselves.

Others, preferring exercise to repose, were walking in the courts, in close ranks, four and five together, with locked arms.

One should possess the energetic and sombre pencil of Salvator or of Goya to sketch these diverse specimens of physical and moral ugliness; to describe their hideous habiliments, the variety of costume of these wretches, covered, for the most part, with miserable clothing; for, only being *attainted*, that is to say, *supposed innocents*, they were not dressed in the uniform of the *maison centrales;* some of them, however, wore it; for, on their entrance into prison, their rags had appeared so dirty, so infectious, that, after the customary bath, they had given to them the cap and coarse gray trowsers of the condemned.

A phrenologist would have attentively studied these ghastly and bronzed faces, with their flat foreheads, their cruel and insidious glances, wicked mouths, and brawny necks; almost all offered a frightful resemblance to the brute.

On the cunning features of this, one would find the subtle perfidy of the fox; on another, the sanguinary rapacity of the bird of prey; on the third, the ferocity of the tiger; and on another, again, the animal stupidity of the brute.

The circular walk of this band of silent beings, with bold and contemptuous looks, an insolent and cynical laugh, pressing one against the other, at the bottom of this court, offered something strangely suspicious. It caused a shudder to think that this ferocious horde would be, in a given time, again let loose among mankind, against whom they had declared an implacable warfare. How much sanguinary revenge, how many murderous projects lurk under this appearance of brazen and jeering perversity!

Let us sketch some few of the prominent physiognomies of the Fosse aux Lions; let us leave the others in the back ground. While one of the guardians watched those who were walking, a kind of meeting was held in the "chauffoir."

Among those who were present, we will find Barbillon and Nicholas Martial, of whom we shall speak only "pour mémoire."

He who appeared (as it is called) to *preside, and conduct* the discussion, was a prisoner nicknamed the Squelette (skeleton), whose name was mentioned several times by the Martials at the island of the Ravageurs.

Le Squelette was provost or captain of the "chauffoir." This man, of a good height, and about forty years of age, justified his appropriate nickname by a leanness impossible to be described, and that we should call almost osteological.

If the physiognomies of the companions of Le Squelette offered more or less analogy to that of the tiger, the vulture, or the fox, the form of his retreating forehead, and his bony, lank, and protruding jaws, supported by a neck of immense length, resembled entirely the conformation of a serpent's head. An absolute *calvitie* increased this resemblance still more; for, under the rough skin of his reptile-shaped forehead could be distinguished the slightest protuberances, the smallest sutures of his skull; as to his visage, let one imagine some old parchment drawn over the face, and only slightly tightened from the cheek-bone to the angle of the lower jaw, the ligament of which was plainly visible.

The eyes, small and squinting, were so deeply sunken, the eyebrows and cheek-bones so prominent, that under the yellowish forehead could be seen two sockets, literally filled with darkness, and, at a small distance, the eyes seemed to disappear in the bottom of these cavities, of these two black holes, which give such a horrible appearance to a death's head. His long, projecting teeth, were almost constantly displayed by an habitual smirk.

Although the emaciated muscles of this man were almost reduced to the condition of tendons, he was of extraordinary strength. The most robust resisted with difficulty the grasp of his long arms, and long, bony fingers. It could be called the grasp of an iron skeleton. He wore a blue "bourgeron," much too short, which disclosed, and he was proud of them, his sinewy hands and the lower part of his arms, or rather bones (the *radius* and the *cubitus*, the reader will pardon this anatomy)—two bones wrapped in a rough and blackened skin, and separated by some hard and cord-like veins.

When he placed his hands on a table, he *seemed*, to use a just metaphor of Pique-Vinaigre, to display a game of cockal.

Le Squelette, after having passed fifteen years of his life at the galleys for robbery and attempt at murder, had broke his "bar," and had been taken in the act of murder and robbery.

This last assassination had been committed under circumstances of such ferocity, that, taking into account he was a robber, this bandit looked upon himself, and with good reason, as already condemned to death.

The influence which Le Squelette exercised over the other prisoners by his strength, by his perversity, had caused him to be chosen by the director of the prison, provost of the dormitory; that is to say, Le Squelette was charged with the police of his ward, as far as regarded the order, arrangements, and neatness of the room and beds. He acquitted himself perfectly of these functions; and never had the prisoners dared to fail in the duties of which he had the superintendence.

Strange and significant.

The most intelligent directors of prisons, after having tried to invest with the functions of which we speak the prisoners who most recommended themselves by their good conduct, or whose crimes were less grave, had found themselves obliged to deviate in their choice, however logical and moral, and seek for provosts among prisoners the most corrupted, the most feared; these alone could exercise any influence over their companions.

Thus, let us repeat it again, the more a culprit shows audacity and impudence, the more he will be regarded, and, thus to speak, respected.

This fact, proved by experience, sanctioned

by the forced choice of which we have spoken, is it not an irrefragable argument against the evil of an imprisonment in common?

Does it not show, even to an absolute evidence, the intensity of the contagion which mortally attacks prisoners in whom there is some hope of restoration?

Yes, for what use of thinking of repentance, amendment, when in this pandemonium, where one must pass many years—his life, perhaps—it is seen that influence is measured by the number and gravity of misdeeds?

* * * * * *

Let us return to Squelette, prevost of the chamber, who was talking with several prisoners, among whom were Barbillon and Nicolas Martial.

"Are you very sure of what you say?" asked Le Squelette of Martial.

"Yes, yes, a hundred times, yes; the Père Micou had it from Gros-Boiteux, who already has wanted to kill him, the 'gredin,' because he has '*mangé*' (betrayed) some one."

"Then let some one eat his nose, and put a stop to this!" added Barbillon. "Just now, Le Squelette was for giving a *tournée rouge* (a stab) to this spy of a Germain."

The prevost took his pipe for a moment from his mouth, and said, in a voice so low, so *crapulously* hoarse, that he could scarcely be heard, "Germain holds up his head; he is a spy; he troubles us: for the less one talks the more one listens. We must make him clear out of the *Fosse aux Lions*. Once we make him bleed, they will take him from here."

"Well, then," said Nicolas, "what change is that?"

"There is this change," replied Le Squelette, "that if he has *mangé*, as Gros-Boiteux says, he shall not escape with a small bleeding."

"Very good," said Barbillon.

"There must be an example," said Le Squelette, becoming more animated. "Now it is no longer *la rousse* (police) who finds us out: it is *les mangeurs* (instigators and informers). Jacques and Gauthier, who were guillotined the other day, *mangés*. Roussillon, who was sent to the galleys *à perte de vue* (for life), *mangé*."

"And me, and my mother, and Calebasse, and my brother at Toulon!" cried Nicolas, "have we not been *mangés* by Bras-Rouge? That is certain now, since, instead of putting him here, they have sent him to 'La Roquette!' They did not dare to leave him with us; he knew his treachery, the gueux."

"And I," said Barbillon; "has not Bras-Rouge also *mangé* me?"

"And I," said a young prisoner, in a shrill and reedy voice, lisping in an affected manner. "I have been *coqué* (betrayed) by Jobert, a man who proposed an affair in the Rue Saint Martin."

This last personage, with the reedy voice, a pale, fat, and effeminate face, and an insidious and cowardly expression, was dressed in a singular manner. He had on his head a red foulard, which allowed two locks of white hair to be seen plastered on his temples; the two ends of the handkerchief formed a rosette over his forehead; he wore, for a cravat, a shawl of white merino with green palms in the corners on his bosom; his jacket, of maroon-coloured cloth, disappeared under the tight waistband of his ample trousers, made of gay Scotch plaid.

"If this is not an indignity! Must man be a scoundrel?" resumed this gentleman with the pretty voice. "Nothing in the world would have made me suspect Jobert."

"I know that he informed against you," answered the skeleton, who seemed to patronise this prisoner particularly. "The proof is, that they have done with him as they did with Bras-Rouge: they did not dare to leave Jobert here; they locked him up at the Conciergerie. Well, this must be put a stop to: we must have an example. Our traitor brothers carve out work for the police. They think they are sure of their necks because they are put in a different prison from those they have betrayed."

"It is the truth."

"To prevent this, every prisoner must look upon all *mangeurs* as deadly enemies: if they have blown on Peter or on James, it matters not which, pounce on them. When we have done the job for four or five in the court, the others will wag their tongues twice before they *coquer la pegre*" (denounce robbers).

"You are right, Squelette," said Nicolas; "then Germain must die!"

"He shall die," answered the prevost; "but let us wait until the Gros-Boiteux comes. When he shall have proved to everybody that Germain is a *mangeur*, enough said: the sheep will bleat no more; his breath shall be stopped."

"And what shall we do with the guardians who watch us?" asked the prisoner whom the skeleton called Javotte.

"I have my own idea. Pique-Vinaigre shall serve us."

"He? He is too cowardly."

"And not stronger than a louse."

"Enough. I understand myself. Where is he?"

"He returned from the grate, but some one came for him to go and *jaspiner* (talk) with his *rat de prison*" (lawyer).

"And Germain. Is he still at the grate?"

"Yes; with the little girl who comes to see him."

"As soon as he descends, attention! But we must wait for Pique-Vinaigre: we can do nothing without him."

"Without Pique-Vinaigre?"

"No."

"And Germain shall be—"

"I will take charge of it."

"But with what? They have taken away our knives."

"And these tongs, will you put your neck between them?" asked Le Squelette, opening his long fingers, hard as iron.

"You will choke him?"

"A little."

"But if they know it is you?"

"Afterward? Am I a calf with two heads, such as is shown in the fair?"

"That is true. One can only be made a head shorter once; and since you are sure of being—"

"Doubly sure; the *rat de prison* told me so yesterday. I have been taken with my hand in the pocket, and my knife in the throat of the *pante* (victim). I am a *cheval de retour* (second comer); it is all over with me. I will send my head to see, in the basket of *Charlot* (the executioner), if it is true that he cheats the condemned, and that he puts sawdust in his pannier instead of bran, which the government allows us."

"It is true; the guillotined has a right to his bran. My father was cheated, also, I recollect," said Nicolas Martial, with a ferocious chuckle.

This abominable pleasantry made all the prisoners laugh loudly.

* * * *

"A thousand thunders!" cried Le Squelette. "I wish they could hear us talk, these *curieux* (judges), who think to make us quake before the guillotine. They have only to come to the Barrière Saint Jacques the day of my benefit; they will hear me crack jokes with the crowd, and say to *Charlot*, in a bold voice, '*Père Samson*, the cord, if you please!'"*

Renewed laughter followed this sally.

"The fact is, that the affair lasts as long it takes to swallow a mouthful. Charlot, draw the cord; and he opens the door of the *boulanger* (devil) for you!" said Le Squelette, continuing to smoke his pipe.

"Ah, bah! Is there a *boulanger?*"

"Fool! I said that for a joke. There is a knife; a head is placed under, and that is all." "Besides, is that our business?" "As for me, now that I know my road, and that I must stop at the Abbaye de Mort à Regnet (the guillotine), I would as soon go to-day as to-morrow," said Le Squelette, with savage energy. "I wish I was there now. I feel my blood in my mouth when I think of the crowd who will be there to see me. There will be four or five thousand who will fight and quarrel for places. They will hire out windows and chairs as for a procession. I hear them already cry, 'Place to let! place to let!' And then there will be the troops, cavalry, and infantry. And all this for me—for Le Squelette. It is not for a *pante* (an honest man) that they take all this trouble. Hein! friends! Here is something to make a man proud. Even if he should be as cowardly as Pique-Vinaigre, it would make him resolute. All these eyes which are looking at you give you courage; and it is but a moment to pass; you die boldly; that vexes the judges and the *pantes*, and encourages the *pegre* (robber) to *blaguer la camarde*" (carry it off boldly).

"That is true," replied Barbillon, endeavouring to imitate the frightful boasting of Squelette. "They think to make us afraid, and confess all, when they send *Charlot* to open his shop on our account."

"Ah, bah!" said Nicolas, in his turn. "One is not wrong to laugh at the shop of *Charlot;* it is like the prison and the galleys; we laugh at them, also; as long as we are all friends together, '*Vive la joie à mort!*' Let us be merry till we die!"

"For example," said the prisoner with the lisping voice; "what would be tough, would be to keep us in cells day and night."

"In cells!" cried Le Squelette, with a kind of savage alarm. "Do not speak of it. In cells! All alone! I would rather they would cut off my arms and legs. All alone! Between four walls! All alone! No old cronies to laugh with! That cannot be! I prefer a hundred times the galleys to the central prisons, because at the galleys, instead of being shut up, one is out of doors, sees company, moves about. Well! I would rather a hundred times be a head shorter than be put into a cell only for one year. Yes, thus, at this moment, I am sure of being cut down, am I not? Well, let them say to me, 'Would you prefer a year in a cell?' I would stretch out my neck. A year all alone! can this be possible? What would they have one to think of when one is all alone?"

"If they were to put you there by force?"

"I would not remain. I would make such use of my feet and hands that I would escape," said Le Squelette.

"But if you could not; if you were sure that you could not escape?" "Then I would kill the first one I could, in order to be guillotined."

"But if, instead of condemning the *escarpes* (assassins) to death, they condemned them to a solitary cell for life?"

Le Squelette seemed to be staggered by this reflection. After a moment's pause, he replied,

"Then I do not know what I should do. I would break my head against the walls. I would allow myself to die with hunger, rather than be in a cell. How? all alone—all my life alone with myself? without the hope of escape? I tell you it is not possible. You know there is no one bolder than I am. I would bleed a man for a crown, and even for nothing, for honour. They think that I have only assassinated two persons; but if the dead could speak, there are five who could tell how I work." The brigand boasted of his crimes.

These sanguinary egotisms are among the most characteristic traits of hardened criminals. A director of the prison told us, *If the pretended murders of which these wretches boast were real, population would be decimated.*

"So I say," replied Barbillon, boasting in his turn: "they think that I have only killed the husband of the milkwoman in *La Cité;* but I have served many others, with big Robert, who was *shortened* last year."

"It was only to tell you," said Le Squelette, "that I fear neither fire nor devil. Well! if I were in a cell, and very sure of not being able to escape—thunder! I believe I should be afraid."

"Of what?" asked Nicolas.

"To be all alone," answered the provost. "Then, if you had to recommence your robberies and murders, and, instead of prisons, galleys, and guillotine, there were only cells, you would hesitate?"

"*Ma foi!* yes—perhaps" (a fact), answered Le Squelette.

And he spoke the truth.

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A noisy burst of laughter, and exclamations of joy proceeding from the prisoners who were walking in the court, interrupted the meeting presided over by Le Squelette.

Nicolas rose precipitately, and advanced towards the door of the "*chauffoir*," to ascertain the cause of this unaccustomed noise.

"It is the Gros-Boiteux!" cried Nicolas, returning. "The Gros-Boiteux?" said the provost; "and Germain, has he descended from the talking-room?"

"Not yet," said Barbillon.

"Let him hurry then," said Le Squelette, "that I may give him an order for a new coffin."

CHAPTER XXV.

CONSPIRACY.

Le Gros-Boiteux, whose arrival had been hailed by the prisoners in the *Fosse aux Lions* with such noisy joy, and whose denunciation was to be so fatal to Germain, was a man of

* To comprehend this humble pleasantry, it must be known that the knife slides in the grooves of the guillotine, after it has been set in motion, by a cord fastened to a spring; and that the only way of getting out of the hotels in Paris is, to ask the porter to draw the cord which leads from his lodge to the door.

middle stature; notwithstanding his obesity and his infirmity, he seemed active and vigorous. His bestial physiognomy, as was the case with most of his companions, much resembled a bulldog's; his low forehead, his little yellow eyes, his falling cheeks, his heavy jawbones, of which the lower, projecting beyond the other, was armed with long teeth, or, rather, broken tusks, which protruded over the lips, rendered this animal resemblance still more striking; he had on his head an otter-skin cap, and wore over his coat a blue cloak with a fur collar.

The *Gros-Boiteux* entered the prison accompanied by a man of about thirty years of age, whose brown and sun-burned face seemed less degraded than those of the other prisoners, although he affected to appear as resolute as his companion; sometimes his face became clouded, and he smiled bitterly.

Le Gros-Boiteux found himself, to use a vulgar expression, in the land of his acquaintances. He could hardly reply to the felicitations and welcomes which were addressed to him from all sides.

"Here you are at last, my jovial fellow. So much the better; we shall have a laugh." "We wanted you."

"You have staid away a long time."

"Yet I have done all I could to return to my friends. It is not my fault if they would not have me sooner."

"Just so, my old cock; no one will come of his own accord to be caged; but once there, one must enjoy himself."

"You are in luck, for Pique-Vinaigre is here."

"He also? an old chum of Melun! famous, famous! he will help us pass the time with his stories, and customers will not be wanting, for I announce some recruits." "Who then?"

"Just now, at the office, while they were enrolling me, they brought in two young men. One I do not know; but the other, who wore a blue cotten cap and a gray blouse, stuck in my eye. I have seen this fellow somewhere. I think it was at the *Lapin Blanc*: a very fine-looking man."

"Say now, Gros-Boiteux, do you recollect at Melun, that I bet with you, before a year, you would be nabbed?"

"That is true; you have won; but I had more chances to be a second comer than to be crowned with roses; but you—what have you done?"

"I have robbed *à l'Américaine*."

"Ah! good, always the same fashion?"

"Always; I go my own nice little road. This trick is common; but greenhorns are also common; and if it had not been for the ignorance of my colleague, I should not be here." "Never mind, the lesson will be of service."

"When I begin again, I will take my precautions; I have my plan."

"Ah, here is *Cardillac*," said the *Boiteux*, seeing a man approach, miserably dressed, with a low, cunning, and wicked expression, which partook of the fox and the wolf. "Good-day, old man." "Come, come, *trainard*," answered Cardillac, gayly; "they said every day, he will come, he will not come. Monsieur does like the pretty women one must wish for."

"Yes, yes." "*Ah ça!*" continued Cardillac; "is it for something a little *corsé* that you are here?" "Ma foi, my dear, I went in for a burglary. Before, I had done some good business; but the last failed, a superb affair; which, however, still remains to be done. Unfortunately, we too, Frank, whom you see, we have *marché dessus*" (failed).

And the Gros-Boiteux pointed to his companion, on whom all eyes were turned.

"So it is, it is true, here is Frank!" said Cardillac. "I would not have known him on account of his beard. How! is it you? I thought that at this present moment you were at least the mayor of your district. You wished to play honest?" "I was a fool, and I have been punished," said Frank, roughly; "but pardon for all sinners; it was good for once; now I belong to the *pègre* until I die; look out when I am released!"

"Very good; that is the way to talk."

"But what has happened to you, Frank?"

"That which happens to all liberated prisoners who are fools enough, as you say, to play honest. Their fate is so just! On coming out of Melun, I had saved nine hundred and some odd francs." "It is true," said the *Gros-Boiteux*, "all his misfortunes come from his having saved this money instead of spending it. You will see what repentance leads to, and whether one pays his expenses by it."

"They sent me under surveillance to Etampes," resumed Frank; "locksmith by trade, I went to seek employment; I said, 'I am a liberated convict; I know no one likes to employ them, but here are 900 francs of my savings; give me work, my money shall be your guarantee; I wish to labour and be honest.'"

"On my word, there is no one but this Frank could have such ideas."

"I proposed, then, my savings as a guarantee to the master locksmith, so that he might give me work. 'I am not a banker to take money on interest,' said he. 'I do not wish convicts in my shop; I work in houses, open doors the keys of which are lost; my trade is a confidential one, and if it were known that I had a convict among my workmen, I should lose my customers. Good-night, neighbour.' Did he not, Cardillac, get what he deserved?"

"Most certainly."

"Childish!" added the *Gros-Boiteux*, addressing Frank in a paternal manner, "instead of breaking your ban at once, and coming to Paris to fritter away your savings, so as to be without a sou in your pocket, and compelled to rob. Then one finds superb ideas."

"You tell me always the same thing!" said Frank, with impatience; "it is true, I was wrong not to spend my money, since I have not enjoyed it. As there were only four locksmiths at Etampes, he to whom I had first spoken had blabbed; when I addressed myself to the others, they told the same as their fellow. Thank you; everywhere the same song. So you see, friends, where is the use? We are marked for life!"

"Behold me '*en grève*' in the streets of Etampes! I lived on my money for two months," resumed Frank; "the money went, and no work came. I broke my ban—I left Etampes."

"That's what you should have done before."

"I came to Paris; there I found some work; my master did not know who I was; I told him I came from the country. There was no better workman than I myself. I placed 700 francs, which remained of my savings, with a broker, who gave me a note; when it fell due, he did not pay; I placed my note in the hands of an attorney, who sued and recovered; I left my money with him, and I said to myself, 'It is for a rainy day.' Then I met the *Gros-Boiteux*."

"Yes, my friends, and it was I who was the rainy day, as you will see. Frank was a locksmith; he manufactured keys; I had an affair in which he could serve me; I proposed it to him; I had impressions; he had only to copy them. The child refused; he wished to become honest; I said to myself, 'I must do him good in spite of himself.' I wrote a letter, without a signature, to his master, another to his companions, to inform them that Frank was a liberated convict. The master turned him out of doors, and his companions turned their backs upon him. He went to another master; worked there eight days; same game. If he had gone to ten more, I would have served him the same."

"And I did not then suspect that it was you who denounced me," said Frank, "otherwise you might have passed a disagreeable quarter of an hour."

"Yes; but I was no fool; I told you I was going to Lonjumeau to see my uncle; but I remained at Paris; and I knew all you did through the little Ledru."

"In short, they drove me away from my last master like a beggar, fit only to hang. Work then! be peaceable! so that one may say to you, not, what are you doing? but, what have you done? Once on the pavement, I said to myself, 'Happily, I have my money left.' I went to the attorney; he had cleared out—my money was gone—I was without a sou. I had not enough to pay a week's rent. You ought to have seen my rage! Thereupon the *Gros-Boiteux* pretended to arrive from Lonjumeau; he profited by my anger. I did not know on what nail to hang myself. I saw there was no means to be honest; that, once a robber, one was in for it for life! *Ma foi*, le *Gros-Boiteux* kept so close at my heels."

"Let this brave Frank scold no more," said the *Gros-Boiteux;* "he took his part boldly; he entered into the affair; it promised great things. Unfortunately, at the moment when we opened our mouths to swallow the morsel, nabbed by the police! What would you, *garçon!* it is a misfortune. The trade would be too fine without this."

"I don't care. If this 'gredin' of a lawyer had not robbed me I should not be here," said Frank, with rage.

* * * * * * *

"We speak of the Squelette! hold! here he is!" said Cardillac, pointing out the prevost, who had just appeared at the door of the "*chauffoir*," to his companion.

"Cadet, advance at the call!" said Le Squelette to the *Gros-Boiteux*.

"Here!" he answered, advancing into the hall, accompanied by Frank, whom he took by the arm.

During the conversation of *Gros-Boiteux*, Frank, and Cardillac, Barbillon had been, by orders of the prevost, to recruit twelve or fifteen prisoners, picked men. These, not to excite the suspicions of the keeper, had gone separately to the "*chauffoir*."

The other prisoners remained in the court; some of them, following the instructions of Barbillon, spoke in a loud, quarrelsome tone, to attract the notice of the keeper, and thus call his attention away from the "*chauffoir*," where were soon assembled *Le Squelette*, Barbillon, Nicolas, Frank, Cardillac, the *Gros-Boiteux*, and some fifteen other prisoners, all waiting with impatient curiosity until the prevost should take the floor.

Barbillon, charged to spy and announce the approach of the superintendent, placed himself near the door. The *Squelette*, taking his pipe from his mouth, said to the *Gros-Boiteux*,

"Do you know a young man named Germain, with blue eyes, brown hair, and the air of a *pante?*" (honest man).

"Germain here!" cried the *Gros-Boiteux*, whose features expressed at once surprise, hatred, and anger.

"You know him, then?"

"Don't I know him? My friend, I denounce him! he is a *mangeur!* he must be rolled up!"

"Yes, yes!" said the prisoners together.

"*Ah, ça!* is it very sure that he has denounced?" asked Frank. "If you should be mistaken, and injure a man who does not deserve it!"

This observation displeased the *Squelette*, who leaned towards the *Gros-Boiteux*, and whispered,

"Who is this?" "A man with whom I have worked." "Are you sure of him?"

"Yes; that he is not made of gall—it is molasses."

"Enough; I'll keep my eye upon him."

"Let us hear how Germain is a *mangeur?*" said a prisoner. "Explain yourself, *Gros-Boiteux*," resumed *Le Squelette*, who watched Frank closely. "Here it is," said the *Gros-Boiteux*. "A Nantes man, named Vélu, an old convict, brought up this young fellow, whose parents are unknown. When he was old enough, he placed him in a banking-house at Nantes, intending to make use of him for an affair he had in view He had two strings to his bow—a forgery, and robbery of the banker's strong box! perhaps a hundred thousand francs to gain by the two. All is ready; Vélu counted on the young man as on himself; this blackguard slept in the room where the strong box was kept; Vélu told him his plan; Germain neither said yes nor no, but told his patron all about it, and left the same evening for Paris."

The prisoners uttered violent threats and murmurs of indignation.

"If he is a *mangeur* we must bone him."

"If any one wishes it, I'll seek a quarrel, and I'll brain him."

"We must write on his face an order for the hospital."

"Silence in the *pègre!*" cried *Le Squelette*, in an imperious tone. "Continue!" he said to the *Gros-Boiteux*; and he recommenced smoking.

"Believing that Germain had said yes, counting on his aid, Vélu and two of his friends at tempted the affair the same night; the banker was on his guard, one of the friends of Vélu was nabbed in climbing a window, and he himself had the luck to escape. He arrived at Paris, furious at having been betrayed by Germain, and foiled in a superb affair. One fine day he met the nice young man; it was broad day; he did not dare to touch him; but he followed him; he saw where he lived, and one night, we two, Vélu and the little Ledru, pounced upon Germain. Unfortunately, he escaped us; he left his nest in the Rue du Temple, and since that time we have not been able to find him; but if he is here, I demand—"

"You have nothing to demand," said the *Squelette*, with authority. The *Gros-Boiteux* was silent.

"I take your bargain; you make over to me the skin of Germain, I'll take it off. I am not called *Le Squelette* for nothing. I am dead in advance; my grave is already dug at Clamart;

I risk nothing in working for *la pègre;* the *mangeurs* devour us more than the police; they place the *mangeurs* of La Force at La Roquette, and the *mangeurs* of La Roquette at the Conciergerie, where they think themselves safe. Stop a moment; when each prison shall have killed its *mangeur*, no matter where he has *mangé*, that will take away the appetite from the others. I set the example—they will follow."

All the prisoners admiring the resolution of *Le Squelette*, crowded around him. Barbillon himself, instead of remaining near the door, joined the group, and did not perceive that a new prisoner had entered the "*chauffoir*."

This new comer, clothed in a gray blouse, and wearing a cap of blue cotton embroidered with red wool, pulled well over his eyes, started on hearing the name of Germain; then he went among the admirers of *Squelette*, and loudly approved both with voice and gesture the determination of the prevost.

"Isn't he a mad cap, Le Squelette?" said one.

"What a learned man!"

"The devil himself could not scare him."

"There's a man!" "If all the *pègres* had his effrontery, it would be they who would judge and guillotine the *pantes*."

"That would be just; every one in his turn."

"Yes; but they won't agree upon that subject."

"All the same; he renders a famous service to the *pègre* by killing them; the *mangeurs* will denounce no more."

"That is certain."

"And since *Le Squelette* is so sure of being cut down, it costs him nothing to kill the *mangeur*."

"As for me, I think it cruel to kill this young man!" said Frank.

"What! what!" cried *Le Squelette*, in an angry tone; "one has no right to pay off a traitor?"

"Yes, true, he is a traitor; so much the worse for him," said Frank, after a moment's reflection.

These last words, and the assurances of *Gros-Boiteux*, calmed the suspicions which Frank for a moment had raised among the prisoners.

Le Squelette alone remained doubtful.

"*Ah, ça!* and what shall we do with the keeper?"

"Say then, *mort d'avance* (dead in anticipation), for this is as much your name as *Le Squelette*," said Nicolas, laughing.

"Well! some will engage his attention on one side." "No: we will hold him by force."

"Yes." "No."

"Silence in the *pègre!*" cried *Le Squelette*.

The most profound quiet ensued.

"Listen to me well," resumed the prevost, in a hoarse voice; "there are no means to do the job while the keeper is in the 'chauffoir' or the court. I have no knife; there will be some stifled cries—the *mangeur* will struggle."

"Then what is to be done?"

"This is my plan: Pique-Vinaigre has promised to relate to us to-day, after dinner, his story of *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*. It rains, we will all retire here, and the *mangeur* will come and take his seat in the corner, in his usual place. We will give some sous to Pique-Vinaigre to make him commence his story. It will be the prison dinner hour. The keeper seeing us quietly occupied in listening to the nonsense of *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*, will have no suspicions; he will go and take a pull at the canteen. As soon as he has left the court, we have a quarter of an hour to ourselves—the *mangeur* will be *mangé* before the guardian returns. I take it upon myself. I have done the job for more stubborn fellows than he. But I wish no help."

"A moment," cried Cardillac; "and the *huissier*, who always comes lounging here at dinner-time. If he should enter the 'chauffoir' to listen to Pique-Vinaigre, and should see us fixing Germain, he is likely to cry for help; he is not a man in breeches; he can fire a pistol, look out."

"That is true," said Le Squelette.

"There is a *huissier* here!" cried Frank, the victim, as is known, of the Maitre Boulard; "there is a *huissier* here!" he added, with astonishment.

"And what is his name?"

"Boulard," said Cardillac.

"It is my man," cried Frank, doubling his fists; "it is he who stole my savings."

"The *huissier?*" asked the prevost.

"Yes; seven hundred and twenty francs which he collected for me."

"You know him? he has seen you?" asked Le Squelette.

"I think I have seen him, to my sorrow. But for him I should not be here."

These regrets sounded badly in the ears of *Le Squelette;* he fixed his squinting eyes on Frank, who answered some questions of his comrades; then leaning over towards the Gros-Boiteux, he whispered in a low tone, "Here is a youngster who is capable of informing the keepers of our plot."

"No: I answer for him; he will denounce no one, but he is still a little timid about crime, and he might be capable of defending Germain. Better get him out of the way."

"Enough," said Le Squelette; and he said in a loud tone, "I say, Frank, won't you have a settlement with this brigand of a *huissier?*"

"Let me alone; let him come, his account is made out." "He is coming, get ready."

"I am all ready; he will bear my mark."

"That will make a scuffle; they will send the *huissier* to his *pistole* and Frank to the dungeon," whispered Le Squelette to the Gros-Boiteux; "we shall get rid of both."

"What, ahead! This Squelette, is he not a trump?" said the bandit, with admiration; then he resumed aloud, "*Ah, ça!* shall Pique-Vinaigre be informed that by the assistance of his story we mean to stuff the keeper and cut down the *mangeur?*"

"No; Pique-Vinaigre has too much molasses in his composition, and is too great a coward; if he knew it, he would not tell his story; the blow struck, he will bear his part."

The dinner-bell rang.

"To your grub, dogs!" said Le Squelette; "Pique-Vinaigre and Germain are going to enter the court. Attention, friends! they call me *mort d'avance*, but the *mangeur*, also, is *mort d'avance*."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STORY-TELLER.

The new prisoner of whom we have spoken, who wore a cotton cap and gray blouse, had attentively listened to, and energetically approved the plot which threatened the life of Germain. This man, of athletic form, left the "*chauffoir*" with the other prisoners, without having been remarked, and soon mingled with the different

groups that pressed into the court around the persons who distributed the beef, which they brought in copper vessels, and the bread, in huge baskets.

Each prisoner received a piece of boiled beef, which had served to make the soup for the morning meal, with half a loaf of bread, superior in quality to that given to soldiers.

The prisoners who had money could buy wine at the "*cantine*," and go there to drink what was called in prison slang, "*la gobette*."

Those who, like Nicolas, had received victuals from out of doors, got up a feast to which they invited the other prisoners. The guests of the son of the widow were Le Squelette, Barbillon, and, upon the latter's recommendation, Pique-Vinaigre, in order to get him in a good-humour for telling stories.

The ham, the hard eggs, the cheese and white bread, due to the forced liberality of Micou the receiver, were spread out on one of the benches of the "*chauffoir*," and Le Squelette prepared to do honour to this repast, without feeling any inquietude concerning the murder he was about to commit.

"Go and see if this Pique-Vinaigre is never coming. While I am waiting to choke Germain, I choke with hunger and thirst; do not forget to say to the Gros-Boiteux that Frank must pull the hair of the *huissier* so that the *Fosse aux Lions* may be rid of them both."

"Be easy, *mort d'avance;* if Frank does not pitch into the *huissier*, it will not be our fault."

And Nicolas left the "*chauffoir*."

At this moment, Maître Boulard entered the yard smoking a cigar, his hands plunged into his long surtout of gray moleskin, his cap drawn over his ears, his face smiling and gay; he spied Nicolas, who, on his side, looked at Frank.

The latter and the Gros-Boiteux were dining, seated on one of the benches of the court; they had not perceived the *huissier*, to whom their backs were turned. Faithful to the recommendations of Le Squelette, Nicolas, seeing with the corner of his eye Maître Boulard coming towards him, appeared not to remark him, and drew nearer to Frank and the Gros-Boiteux.

"Good-day, 'mon brave,'" said the *huissier* to Nicolas. "Ah! good-day, monsieur, I did not see you; you come, as usual, to take a little walk?" "Yes, my boy, and to-day I have two reasons for doing it. I am going to tell you why; but first take these cigars. Come, now, among comrades—the devil! one must not stand on ceremony."

"Thank you, monsieur. *Ah ça!* why have you two reasons for walking?"

"You will understand it, my boy; I do not feel any appetite to-day. I said to myself, looking at these gay boys at their dinner, and seeing them make use of their jaws, perhaps hunger will come." "Not so bad. But look this way if you wish to see two 'cadets' who eat lustily," said Nicolas, leading the *huissier* by degrees near the bench of Frank, whose back was turned; "just look at these two *swallow-raws*, your hunger will come as if you had just eaten a whole bottle of pickles."

"Ah! parbleu; let us see this phenomenon," said Maître Boulard.

"Eh! Gros-Boiteux!" cried Nicolas.

The Gros-Boiteux and Frank quickly turned their heads. The *huissier* was stupified, and stood with his mouth open on recognising him whom he had swinded.

Frank, throwing his bread and meat on the bench, with one bound jumped at Maître Boulard, whom he caught by the throat, crying,

"My money!"

"How? What? monsieur—you strangle me. I—" "My money!"

"My friend, listen to me."

"My money! And yet it is too late, for it is your fault that I am here."

"But—I—but—"

"If I go to the galleys, mark me, it is your fault; for if I had that of which you robbed me, I should not have been under the necessity of stealing. I should have remained honest as I wished to be. And you will be acquitted, perhaps—you—they will do nothing to you. I—but I will do something to you. I—you shall bear my marks. Ah! you have jewels, gold chains, and you rob! There—there—have you enough? No—here, take some more!"

"Help! help!" cried the *huissier*, rolling under the feet of Frank, who struck him furiously.

The other prisoners, very indifferent to this squabble, made a circle round the two combatants, or, rather, round the beating and the beaten, for Maître Boulard, panting and much alarmed, made no resistance, but endeavoured to parry, as well as he could, the blows of his adversary.

Happily, the superintendent ran, on hearing the cries of the huissier, and released him from his peril.

Maître Boulard arose, pale and trembling, with one of his large eyes bruised, and, without giving himself time to pick up his cap, cried, as he ran towards the wicket,

"Keeper—open for me; I do not wish to remain a moment longer—help!"

"And you, for having struck monsieur, follow me to the director," said the keeper, taking Frank by the collar; "you will go to the dungeon two days for this." "I don't care; he has got his pay."

"*Ah ça!*" whispered the Gros-Boiteux to Frank, pretending to adjust his clothes, "not a word of what they are going to do to the *mangeur*."

"Be easy; perhaps, if I had been there, I should have defended him; for to kill a man for that is hard; but denounce you? never."

"Allons, will you come?" said the keeper.

"There, we are rid of the *huissier* and Frank now; hot work, hot work for the *mangeur!*" said Nicolas.

As Frank left the court, Germain and Pique-Vinaigre entered.

Germain was no longer recognisable; his physiognomy, formerly so sad and cast down, was radiant with joy; he carried his head erect, and cast around him a cheerful and assured glance—he was beloved—the horrors of the prison disappeared from before his eyes.

Pique-Vinaigre followed him with an embarrassed air; at length, after having hesitated two or three times to accost him, he made a great effort, and slightly touched the arm of Germain before he had approached the group of prisoners, who, at a distance, were examining him with sullen hatred. Their victim could not escape.

In spite of himself, Germain shuddered at the touch of Pique-Vinaigre; for the face and rags of the "ci-devant" juggler did not speak much in his favour. But, recollecting the advice of Rigolette, and, besides, finding himself too happy not to be benevolent, Germain stopped, and said kindly to Pique-Vinaigre,

"What do you wish?"

"To thank you." "For what?" "For what your pretty little visiter wishes to do for my sister." "I do not understand you," said Germain, surprised.

"I am going to explain. Just now, at the office, I met the superintendent, who was on guard in the *parloir*." "Ah, yes; a very good man." "Ordinarily, the jailers do not agree with that description. But the Père Roussel, it is another thing; he deserves it. Just now he slipped into the tunnel of my ear, 'Pique-Vinaigre, my boy, do you know M. Germain well?' 'Yes; the butt of the yard,' I answered." Then, interrupting himself, Pique-Vinaigre said to Germain, "Pardon, excuse me, if I have called you a butt. Do not think of it; wait for the end. 'Yes, then,' I answered; 'I know M. Germain, the butt of the prison.' 'And yours also, perhaps, Pique-Vinaigre?' asked the keeper, in a severe tone. 'Monsieur, I am too cowardly and too good-natured to allow myself any kind of a butt, black, white, or gray, and M. Germain still less than any other; for he does not appear wicked, and they are unjust towards him.' 'Well, Pique-Vinaigre, you have reason to be on M. Germain's side, for he has been good to you.' 'To me? How so?' 'That is to say, not to you; but, saving that, you owe him great gratitude,' answered the Père Roussel." "Let us see; explain yourself a little more clearly," said Germain, smiling.

"That is exactly what I said to the keeper: 'Do speak more clearly.' Then he answered, 'It is not M. Germain, but his pretty little visiter, who has been full of kindness for your sister. She overheard her relate to you her misfortunes, and, as she was about leaving the *parloir*, the young girl offered her any assistance she could render.'"

"Good Rigolette!" cried Germain, affected. "She took good care not to mention it."

"'Oh! then,' I answered the keeper, 'I am only a gander. You are right; M. Germain has been good to me; for his visiter is, as may be said, himself, and my sister Jeanne is myself and much more.'"

"Poor little Rigolette!" said Germain. "This does not surprise me; she has a heart so generous, so susceptible."

"The keeper went on: 'I heard all this without pretending to listen. Now you know it, if you do not try to render a service to M. Germain; if you do not advise him in case of any plot against him, you would be a finished scoundrel, Pique-Vinaigre.' 'Keeper, I am a scoundrel,' commenced I, 'it is true; but not a finished scoundrel. In fine, since the visiter of M. Germain wished to do some good to my poor Jeanne, who is a good and honest girl, I will do for M. Germain what I can; unfortunately, that will be no great things.'

"'Never mind, do what you can; I am also going to give you some good news for M. Germain; I have just heard it.'" "What is it, then?" asked Germain. "'To-morrow there will be a cell vacant *à la pistole*,' the keeper told me to inform you."

"Can it be true? Oh! what happiness!" cried Germain. "This good man was right; it is good news you tell me."

"I think so, for your place is not with folks like us, Monsieur Germain." Then he added hastily, and in a low tone, as he pretended to stoop for something, "Hold, Monsieur Germain; look at the prisoners how they stare at us; they are astonished to see us talking together. I leave you; be on your guard. If they seek a quarrel, do not answer; they only want a pretext to engage you in a dispute, and beat you. Barbillon is to begin the dispute—look out for him; I will try to turn them from this notion." And Pique-Vinaigre lifted up his head as if he had found what he had pretended to look for. Only informed of the conspiracy of the morning, which was to provoke a quarrel in which Germain would be roughly handled, in order to force the director to change his ward, not only was Pique-Vinaigre ignorant of the murderous project of Le Squelette, but he was also ignorant that they counted on his story of *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux* to deceive and distract the attention of the keeper.

"Come, then, lazy-bones," said Nicolas to Pique-Vinaigre, going to meet him; "leave your ration of flesh there; we have a merry-making and feasting. I invite you."

"Whereabouts? at the Panier Fleuri? at the Petit Ramponneau?"

"*Farceur!* No, in the *chauffoir*; the table is set on a bench. We have some gammon, eggs, and cheese—my treat."

"That suits me; but it is a pity to lose my ration, and still more that my sister cannot profit by it. Neither she nor her children often see meat, except at the door of the butcher."

"Come, come quick. Le Squelette is making a beast of himself; he is capable of devouring the whole with Barbillon."

Nicolas and Pique-Vinaigre entered the "*chauffoir*;" Le Squelette, seated astride on the end of the bench where the feast was spread, swore and cursed while waiting for the giver of the banquet.

"Here you are at last, snail, laggard!" cried the bandit, at the sight of Pique-Vinaigre; "what have you been doing, then?"

"He was talking with Germain," said Nicolas, carving the ham.

"Ah! you were talking with Germain?" said Le Squelette, looking attentively at Pique-Vinaigre, without pausing in his mastication.

"Yes!" answered the "*conteur*" (story teller). "Ah! here is another who never invented bootjacks and hard eggs (I say eggs because I adore them). Isn't he a fool! this Germain! I used to think that he was a spy, but he is too much of a flat for that!"

"Ah! you think so?" said Le Squelette, exchanging a rapid and significant glance with Nicolas and Barbillon.

"I am as sure of it as that I see ham! And, then, how the devil would you have him spy? he is always alone; he speaks to no one, and no one speaks to him; he runs away from us as if we had the cholera. Besides, he will not spy for a long time; he is going to be *à la pistole*."

"He!" cried Le Squelette; "and when?"

"To-morrow morning there will be a cell vacant."

"You see we must kill him at once. He does not sleep in my ward; to-morrow will be too late. To-day we have only until four o'clock, and now it is almost three," whispered Le Squelette to Nicolas, while Pique-Vinaigre talked with Barbillon.

"All the same," answered Nicolas aloud, pretending to answer an observation of Le Squelette. "Germain looks as if he despises us."

"On the contrary, my children," answered

Pique-Vinaigre, "you intimidate this young man. He looks upon himself, in comparison with you, as the least of the least. Just now, what do you think he said?"

"How should I know?"

"He said to me, 'You are very happy, Pique-Vinaigre, to dare to speak with this famous Squelette (he used the word famous) as an equal and a companion. I am dying to speak to him; but he produces an effect upon me so respectful—so respectful—that, should I see monsieur the prefect of the police in flesh, and bones, and uniform, I could not be more overcome.'"

"He told you that?" replied Le Squelette, feigning to believe him, and to be flattered at the admiration he excited in Germain.

"As true as that you are the greatest brigand on the earth, he told me so."

"Then it is different," answered Le Squelette; "I must make up with him. Barbillon had a mind to pick a quarrel, but he, too, will do well to let him alone."

"He will do better," cried Pique-Vinaigre, persuaded that he had turned away the danger with which Germain was threatened. "He will do better, for this poor fellow won't dispute; he is one of my kind, bold as a hare."

"Yet it is a pity," said Le Squelette: "we reckoned on this quarrel to amuse us after dinner, the time appears so long."

"Yes. What shall we do, then?" asked Nicolas.

"Since it is so, let Pique-Vinaigre tell us a story. I will not seek a quarrel with Germain," said Barbillon.

"Agreed, agreed!" cried the "*conteur*." "That is one condition; but there is another, and without both I tell no stories."

"Come, what is your other condition?"

"It is, that the honourable society which is poisoned with capitalists," said Pique-Vinaigre, assuming his mountebank twang, "will make for me the trifle of a contribution of twenty sous. Twenty sous, messieurs, to hear the famous Pique-Vinaigre, who has had the honour to perform before the most renowned robbers, before the most famous rogues of France and Navarre, and who is immediately expected at Brest and at Toulon, where he goes by order of the government. Twenty sous! It is nothing, messieurs!"

"Come, you shall have twenty sous when you have told the story."

"After? No; before!" cried Pique-Vinaigre.

"*Ah, ça!* I say, do you think us capable of cheating you out of twenty sous?" said Le Squelette, with a displeased air.

"Not at all," answered Pique-Vinaigre; "I honour the *pégre* with my confidence, and it is to spare its purse that I ask twenty sous in advance."

"On your word of honour?"

"Yes, messieurs; for, after my tale is finished, you will be so satisfied that it is no longer twenty sous, but twenty francs—but a hundred francs that you will force me to take! I know, myself, I would have the *meanness* to accept the offering; so, you see, that, for economy's sake, you will do better to give me twenty sous in advance."

"Oh! you are not wanting in jaw."

"I have nothing but my tongue; I must use it; and then, the point of the matter is, that my sister and her children are in extreme want, and twenty sous in a small circle is felt."

"Why does she not *grinche?* and her children also, if they are old enough?" said Nicolas.

"Do not speak of it; it wounds me, it dishonours me. I am too good."

"You had better say too stupid, since you encourage her." "It is true, I encourage her in the vice of honesty. But she is only good for that trade—she makes me pity her. *Ah, ça!* it is agreed. I will relate to you my famous history of Gringalet et Coupe en Deux; but I must have my twenty sous; and Barbillon will not seek a quarrel with that imbecile Germain."

"You shall have your twenty sous, and Barbillon shall not pick a quarrel with the imbecile Germain," said Le Squelette.

"Then open your ears, for you are going to hear something choice. But here is the rain, which sends in the guests; there will be no need to go after them."

In fact, the rain began to fall, the prisoners left the court, and came to take refuge in the "*chauffoir*," always accompanied by a keeper. We have already said that this *chauffoir* was a long paved room, lighted by windows looking out on the court; in the centre was placed the stove, near which were Le Squelette, Barbillon, Nicolas, and Pique-Vinaigre. At a nod from the provost, Le Gros-Boiteux joined the group.

Germain entered among the last, absorbed in delightful thoughts. He went mechanically to seat himself on the ledge of the farthest window in the room, a place he habitually occupied, and which no one disputed; for it was far from the stove, around which the prisoners clustered.

We have said that only some fifteen of the prisoners had been informed at first of the intended murder of Germain. But, soon divulged, this project counted as many adherents as there were prisoners; these wretches, in their blind cruelty, regarded this frightful plot as a legitimate vengeance, and saw in it a certain guarantee against the future denunciations of the *mangeurs*.

Germain, Pique-Vinaigre, and the keeper were alone ignorant of what was about to take place. The general attention was divided between the executioner, the victim, and the "*conteur*," who was about innocently to deprive Germain of the only succour which he had to depend upon; for it was almost certain that the keeper, seeing the prisoners attentive to the story of Pique-Vinaigre, would believe his presence useless, and profit by this moment of calm to go and take his repast.

When all the prisoners had entered, Le Squelette said to the keeper,

"I say, old man, Pique-Vinaigre has a good idea: he is going to tell us his story of *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*. The weather is so bad it is not fit to put a constable out of doors; we are going to wait here quietly for the time to go to our nests." "True enough, when he talks, you keep yourselves quiet. At least, there is no need of being behind your backs."

"Yes," replied Le Squelette; "but Pique-Vinaigre charges high for telling a story: he wants twenty sous."

"Yes, the bagatelle of twenty sous; and then it is for nothing," cried Pique-Vinaigre. "Yes, messieurs, nothing; for one should not keep a '*liard*' in his pocket, and thus deprive himself of the pleasure of hearing the adventures of poor little *Gringalet*, of the terrible *Coupe en Deux*, and the wicked *Gargousse;* it is enough to break one's heart, to make your the hair stand on

end. Now, messieurs, who is it that cannot spare the bagatelle of four '*liards*,' or, if you prefer to count in kilometres, the trifle of five centimes, to have the heart broken and the hair made to stand on end?"

"I give two sous!" said Le Squelette; and he threw his piece towards Pique-Vinaigre. "Allons! shall the *pègre* be stingy for such an entertainment?" he added, looking at his accomplices with a significant air. Several sous were thrown from one side and the other, to the great joy of Pique-Vinaigre, who thought of his sister as he made his collection. "Eight, nine, eleven, twelve, thirteen!" he cried, picking up his money; "come, messieurs the rich folks, capitalists and other bankers, one more little effort; you cannot remain at thirteen, it is an unlucky number. Only seven sous wanting—the bagatelle of seven sous! How, messieurs, shall it be said that the *pègre* of the *Fosse aux Lions* cannot raise seven sous more—seven miserable sous! Ah! messieurs, you will lead me to think that you have been placed here unjustly, or that you have been very unlucky."

The piercing voice and the witticisms of Pique-Vinaigre had roused Germain from his revery; as much to follow the advice of Rigolette, to make himself popular, as to make a slight donation to this poor devil who had shown some desire to be useful to him, he arose and threw a piece of ten sous at the feet of the "*conteur*," who cried, showing to the crowd the generous donor,

"Ten sous, messieurs! you see, I spoke of capitalists; honour to monsieur, he acts the banker, the ambassador, to be agreeable to the society. Yes, messieurs! for it is to him you will owe the greater part of *Gringalet* and *Coupe en Deux*, and you will thank him for it. As to the three sous surplus caused by his donation, I will deserve them by imitating the voices of my personages, instead of speaking in my ordinary manner. This shall be another delight that you will owe to this rich capitalist, whom you must adore."

"Come, don't jaw so much, but begin," said Le Squelette. "A moment, messieurs," said Pique-Vinaigre; "it is but just that this capitalist, who has given me ten sous, should have the best place, except our provost, who must choose first." This proposition answered the purpose of Le Squelette so well, that he cried,

"It is true, after me he should be the best seated." And the bandit again cast a look of intelligence at the prisoners.

"Yes, yes, let him approach," they cried.

"Let him take the front seat."

"You see, young man, your liberality is recompensed; the honourable society recognises that you have the right to the first seat," said Pique-Vinaigre to Germain.

Believing that his liberality had really disposed his odious companions in his favour, enchanted thus to follow the advice of Rigolette, Germain, in spite of his repugnance, left his seat, and approached the "*conteur*."

He, aided by Nicolas and Barbillon, having arranged around the stove the four or five benches of the "*chauffoir*," said with emphasis,

"Here are front boxes! honour to whom honour is due; in the first place the capitalist. Now, let those who have paid seat themselves on the benches," added Pique-Vinaigre, gayly, firmly believing that Germain had, thanks to him, no more danger to apprehend. "And those who have not paid," he added, "will sit on the ground or stand up, as they choose."

Let us glance at the arrangements as now completed.

Pique-Vinaigre, standing near the stone, was getting ready to commence his story.

Near him, Le Squelette, also standing, ready to spring on Germain the moment the keeper should leave the hall.

At some distance from Germain, Nicolas, Barbillon, Cardillac, and some other prisoners, among whom was seen the man in the blue cotton cap and gray blouse, occupied the back benches.

The larger number of prisoners grouped here and there, some seated on the ground, others standing and leaning against the walls, composed the background of this picture, lighted, after the manner of Rembrandt, by the three lateral windows, which cast a vivid light and deep shade on these figures, so differently characterized and so strongly marked.

The keeper, who, without knowing it, was, by his departure, to give the signal for the murder of Germain, stood near the half-opened door.

"All ready?" said Pique-Vinaigre to Le Squelette. "Silence in the *pègre!*" answered the latter, half turning round; then addressing Pique-Vinaigre, "Now, begin your story: we listen."

A profound silence reigned in the "*chauffoir*."

CHAPTER XXVII.

GRINGALET ET COUPE EN DOUX.

"Rien de plus doux, de plus salutaire, de plus précieux, que vos paroles, elles charment, elles encouragent, elles améliorent."—WOLFRAND, liv. iv.

BEFORE we commence the recital of Pique-Vinaigre, we will recall to our readers that, by a strange contrast, the majority of the prisoners, notwithstanding their cynical perversity, almost always preferred artless stories (we would not say puerile), in which the oppressed, by the laws of an inexorable fatality, is revenged on his tyrant, after trials and difficulties without number.

The thought is far from us, to establish the slightest parallel between corrupted beings and the honest and poor masses; but is it not known with what phrensied applause the audience at the theatres of the Boulevards behold the deliverance of the victim, and with what curses they pursue the traitor and the wicked?

One ordinarily laughs at these rough evidences of sympathy for that which is good, weak, and persecuted; of aversion for that which is powerful, unjust, and cruel.

It seems to us that to laugh at this is wrong.

Nothing is more innately consoling than these feelings of the multitude.

Is it not evident that these salutary instincts may become fixed principles in those unfortunate beings whom ignorance and poverty expose to the subversive attacks of evil? Why not have every hope of a people whose good moral sense is so invariably manifested? of a people who, in spite of the fascinations of art, will never permit a dramatic work to arrive at its denouement by the triumph of the wicked and the punishment of the just?

This fact, scorned and laughed at though it

be, appears to us of considerable importance on account of the tendencies which it proves, and which are even often found (we repeat it) among beings the most corrupt, when they are, so to speak, in repose, and sheltered from criminal temptations or necessities. In a word, since men hardened in crime, still sometimes sympathize with the recital and expression of elevated sentiments, ought we not to believe that all men have more or less in them of the love of the good, the well doing, the just; but that poverty and ignorance, in falsifying, in stifling, these Divine instincts, are the first causes of human depravity?

Is it not evident that generally one does not become wicked except through misfortune, and that to snatch man from the terrible temptations of want by the equitable melioration of his material condition, is to make him capable of the virtues of which he is conscious?

* * * * * * *

The impression caused by the story of Pique-Vinaigre will demonstrate, or rather display, we hope, some of the ideas we have just set forth. Pique-Vinaigre then commenced his story in these terms, in the midst of the profound silence of his auditory:

"It is not very long since the events occurred which I am going to relate to this honourable society. That which was called *La Petite Pologne* was not yet destroyed. Does the honouraable society know what was called La Petite Pologne?"

"I remember," said the prisoner in the blue cap and gray blouse, "it was some small houses near the Rue du Rocher, and the Rue de la Pépinière."

"Exactly, mon garçon," replied Vinaigre; "the '*quartier*' of la cité, which, however, is not composed of palaces, would be a Rue de la Paix, or a Rue de Rivoli, alongside of La Petite Pologne; but, otherwise, a famous resort for the *pègre;* there were no streets, but lanes; no houses, but hovels; no pavement, but a little carpet of mud and manure, so that the noise of the carriages would not have incommoded you if any had passed; but none passed. From morning to night, and, above all, from night to morning, what one did not cease to hear, were cries, '*watch!*' '*help!*' '*murder!*' but the watch did not disturb himself. So many the more with their brains dashed out in La Petite Pologne—so many the less to be arrested!

"The swarming population therein, you should have seen it; very few jewellers, goldsmiths, or bankers lodged there; but, to make amends, there were heaps of organ-players, rope-dancers, Punch and Judies, or keepers of curious beasts. Among the latter, was one named *Coupe en Deux* (cut in two), so cruel was he; but he was, above all, cruel towards children. They called him Coupe en Deux, so they said, because, with a hatchet, he had cut in two a little Savoyard."

At this part of the story of Pique-Vinaigre, the clock of the prison struck a quarter past three.

The prisoners entering their sleeping apartments at four o'clock, the crime of Le Squelette was to be consummated before that hour.

"Thousand thunders! the keeper does not go," he whispered to the Gros-Boiteux.

"Be quiet; once the story in train, he will leave." Pique-Vinaigre continued his recital.

"No one knew whence Coupe en Deux came; some said he was an Italian, others a Bohemian, others a Turk, others an African; the old women called him a magician, although a magician in these days may appear droll; as for me, I should be quite tempted to say the same as the old women. What makes this likely, is, that he always had with him a great red ape called Gargousse, which was so cunning and wicked, that one would have said he had the devil in his belly. By-and-by I shall speak again of Gargousse. As to Coupe en Deux, I am going to show him up: he had a skin the colour of a boot-lining, hair as red as the hide of his ape, green eyes, and that which makes me think with the old women that he was a magician, is, that he had a black tongue."

"Black tongue?" said Barbillon.

"Black as ink!" answered Pique Vinaigre.

"And how is that?"

"Because before he was born, his mother had probably spoken of a negro," answered Pique Vinaigre, with modest assurance. "To this ornament, Coupe en Deux joined the trade of having I do not know how many tortoises, apes, Indian hogs, white mice, foxes, and marmots, with an equal number of little Savoyards or abandoned children."

"Every morning, Coupe en Deux distributed to each one his beast and a piece of black bread, and started them off, to beg for a sou or '*faire danser La Catalina.*' Those who, at night, brought back less than fifteen sous, were beaten, oh! how they were beaten! so that they were heard to cry from one end of La Petite Pologne to the other.

"I must tell you also that there was in La Petite Pologne, a man who was called the *doyen*, because he was the longest resident of this 'quartier,' and also the mayor, provost, justice of the peace, or, rather, of war, for it was in his court (he was a wine merchant) that they went to comb one another's heads, when there was no other way to settle their disputes. Although quite old, the *doyen* was strong as a Hercules and very much feared; they only swore by him in La Petite Pologne: when he said 'it is good,' every one said 'it is very good;' when he said 'it is bad,' every one said 'it is very bad;' he was a good man at the bottom, but terrible; when, for example, strong people caused misery to the weaker, then, stand from under.

"As the *doyen* was the neighbour of Coupe en Deux, he had in the commencement heard the children cry, on account of the blows which the owner of the beasts gave them; but he said to him, 'If I hear the children cry again, I'll make you cry in your turn, and, as you have a stronger voice, I'll strike harder.'"

"Farceur of a *doyen!* I like the *doyen!*" said the prisoner in a blue cap.

"And so do I," added the keeper, approaching the group. Le Squelette could not restrain a movement of angry impatience.

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"Thanks to the *doyen*, who had threatened Coupe en Deux, the children were no more heard to cry at night in La Petite Pologne; but the poor little unfortunates did not suffer the

less, for if they did not cry when their master beat them, it was because they feared to be beaten still more. As for going and complaining to the *doyen*, they never had such an idea. For the fifteen sous which each of the little boys was obliged to bring him, Coupe en Deux fed them, lodged them, and clothed them.

"At night, a piece of black bread, the same for breakfast—that was the way he fed them; he never gave them any clothes—that was the way he clothed them; and he shut them up at night pell-mell with their beasts, on the same straw, in a garret to which they clambered by a ladder and through a trap-door—and that was the way he lodged them. Once the beasts and children all housed, he took away the ladder and locked the trap-door with a key.

"You may imagine the noise and uproar which these apes, Indian hogs, foxes, mice, tortoises, marmots, and children made, without any light, in this garret, which was as large as nothing. Coupe en Deux slept in a room underneath, having his large ape Gargousse tied to the foot of the bed. When the noise was too loud in the garret, the owner of the beasts arose, took a large whip, mounted the ladder without a light, opened the trap, and lashed away at random.

"As he always had some fifteen boys, and some of them brought, the *innocents*, sometimes as much as twenty sous a day, Coupe en Deux, his expenses paid, and they were not heavy, had for himself about four or five francs each day; with that, he frolicked, for note well that he was the greatest drinker on the earth, and was regularly dead drunk once every day. It was his rule, he said; except for that he would have a headache all the day long; it must be said, also, that from his gains he bought sheep's hearts for Gargousse, the big ape eating raw meat like a voracious animal.

"But I see that the honourable society asks for Gringalet; here he is, messieurs."

"Ah! let us see Gringalet, and then I'll go and eat my soup," said the keeper.

Le Squelette exchanged a look of ferocious satisfaction with the Gros-Boiteux.

"Among the children to whom Coupe en Deux distributed his beasts," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, "there was a poor little devil nicknamed Gringalet. Without father or mother, without sister or brother, without a home, he found himself alone—all alone in the world, where he never asked to come, and whence he could have gone, without anybody caring at all about it. He was not called Gringalet for his pleasure; he was dwarfish, and puny, and needy; no one would have given him over seven or eight years, yet he was thirteen; but if he did not look more than half his age, it was not his fault, for he had not on the average eaten more than every other day, and then so little, so little—and so bad, so bad, that he really did very well in appearing to be seven."

"Poor 'moutard,' I think I see him," said the prisoner in the blue cap; "there are so many like him in the streets of Paris, little starve-to-deaths."

"They ought to begin to learn that trade young," replied Pique-Vinaigre, bitterly; "so that they can become used to it."

"Come, go on then, make haste," said Le Squelette, gruffly; "the keeper is impatient, his soup is growing cold."

"Ah, bah! never mind," answered the keeper; "I wish to make a little more acquaintance with Gringalet; it is amusing."

"Really, it is very interesting," added Germain, attentive to the story.

"Ah, thank you! for what you say, my capitalist; that gives me more pleasure than your ten sous."

"Thunder of a laggard!" cried Le Squelette, "will you have done keeping us waiting?"

"*Voilà!*" answered Pique-Vinaigre.

"One day, Coupe en Deux had picked up Gringalet in the street, dying with cold and hunger; he would have done just as well to let him alone and die. As Gringalet was feeble, he was afraid; and as he was cowardly, he became the laughing-stock and scapegoat of his companions, who beat him, and caused him so much misery, that he would have been very wicked, if strength and courage had not failed him.

"But, no: when they beat him, he cried, saying, 'I have done no harm to any one, yet every one harms me—it is unjust. Oh! if I were strong, and bold!' You think, perhaps, that Gringalet was going to add, 'I would return to others the evil they did me.' Well, no! not at all: he said, 'Oh! if I were strong and bold, I would defend the weak against the strong; for I am weak, and the strong make me suffer.'

"In the mean time, as he was too much of a pigmy to prevent the strong from molesting the weak, he prevented the larger beasts from injuring the smaller ones."

"There's a funny idea!" said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"And, what is still more funny," replied the "*conteur*," "is, that, with this idea, one would have said, that Gringalet consoled himself for being beaten; and that proves that, at the bottom, he had not a bad heart."

"Pardieu, I think so—on the contrary," said the keeper. "Devil of a Pique-Vinaigre, is'nt he amusing?"

At this moment, the clock struck half past three.

The Squelette and Gros-Boiteux exchanged significant glances.

The hour advanced, the keeper did not retire, and some of the least hardened prisoners seemed almost to forget the sinister projects of the Squelette against Germain, who listened with eagerness to the recital of Pique-Vinaigre.

"When I say," he resumed, "that Gringalet prevented the larger beasts from eating the smaller ones, you will please understand, that Gringalet did not go and interfere in the affairs of the tigers, lions, wolves, or even the foxes and apes of the menagerie of Coupe en Deux—he was too cowardly for that; but, as soon as he saw, for example, a spider concealed in his web, to catch a poor foolish fly that was buzzing about gayly in the sun of the 'bon Dieu,' without harming any one, crack! Gringalet gave a sweep into the web, delivered the fly, and crushed the spider, like a real Cæsar. Yes! like a real Cæsar! for he became as white as chalk at even touching these villanous creatures; he needed, then, resolution: he who was afraid of a lady-bug, and who had taken a very long time

to become familiar with the tortoise which Coupe en Deux handed over to him every morning. Thus, Gringalet, in overcoming the alarm which spiders caused him, to prevent the flies from being eaten, showed himself—"

"Showed himself as bold, in his way, as a man who would have attacked a wolf, to take from him a lamb of the fold," said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"Or as a man who would have attacked Coupe en Deux, to drag Gringalet from his claws," added Barbillon, also much interested.

"As you say," replied Pique-Vinaigre. "Accordingly, after these doings, Gringalet did not feel so very unfortunate. He who never laughed, smiled, looked wise, put on his cap sideways (when he had a cap), and sang the Marseilloise with a trumpet air. At such times, there was not a spider that dared to look him in the face.

"Another time it was a cricket that was drowning and struggling in a gutter; quickly Gringalet bravely plunged two of his fingers into the waves and caught the cricket, which he afterward placed on a blade of grass: a master swimmer with a medal, who should have fished up his tenth drowned person, at fifty francs the head, could not have been more proud than Gringalet, when he saw his cricket kick and run away.

"And yet the cricket gave him neither money nor a medal, and did not even say thank you, nor did the fly. But then, Pique-Vinaigre, my friend, will the honourable society say, what kind of pleasure Gringalet, whom every one beats, could find in being the deliverer of crickets and the executioner of spiders? Since others injured him, why did he not revenge himself in doing harm according to his strength? for example, by causing the flies to be eaten by spiders, or in letting the crickets drown themselves; or even drowning them himself?"

"Yes, exactly: why did he not revenge himself in that way?" said Nicolas.

"What good would that have done him?" said another.

"Why, to do harm, because others harmed him!"

"No! as for me, I can comprehend why he liked to save the flies, poor little '*moutard!*'" answered the man with the blue cap. "He thought, perhaps, 'Who knows that some one will not save me in the same way?'"

"The comrade is right," cried Pique-Vinaigre; "he has read in his heart what I was about to explain to the honourable company.

"Gringalet was not malicious; he saw no farther than the end of his nose; but he said to himself, 'Coupe en Deux is my spider; perhaps one day somebody will do for me what I do for the flies; they will break up his web, and snatch me from his claws.' For, until then, on no account would he have dared to run away from his master; he would have thought himself stone dead. Yet, one day, when neither he nor his tortoise had had any luck, and they had only earned two or three sous, Coupe en Deux began to whip the poor child so hard, so hard! that, *ma foi*, Gringalet could stand it no longer. Tired of being the butt and martyr of everybody, he watched the moment when the trap-door of the garret was open, and while Coupe en Deux was feeding his beasts, he slipped down the ladder."

"Ah! so much the better!" said a prisoner

"But why did he not go and complain to the *doyen?*" said the blue cap; "he would have given Coupe en Deux his change."

"Yes, but be did not dare; he was so much afraid he preferred to run away. Unfortunately, Coupe en Deux had seen him; he caught him by the throat, and carried him back to the garret; this time, Gringalet, on thinking of what he had to expect, shuddered from head to foot, for he was not at the end of his troubles.

"Speaking of the troubles of Gringalet, it is necessary that I should speak to you of Gargousse, the favourite ape of Coupe en Deux. This wicked animal was, '*ma foi*,' larger than Gringalet: judge what a size for an ape! Now I am going to tell you why they did not lead him as a show through the streets, like the other beasts of the menagerie; it was because Gargousse was so wicked and so strong that, among all the children, there was only an Auvergnat of fourteen years, a resolute fellow, who, after having several times collared and fought with Gargousse, had succeeded in mastering him, and leading him by a chain; and even then, there were often battles between them, and bloody ones, too, I tell you.

"Tired of this, the little Auvergnat said one day, 'Well, well, I will revenge myself on you, scamp of an ape!' So one morning he set off with his beast, as usual; to decoy him, he bought a sheep's heart: while Gargousse was eating, he passed a cord through the end of his chain, and fastened it to a tree, and when he had the scoundrel of an ape once tied, he poured on him such a torrent of blows! a torrent that fire could not have extinguished."

"Ah! well done!"

"Bravo! the Auvergnat!"

"Hit hard, my boy!"

"Break his back for him, the rascally Gargousse," said the prisoners.

"And he did lay it on with a good heart," answered Pique-Vinaigre. "You should have heard how Gargousse cried, seen how he gnashed his teeth, jumped, danced here and there; but the Auvergnat trimmed him up with his club, saying, 'Do you like it? here is some more!' Unfortunately, apes are like cats, they have nine lives. Gargousse was as cunning as he was wicked. When he saw, as I may say, what kind of wood was burning for him, at the very thickest moment of the torrents he cut a last caper, fell flat down at the foot of the tree, kicked a moment, and then shammed dead, not budging any more than a log. The Auvergnat wished nothing more: believing the ape done for, he cleared out, never to put his feet in Coupe en Deux's abode again. But the vagabond of a Gargousse watched him out of the corner of his eye, all wounded as he was, and as soon as he saw himself alone, and the Auvergnat at a distance, he gnawed the cord with his teeth. The Boulevard Monceau, where he had had his dance, was very near La Petite Pologne; the ape knew his road as well as he did his *pater;* he slowly went off then, crawling along, and arrived at his master's, who swore and foamed to see his favourite ape thus served out. But this is not all; from that mo-

ment Gargousse had preserved such furious spite against all children in general, that Coupe en Deux, who was not very tender-hearted, had not dared to let any of them lead him, for fear of an accident; for Gargousse would have been capable of strangling or devouring a child; and the little fellows would rather have allowed themselves to be slashed by Coupe en Deux than approach the ape."

"I must most decidedly go and eat my soup," said the keeper, making a movement towards the door; "this devil of a Pique-Vinaigre would make the birds come down from the trees to hear him. I do not know where he has fished up this story."

"At length the keeper is off," whispered Le Squelette to the Gros-Boiteux; "I am in a sweat—I have a fever, so much do I burn within. Only attend to making the wall around the *mangeur*, I'll take care of the rest."

"*Ah ça!* be good boys," said the keeper, going towards the door.

"Good as images," answered Le Squelette, drawing near Germain, while the Gros-Boiteux and Nicolas, at a concerted signal, made two steps in the same direction.

"Ah! respectable keeper, you are going away at the finest moment," said Pique-Vinaigre, with an air of reproach.

Except for the Gros-Boiteux, who prevented his movement by seizing his arm, Le Squelette had sprung upon Pique-Vinaigre.

"How! at the finest moment?" answered the keeper, returning towards the "*conteur.*"

"I think so," said Pique-Vinaigre; "you do not know all you are going to lose; the most charming part of my story is about to commence."

"Do not listen to it, then," said Le Squelette, with difficulty restraining his rage; "he is not in the vein to-day: as for me, I find his story abominably stupid."

"My story stupid?" cried Pique-Vinaigre, his vanity wounded; "well, keeper, I beg you, I supplicate you, to remain to the end. I have only enough to fill a good quarter of an hour; besides, your soup is cold. Now what do you risk? I will hasten on with my story, so that you may still have the time to go and eat before we go to our beds."

"Well, then, I remain, but make haste," said the keeper, drawing near.

"And you are right to remain, for, without boasting, you have never heard anything like it—above all, the conclusion; there is the triumph of the ape and of Gringalet, escorted by all the little beast conductors and inhabitants of La Petite Pologne. My word of honour, I do not say it from vanity, but it is superb."

"Then go on, my boy," said the keeper, coming close to the stove.

Le Squelette trembled with rage. He almost despaired of accomplishing his crime. Once the hour of repose arrived, Germain was saved; for he did not sleep in the same ward with his implacable enemy, and the next day, as we have said, he was to occupy one of the vacant cells *à la pistole.*

And, moreover, Le Squelette saw from the interruptions of several of the prisoners, that they found themselves, thanks to the story of Pique-Vinaigre, filled with ideas that softened their hearts; perhaps, then, they would not assist, with savage indifference, the accomplishment of a frightful murder, of which their presence would make them accomplices.

Le Squelette could prevent the "*conteur*" from finishing his story, but then his last hope vanished of seeing the keeper retire before the hour in which Germain would be in safety.

"Ah! it is stupid, is it?" said Pique Vinaigre. "Well! the honourable society shall be the judge.

"There was not then an animal more wicked than the large ape Gargousse, which was, above all, as savage as his master towards children. What did Coupe en Deux do to punish Gringalet for wishing to run away? That you shall know directly; in the mean time, he caught the child, shut him up in the garret, saying to him, 'To-morrow morning, when all your comrades are gone, I will take hold of you, and you shall see what I do to those who wish to run away from here.'

"I leave you to imagine what a horrible night Gringalet passed. He hardly closed his eyes; he asked himself what Coupe en Deux would do. At length he fell asleep. But what a sleep! then there was a dream, a frightful dream—that is to say, the beginning—you will see.

"He dreamed that he was one of those poor flies which he had so often saved from the spider's web, and that he, in his turn, fell into a large and strong web, where he struggled with all his strength without being able to escape; then he saw coming towards him, softly, cautiously, a kind of monster, which had the face of Coupe en Deux on a spider's body.

"My poor Gringalet began again to struggle, as you may imagine; but the more efforts he made the more he was entangled in the toils, just like the poor flies. At length the spider approached—touched him—and he felt the large, cold, and hairy paws of the monster encircle him. He thought himself dead: but suddenly he heard a kind of humming noise, clear and acute, and saw a little golden gnat which had a kind of sting as fine and brilliant as a diamond needle, flying round the spider in a furious manner, and a voice (when I say a voice, just imagine the voice of a gnat!) a voice said to him, 'Poor little fly; you have saved flies; the spider shall not—'

"Unfortunately, Gringalet awoke with a start, and he saw not the end of the dream; nevertheless, he was a little comforted, saying to himself, 'Perhaps the golden gnat with the diamond sting would have killed the spider, if I had seen the end of the dream.'

"But Gringalet had need of all this to console himself, for as the night advanced his fear returned so strongly that in the end he forgot his dream, or, rather, he only remembered the frightful part of it; the great web where he had been entangled, and the spider with the face of Coupe en Deux. You can judge what shiverings of alarm he must have had. Dame! judge then, alone—all alone—with no one to take his part!

"In the morning, when he saw the light appear little by little through the garret window, his alarm redoubled; the moment was drawing near when he would be left all alone with

Coupe en Deux. Then he threw himself on his knees in the middle of the garret, and weeping hot tears, he begged his companions to ask his pardon from Coupe en Deux; or to assist him to escape, if there was any way. Oh, yes! some from fear of the master, others from caring nothing about it, others from cruelty, refused the service which poor Gringalet demanded.

"Wicked scrubs!" said the prisoner in the blue cap; "they had neither body nor soul!"

"It is true," said another; "it is vexing to to see this want of feeling."

"And alone, and without defence," resumed the prisoner in the blue cap; "for one who cannot stretch out his neck without wincing it is always a pity. When one has teeth to bite, then it is different. *Ma foi*, you have tusks? Well, show them, and look for tail, my cadet!"

"That is true!" said several of the prisoners.

"*Ah, ça!*" cried Le Squelette, no longer able to restrain his rage, and addressing the blue cap, "will you not be still, you? have I not already said, 'Silence in the *pègre?*' Am I, or am I not, the prevost here?"

For sole answer, the blue cap looked Squelette in the face, and then made a gesture, perfectly well known to the "*gamins*" of Paris, which consists in placing on the end of the nose the thumb of the right hand, opened, and touching with the little finger the thumb of the left, also spread out like a fan.

The blue cap accompanied this mute answer with an expression so grotesque that several of the prisoners shouted with laughter, while some of the others, on the contrary, remained stupified at the audacity of the new prisoner.

Le Squelette shook his fist at blue cap, and said, grinding his teeth, "We'll settle this tomorrow."

"And I will make the addition on your 'hide.' I'll set down seventeen and carry naught."

For fear the keeper should find a new reason for remaining, in order to prevent a possible quarrel, Le Squelette answered calmly,

"That is not the question. I have the superintendence of the *chauffoir*, and I must be obeyed; is it not so, keeper?"

"It is true," said the officer. "Do not interrupt. And you, Pique-Vinaigre, go on; but make haste, my boy."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TRIUMPH OF GRINGALET AND OF GARGOUSSE.

"Then," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, continuing his story, "Gringalet, seeing himself abandoned, gave himself up to his unhappy fate. Broad daylight came, and all the children prepared to depart with their beasts. Coupe en Deux opened the trap and called the roll, in order to give each one his piece of bread; all descended the ladder, and Gringalet, more dead than alive, crouching in a corner of the garret, moved no more than it did; he saw his companions going off, one after the other; he would have given anything to do as they did. Finally, they were all gone. The heart of the poor child beat strongly; he hoped that, perhaps, his master would forget him. Ah, well, he heard Coupe en Deux, who was at the bottom of the ladder, cry in a harsh voice,

"'Gringalet! Gringalet!'

"'Here I am, master.'

"'Come down at once, or I'll fetch you,' answered Coupe en Deux. Gringalet thought his last day was come.

"'Allons,' he said to himself, trembling in every limb, and remembering his dream, 'now you are in the toils, little fly; the spider is going to eat you.'

"After having placed his tortoise softly on the ground, he bade him adieu, for he had become attached to the creature, and approached the trap-door. He placed his foot on the ladder to descend, when Coupe en Deux, taking him by his poor little thin leg, as slender as a spindle, drew him so strongly, so harshly, that Gringalet tumbled down, and polished his face against the whole length of the ladder."

"What a pity that the *doyen* of La Petite Pologne had not been there—what a fine dance for Coupe en Deux," said the blue cap; "it is in such times as these that it is good to be strong."

"Yes, my boy; but, unfortunately, the *doyen* was not there! Coupe en Deux took the child by the seat of his trousers, and carried him into his den, where he kept his big ape tied to the foot of his bed. On seeing the child, the beast began to leap and grind his teeth like a mad thing, and to spring the whole length of his chain, as if he wished to devour him."

"Poor Gringalet, how did he get out of this?"

"But if he had fallen into the clutches of the ape, he would have been strangled at once."

"Thunder! it makes me half dead," said the blue cap: "as for me, at this moment, I could not harm a louse—and you, friends?"

"*Ma foi*, nor I either." "Nor I."

At this moment the clock struck three quarters past three.

Le Squelette, fearing more and more that time would be wanting, cried, furious at these interruptions, which seemed to indicate that several of the prisoners were becoming softened, "Silence in the *pègre!* He will never finish, this '*conteur*' of misfortune, if you talk as much as he does."

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"When one reflects that Gringalet had had all the trouble in the world to become accustomed to his tortoise, and that the most courageous of his comrades trembled at the name alone of *Gargousse*, let him imagine his terror when he saw himself carried by his master near to this devil of an ape. 'Pardon, master,' he cried, his teeth chattering as if he had an ague —'pardon, master! I will never do it again, I promise you.'

"The poor little fellow cried, 'I will never do it again,' without knowing why he said so, for he had nothing to reproach himself with; but Coupe en Deux laughed at that. In spite of the cries of the child, who struggled hard, he placed him within reach of Gargousse, and the beast sprang upon him and clutched him."

A shudder passed through the audience, who were more and more attentive.

"How stupid I would have been to go away," said the keeper, approaching still nearer.

"And this is nothing yet; the finest has yet to come," answered Pique-Vinaigre. "As soon

as Gringalet felt the cold and hairy paws of the great ape, which seized him by the throat and by the head, he thought himself devoured, became as it were delirious, and began to cry with groans which would have softened a tiger,

"'The spider of my dream, good Lord! the spider of my dream—little golden gnat, help, help!'

"'Will you hush? will you hush?' said Coupe en Deux, giving him heavy kicks, for he was afraid that his cries would be heard; but at the end of a moment there was no more danger: poor Gringalet cried no more, struggled no more; on his knees, as white as a sheet, he shut his eyes and shivered as if it had been January. Meantime the ape beat him, pulled his hair, and scratched him; and from time to time, the wicked beast stopped to look at his master, absolutely as if they understood each other. As for Coupe en Deux, he laughed so loud! so loud! that if Gringalet had cried, the shouts of his master would have drowned his cries. It would seem as if this encouraged Gargousse, for he was more and more cruel to the child."

"Ah! '*gredin*' of an ape," cried the blue cap. "If I had held you by the tail, I would have spun you round like a mill—just like a sling, and I would have cracked your pate on the pavement."

"Rascally ape! he was as wicked as a man!"

"There are no men so wicked as that!"

"Not so wicked?" answered Pique-Vinaigre. "And Coupe en Deux? Judge of it—this is what he did afterward: he unfastened the chain (which was very long) from the bed, took the child, more dead than alive, from the paws of Gargousse, and fastened him at one end of it, with Gargouse at the other. There was an invention."

"It is true, there are men more cruel than the most cruel beasts."

"When Coupe en Deux had done this, he said to his ape, which appeared to understand him,

"'Attention, Gargousse! they have led and shown you, now in your turn you shall show Gringalet; he shall be your ape. Come, hop, stand up, Gringalet, or I say to Gargousse, "speak to him, fellow!"'

"The poor child had fallen on his knees, his hands clasped, but not able to speak; his teeth chattered in his head.

"'Tiens! make him walk, Gargousse,' said Coupe en Deux to his ape; 'and if he is cross, do as I do.'

"And at the same time he gave the child a torrent of blows with a switch, and afterward handed it to the ape.

"You know how these animals imitate by nature, but Gargousse in this respect excelled; so he took the rod in his hand and fell upon Gringalet, who was obliged to get up. Once on his legs, he was about the same size as the ape; then Coupe en Deux went out of his room and descended the staircase, calling Gargousse, and Gargousse followed him, driving Gringalet before him with blows from the rod.

"They reached thus the little court of the building of Coupe en Deux. There he counted on amusing himself; he shut the door leading into the lane, and signed to Gargousse to make the child run before him around the court, by striking him with the switch.

"The ape obeyed, and began to chase Gringalet in this manner, while Coupe en Deux held his sides with laughter. You think that this wickedness was enough? Oh! yes, but it was nothing as yet. Up to this time Gringalet would have escaped with a few scratches, lashes, and horrible fear. Now this is what Coupe en Deux did:

"To make the ape furious against the child, who, panting and out of breath, was more dead than alive, he took Gringalet by the hair, pretended to belabour him with blows, and then he handed him back to Gargousse, crying, 'Speak to him, speak to him!' and then he showed him a piece of sheep's heart, as much as to say to him, 'This shall be your reward!'

"Oh! then, my friends, truly it was a dreadful sight. I imagine a great red ape with a black snout, grinding his teeth like a madman, and throwing himself furiously on this poor little unfortunate, who, not being able to defend himself, had been thrown down at the first blow, and lay with his face to the ground, in order to protect it.

"Seeing this, Gargousse, his master setting him at the child continually, mounted on his back, took him by the neck, and fell to biting him, until he made the blood come.

"'Oh! the spider of my dream—the spider!' cried Gringalet in a stifled voice, believing now that he was going to be killed. Suddenly there was a knock at the door, pan! pan! pan!"

"Ah! the *doyen!*" cried the prisoners with joy.

"Yes, this time it was he, my friends; he called through the door, 'Will you open, Coupe en Deux? will you open? Do not sham deaf; for I see you through the keyhole!'

"Coupe en Deux, forced to reply, went grumbling to open the door for the *doyen*, who was a *gaillard* as solid as a bridge, in spite of his fifty years, and with whom it was worth no one's while to joke when he was angry.

"'What do you want with me?' said Coupe en Deux to him, half opening the door.

"'I want to speak to you,' said the *doyen*, who entered almost by force into the little court; then, seeing the ape always savage after Gringalet, he ran, caught Gargousse by the nape of his neck, and tried to take the child away from under him; but he only then saw that the child was chained to the ape. Seeing this, the *doyen* looked at Coupe en Deux in a terrible manner, and cried, 'Come, then, at once, and unchain this poor unfortunate!'

"You can judge of the joy and surprise of Gringalet, who, half dead with fright, found himself saved as it were by a miracle. Then he could not but think of the golden gnat of his dream, although the *doyen* did not look much like a gnat, the '*gaillard.*'"

"Allons," said the keeper, making a step towards the door; "now Gringalet is saved, I go to eat my soup."

"Saved?" cried Pique-Vinaigre, "oh! yes, saved! he is not yet at the end of his troubles, poor Gringalet."

"Really?" said several of the prisoners, with interest. "But what is going to happen to him now?" asked the keeper, drawing near.

"Remain, and you shall know," answered the "*conteur*." "Devil of a Pique-Vinaigre, he does with one just as he pleases," said the keeper; "*ma foi*, I will remain a little longer." Le Squelette, mute, foamed with rage.

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"Coupe en Deux, who feared the *doyen* as he did fire, had, grumbling, loosened the child from the chain; when that was done, the *doyen* threw Gargousse into the air, received him on the end of a most magnificent kick, and sent him sprawling ten feet. The ape cried like a burned child, gnashed his teeth, but he fled quickly, and went to take refuge on the top of a shed, where he shook his fist at the *doyen*.

"'Why do you beat my ape?' said Coupe en Deux to the *doyen*.

"'You ought rather to ask me, why I do not beat you, to cause this child such suffering! You are drunk pretty early this morning?'

"'I am no more drunk than you are; I was teaching a trick to my ape; I wish to give a representation where he and Gringalet will appear together; I am following my business—why do you meddle with it?'

"'I meddle with what concerns me. This morning, not seeing Gringalet pass before my door with the other children, I asked them where he was; they did not answer—they looked embarrassed. I know you. I thought you were after no good, and I was not wrong. Listen to me: every time I do not see Gringalet pass before my door with the others in the morning, I will be here at once, and you must show him to me, or—I'll knock you down.'

"'I will do as I please; I have no orders to receive from you,' answered Coupe en Deux, irritated at this threat. 'You shall not knock me down; and if you do not take yourself off from this, or if you return, I—'

"Flip-flap went the *doyen*, interrupting Coupe en Deux by a duet of blows enough to silence a rhinoceros: 'There is what you get for answering in this manner to the *doyen* of La Petite Pologne.'"

"Two blows! it was too little," said the blue cap; "in the *doyen's* place, I should have given him a touch of '*soupe grasse*.'"

"And he should not have had it too hastily," added a prisoner.

"The *doyen*," replied Pique-Vinaigre, "could have eaten ten like Coupe en Deux. So he was obliged to put these blows in his pocket; but he was none the less furious at being struck, and, above all, before Gringalet. Thus, at this very moment, he promised to avenge himself, and an idea occurred to him which could only have occurred to a demon of wickedness like himself. While he was ruminating on this diabolical idea, the *doyen* said,

"'Remember, that if you attempt to injure this child again, I will force you to clear out from La Petite Pologne, you and your beasts; otherwise I will stir up the neighbourhood against you; you know they hate you here, so you will have a passport which your back will remember, I promise you.'

"Traitor as he was, in order to be able to execute his wicked idea, instead of continuing to be angry against the *doyen*, Coupe-en-Deux cringed like a dog, and said,

"'Faith of man! *doyen*, you were wrong to strike me, and to think that I wished any harm to Gringalet; on the contrary, I repeat to you, that I was teaching a new trick to my ape; he is not sweet-tempered when he is angry, and if, in the scuffle, the little one was bitten, I am sorry for it.'

"'Hum!' said the *doyen*, looking at him from the corner of his eye, 'is this really true that you tell me? If you wish to teach a trick to your ape, why did you fasten him to Gringalet?'

"'Because Gringalet must also know it. This is what I wish to do: I will dress Gargousse in a red coat and a cap with feathers; I will seat Gringalet in a child's chair; then I will put a towel around his neck, and the ape, with a large wooden razor, will pretend to shave him.'

"The *doyen* could not keep from laughing at this idea.

"'Is it not a farce?' said Coupe en Deux, with a smirking look.

"'In truth, it is a farce,' said the *doyen*; 'so much the more, as they say your ape is sufficiently cunning and knowing to play such a part.'

"'I think so. When he has seen me five or six times pretend to shave Gringalet, he will imitate me with his large wooden razor; but on that account, as the child must become used to him, I have tied them together.'

"'But why have you chosen Gringalet rather than any other?'

"'Because he is the smallest of all, and, being seated, Gargousse will be larger than he is; besides, I intend to give half of the profits to Gringalet.'

"'If this is so,' said the *doyen*, reassured by the hypocrisy of the owner of the beasts, 'I regret the twist I gave you; consider it as an advance.'

"While his master spoke with the *doyen*, Gringalet dared not breathe; he trembled like a leaf, and longed to throw himself at the feet of the *doyen* and beg to be taken away; but his courage failed, and he began again to despair, saying to himself, 'I shall be like the poor fly of my dream—the spider will devour me; I was wrong to believe that the golden gnat would save me!'

"'Allons! my boy; since the Père Coupe en Deux gives you half of the money, that ought to encourage you to accustom yourself to the ape. Bah! bah! you will do it; and if the profits are large, you will have no cause to complain.'

"'He complain! Have you any reason to complain?' asked his master, giving him a side look so terrible that the child wished he was a hundred feet under ground.

"'No, no, my master!' he stammered.

"'You see, *doyen*,' said Coupe en Deux, 'he never has complained; I only wish for his welfare, after all. If Gargousse scratched him the first time, it shall not happen again, I promise you. I will watch.'

"'Very well! Thus every one will be content.'

"'Gringalet the most,' said Coupe en Deux; 'is it not so?'

"'Yes, yes, master,' said the trembling child.

"'And to console you for your scratches, I will give you part of a good breakfast; for the *doyen* is going to send a plate of cutlets and

pickles, four bottles of wine, and a gallon of brandy.'

"'At your service, Coupe en Deux: my cellar and my kitchen shine for the whole world.'

"At heart, the doyen was a good man, but he was not very wise, and he loved to sell his wine, and his cutlets also. The rascal of a Coupe en Deux knew it well; you see that he sent him off contented at having sold some eatables and drinkables, and reassured as to the fate of Gringalet.

"So, now, here is the poor little fellow fallen again into the power of his master. The moment the doyen had turned on his heels, Coupe en Deux showed the staircase to his victim, and ordered him to mount at once to his garret; the child did not allow him to say it twice, but went, very much alarmed.

"'Oh, Lord! I am lost,' he cried, throwing himself upon the straw beside his tortoise, and weeping bitterly. He was there for a good hour, sobbing, when he heard the coarse voice of Coupe en Deux calling him. That which increased the fear of Gringalet was, that it seemed to him the voice of his master had a strange sound.

"'Will you come down at once?' said the owner of the beast, with a horrid oath.

"The child quickly descended the stairs. Hardly had he put his foot on the ground, when his master seized him, and carried him to his chamber, staggering at each step, for Coupe en Deux had drunk so much—so much, that he was as tipsy as a sow, and could hardly keep his legs: his body swayed backward and forward, and he looked at Gringalet, rolling his eyes in a most ferocious manner, but without speaking. He had, as the saying is, his tongue too thick. Never had the child been more afraid of him.

"Gargousse was chained to the foot of the bed.

"In the middle of the room was a chair with a cord hanging on the back.

"'Si—si—sit down there,'" continued Pique-Vinaigre, imitating, to the end of this story, the stammering of a drunken man, whenever he related what Coupe en Deux said.

"Gringalet seated himself trembling. Then Coupe en Deux, without saying a word, wound the cord around him, and tied him to the chair, and that not easily; for although the owner of the beasts could still see a little, and knew what he was about, you may imagine he made double knots. At length, Gringalet is firmly fastened in the chair. 'Mon bon Dieu! mon bon Dieu!' he murmured. 'This time no one will come to deliver me.'

"Poor little fellow! he was right; no one could—no one did come, as you will see. The doyen had gone, and Coupe en Deux had double locked the door of the court on the inside, and drawn the bolt: no one could come there to the aid of Gringalet."

"Oh! this time," said several of the prisoners, much interested in the story, "Gringalet, you are lost." "Poor little fellow!" "What a pity!" "If it only needed twenty sous to save him, I would give them." "I also." "Rascal of a Coupe en Deux! What is he going to do?"

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"When Gringalet was tied to the chair h master said to him, '"*Gredin*," it is you wh has been the cause that—that I have bee beaten by the doyen—you—are—go-o-o-ing t die!' And he drew from his pocket a larg razor, newly sharpened, opened it, and too with one hand Gringalet by the hair."

A murmur of indignation and horror circulate among the prisoners, and interrupted for a mo ment Pique-Vinaigre, who resumed:

"At the sight of the razor the child began t cry, 'Pardon! master, pardon! do not kill me 'C-r-r-r-y, c-r-r-y, b-o-o-y — you will not cr long,' answered Coupe en Deux.

"'Golden gnat! golden gnat! help!' crie poor Gringalet, almost delirious, recalling to hi mind his dream; 'here is the spider that i going to kill me!'

"'Ah! you call — me — a-a-a spider!' sai Coupe en Deux; 'on account—o-of—that—an other things, you—are—go-o-o-ing to die—d you hear-r-r—but—not by my hand—because that—the thing—and, besides, they will guillotine me-e-e. I will say—and—prove—that it was —the—a-a-pe—I have prepared—but no matter!' said Coupe en Deux, hardly able to stand; then, calling his ape, which, at the end of his chain, ground his teeth, and looked alternately at his master and the child,

"'Look here, Gargousse,' he said, showing him the razor and Gringalet, whom he held by the hair, 'you must do so to him; do you see?'

"And passing the back of the razor several times over the throat of Gringalet, he pretended to cut it.

"The '*gueuse*' of an ape was such a good imitator, so wicked, and so malicious, that he comprehended what his master wished; and, to prove it to him, shook his chin with the left paw, threw his head back, and pretended to cut his throat. 'That's it, Gargousse; that's it,' said Coupe en Deux, stammering, shutting his eyes, and reeling so much that he came near falling with Gringalet and the chair. 'Yes, that's it; I'll unfasten your chain—cut his whistle—that's it; hey, Gargousse?'

"The ape cried and chattered, as if to say yes, and put out his paw to take the razor, which Coupe en Deux held towards him.

"'Golden gnat, help!' murmured Gringalet in a dying tone, certain now that his hour was come.

"For, alas! he called the golden gnat to his assistance, without any hope that he would come; but he said that as one says 'Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!' when is one drowning.

"Just at this moment, Gringalet saw come in at the window one of those small flies, green and gold, which are so common; one would have called it a spark of fire which flew, flew, and just at the moment when Coupe en Deux gave the razor to Gargousse, the golden gnat flew straight into the eye of this wicked brigand.

"A fly in the eye is no great thing; but, for a moment, it stings like a prick with a needle; thus Coupe en Deux, who could hardly stand, fell on the floor and rolled like a log to the foot of the bed where Gargousse was chained.

"'Golden gnat, I thank you; you have saved me!' cried Gringalet; for, still seated, and tied on the chair, he had seen everything."

"It is true enough, the golden gnat prevented his throat from being cut," cried the prisoners, transported with joy.

"'*Vive*' the golden gnat!" cried the blue cap.

"Yes, long live the golden gnat!" repeated several voices.

"*Vive* Pique-Vinaigre and his stories!" said another.

"Stop, then," resumed the "*conteur*," "here's the finest and most terrible part of the history that I had promised you.

"Coupe en Deux had fallen on the ground like lead; he was so drunk that he stirred no more than a log; he was dead drunk, and knew nothing; but, in falling, he came near crushing Gargousse, and had almost broken one of his hind paws. You know how wicked this villanous beast was—rancorous and malicious. He held on to the razor which his master had given him to cut the throat of Gringalet. What does my '*gueux*' of an ape when he sees his master stretched on his back, immovable as a fried carp, and much at his ease? He sprang upon him, crouched on his breast, with one of his paws stretched the skin of his throat, and with the other—'*crac*'—he cut his windpipe in a moment, exactly as Coupe en Deux had shown him how to operate on Gringalet."

"Bravo!" "Well done!" "Long live Gargousse!" "'*Vive*' the little golden gnat!" "'*Vive*' Gringalet!" "'*Vive*' Gargousse?" cried the prisoners with enthusiasm.

"Well, my friends!" cried Pique-Vinaigre, enchanted at the success of his story; "what you have just cried, all La Petite Pologne cried an hour later."

"How is that—how?"

"I told you that, to do this bloody deed quite at his ease, Coupe en Deux had locked his door on the inside. In the evening, the children returned, one after the other, with their beasts; the first knocked—no answer; at length, when they were all assembled, they knocked again—no reply; one of them went after the doyen, and told him that they had knocked, and that their master did not open the door. 'The "*gredin*" is as drunk as an Englishman,' said he. 'I sent him some wine just now; we must break open the door; these children cannot remain all night out of doors.'

"They break open the doors, they enter, they mount the stairs, they reach the chamber, and what do they see? Gargousse, chained and crouching on the body of his master, and playing with the razor; poor Gringalet, happily out of his reach, still seated, and tied on the chair, not daring to cast his eyes on the dead body, and looking at—guess what! The little golden fly, which, after having fluttered around the child, as if to felicitate him, had finally come and seated itself on his little hand.

"Gringalet related all to the doyen, and to the crowd who followed him; this appeared truly, as they said, an act of Providence; then the doyen said, 'A triumph to Gringalet; a triumph to Gargousse, who has killed this bad brigand of a Coup en Deux. He cut others; it was his turn to be cut!'

"'Yes, yes!' said the crowd, for the defunct was detested by everybody, 'a triumph for Gargousse! a triumph for Gringalet.'

"It was night; they lighted torches of straw, they tied Gargousse on a bench, which four boys carried on their shoulders; the '*gredin*' of an ape did not appear to dislike this, and assumed the airs of a conqueror, by showing his teeth to the crowd. After the ape came the doyen, carrying Gringalet in his arms: all the little boys, each with his beast, surrounded the doyen; one carried his fox, another his marmot, another his Indian hog; those who played on the hurdygurdy, played on the hurdygurdy; there were coalmen, chimneysweeps, with their bagpipes, who also played: it was a noise, a joy, a fête, which cannot be imagined! Behind the musicians came all the inhabitants of La Petite Pologne, men, women, and children; they all held in their hands torches of straw, and shouted like madmen, "'*Vive*' Gringalet! "*vive*" Gargousse!' The *cortège* in this order marched round the house of Coupe en Deux. It was a droll spectacle; these old buildings and all these figures illuminated by the red light of the straw fires, which flickered, and sparkled, and blazed up! As to Gringalet, the first thing he did, once at liberty, was to place the little golden fly in a paper box; and he kept repeating, during his triumph, 'Little golden gnats, I have well done to hinder the spiders from eating you, for—'"

The recital of Pique-Vinaigre was interrupted.

"Eh! Père Roussel," cried a voice from without, "come, then, and eat your soup; four o'clock will strike in ten minutes."

"'*Ma foi*!' the story is about finished. I'll go."

"Thank you, my boy, you have amused me finely; you may be proud of it," said the keeper to Pique-Vinaigre, going towards the door. Then stopping, "*Ah, ca!* be good boys!" he said to the prisoners, turning around.

"We are going to hear the end of the story," said Le Squelette, almost bursting with restrained rage. Then he whispered to the Gros-Boiteux, "Go to the door, look after the keeper, and, when you have seen him go out of the court, cry 'Gargousse!' and the '*manguer*' is dead."

"Just so," said the Gros-Boiteux, who accompanied the keeper, and remained standing near the door watching him.

"I told you, then," said Pique-Vinaigre, "that Gringalet, all the time of his triumph, said to himself, 'Little gnats, I have—"

"Gargousse!" cried the Gros-Boiteux.

"Mine! Gringalet. I will be your spider!" shouted Le Squelette, throwing himself on Germain so that he could neither make a movement nor utter a cry. His voice died under the formidable grasp of the long iron fingers of Le Squelette.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNKNOWN FRIEND.

"If you are the spider, I will be the golden gnat, Squelette of evil!" cried a voice, at the moment when Germain, surprised by the violent and sudden attack of his implacable enemy, fell backward on his bench, at the mercy of the brigand, who, with one knee on his breast, held him by the throat. "Yes, I will be the gnat, and, what is more, a famous gnat!" repeated the man in the blue cap, of whom we

have spoken; then, with a furious bound, overturning three or four prisoners who separated him from Germain, he sprang upon Le Squelette, and struck on his head and between the eyes such a torrent of blows with his fists that the sound was like that of a hammer upon an anvil.

The man in the blue cap, who was no other than the Chourineur, added, as he redoubled the rapidity of his hammering on the head of Le Squelette,

"It is the hail-storm of fisticuffs which M. Rodolphe planted on my scull. I have learned the trick."

At this unexpected assault, the prisoners were struck with surprise, taking no part for or against the Chourineur. Many of them, still under the salutary impression of the story of Pique-Vinaigre, were even satisfied at this incident, which might save Germain.

Le Squelette, at first stunned, staggering like an ox under the butcher's axe, extended his hands mechanically to ward off the blows of his enemy. Germain was enabled to disengage himself from the mortal gripe, and half arose.

"But what is all this? who is this brigand?" cried the Gros-Boiteux; and springing upon the Chourineur, he tried to seize his arms from behind, while the latter endeavoured to hold down Le Squelette on the bench.

The defender of Germain answered the attack of the Gros-Boiteux by a kind of kick, so violent, that he sent him rolling to the extremity of the circle formed by the prisoners.

Germain, of a livid paleness, half suffocated, kneeling beside the bench, did not appear to have any consciousness of what was passing around him. The strangulation had been so violent and so painful that he hardly breathed.

After he had recovered a little, Le Squelette, by a desperate effort, succeeded in shaking off the Chourineur, and getting upon his feet. Panting, drunk with rage and hatred, he was frightful. His cadaverous face streamed with blood, his upper lip, drawn back like a mad wolf's, displayed his teeth closely set against each other.

At length he cried, in a voice breathless with anger and fatigue, for his struggle with the Chourineur had been violent, "Cut him down, then, this brigand, cowards! who let me be attacked traitorously, or the *mangeur* will escape."

During this kind of truce, the Chourineur, raising up the half-fainting Germain, had skilfully manœuvred to approach by degrees an angle of the wall, where he placed his *protégé*.

Profiting by this excellent position of defence, the Chourineur could then, without fear of being attacked from behind, hold out a long time against the prisoners, on whom the courage and Herculean strength which he had just displayed made a powerful impression.

Pique-Vinaigre, alarmed, had disappeared during the tumult, without any one remarking his absence.

Seeing the hesitation of the greater part of the prisoners, Le Squelette said, "Come on, then! let us do the job for both of them, the large man and the little *mangeur*."

"Take care!" answered the Chourineur, preparing for the combat; "look out for yourself, Le Squelette! If you wish to play Coupe en Deux, I will play Gargousse—I'll cut your throat."

"Why don't you jump on him?" cried the Gros-Boiteux. "Why does this madman defend the *mangeur*? Death to the *mangeur*, and him also! If he defends Germain, he is a traitor."

"Yes! yes!"

"Death to the *mangeur!*"

"Death!"

"Yes; death to the traitor who defends him!"

Such were the cries of several of the prisoners. A part of them, more merciful, cried, "Not before he speaks!

"Yes; let him explain!"

"A man must not be killed without a hearing!"

"And without defence!"

"One would be a real Coupe en Deux!"

"So much the better!" answered the Gros-Boiteux and the partisans of Le Squelette.

"One cannot do too much to a *mangeur!*"

"To death with him!"

"Fall upon him!"

"Let us support Le Squelette!"

"Yes, yes! *charivari* for the blue bonnet!"

"No; let us sustain the blue cap! *charivari* for Le Squelette!" answered the party of the Chourineur.

"No; down with the blue cap!"

"Down with Le Squelette!"

"Bravo, my lads!" cried the Chourineur, addressing those of the prisoners who ranged themselves on his side; "you have hearts; you would not see a man murdered who is half dead; only cowards are capable of such conduct. Le Squelette is no bad joker; he is condemned in advance; that is the reason why he urges you on. But if you aid him to kill Germain, you will be roughly treated. Besides, I have a proposition to make. Le Squelette wants to finish this young man. Well! let him come and take him, if he will: it will be an affair between ourselves; we will walk into each other, and you will see; but he dares not—he is like Coupe en Deux, strong among the weak."

The vigour, the energy, the hardy figure of the Chourineur had a powerful effect on the prisoners; a considerable number ranged themselves on his side, and surrounded Germain; the party of Le Squelette were grouped around this bandit.

A bloody affray was about to take place, when the quick and measured step of a guard of infantry was heard in the court.

Pique-Vinaigre, profiting by the noise and general commotion, had gained the court and knocked at the wicket, in order to inform the keepers of what was going on in the "*chauffoir*."

The arrival of the soldiers put an end to this scene. Germain, Le Squelette, and the Chourineur were conducted to the presence of the director; the first to lodge his complaint, the others to answer the charge of a fight in the prison.

The alarm and sufferings of Germain were so intense, his weakness was so great, that he was obliged to lean on two of the keepers to reach the director's room. There he became quite faint; his excoriated throat bore the livid and bloody marks of the iron fingers of Le Squelette. A few seconds more, and the betrothed of Rigolette would have been strangled.

The keeper charged with the surveillance of

the *parloir*, who, as we have said, was much interested for Germain, gave him every assistance.

When he came to himself, when reflection succeeded to the rapid and terrible emotions that had hardly left him the exercise of his reason, his first thought was for his deliverer.

"Thank you for your attentions, monsieur," he said to the keeper; "but for that courageous man, I was lost."

"How are you now?"

"Better. Ah! all that has passed seems to me like a horrid dream!"

"Recover yourself."

"And he who saved me, where is he?"

"In the director's room. He is telling him how the affray occurred. It appears that without him—"

"I had been murdered, monsieur. Oh! tell me his name—who is he?"

"His name I do not know; he is nicknamed the Chourineur; he was once in the galleys."

"And the crime which brought him here, perhaps, is not serious?"

"Very serious—burglary," said the keeper. "He will probably have the same dose as Pique-Vinaigre; fifteen or twenty years of hard labour and the pillory, as he is a second comer."

Germain shuddered; he would have preferred to be bound by the ties of gratitude to one less criminal.

"Ah! it is frightful," he said; "and yet this man, without knowing me, took my part. So much courage, so much generosity."

"What would you have, monsieur? Sometimes there is some good left in these people. The most important part is, that you are saved; to-morrow you will have your cell '*à la pistole*,' and for this night you will sleep in the infirmary, according to the orders of the director. Come, courage, monsieur! The worst is over; when your pretty little visiter comes to see you, you can reassure her, for, once in your cell, you will have nothing more to fear." "Oh! no, I will not speak to her about it; but I wish to thank my defender. However culpable he may be in the eyes of the law, he has none the less saved my life."

"Hold! I hear him leaving the director's room. Le Squelette is now to be examined; I will take them back together, directly, Le Squelette to the dungeon, and the Chourineur to the *Fosse aux Lions*. He will, besides, be a little recompensed for what he has done for you; for as he is a bold and determined fellow, such as one should be to lead others, it is probable that he will take the place of Le Squelette as prevost."

The Chourineur having crossed a little lobby, on which opened the room of the director, entered the apartment where Germain was seated.

"Wait for me here," said the keeper to the Chourineur; "I am going to know what the director decides to do with Le Squelette, and I will return directly for you. There is our young man quite recovered; he wishes to thank you, and he has reason to, for without you all had been finished for him." The keeper retired. The features of the Chourineur were radiant with delight. He advanced joyfully, saying,

"Thunder! how happy I am at saving you!" And he extended his hand to Germain.

He, from a feeling of involuntary repulsion, at first drew back slightly instead of taking the hand offered by the Chourineur; then, recollecting that, after all, he owed his life to this man, he wished to make amends for this first movement of repugnance.

But the Chourineur had perceived it; a gloom spread over his face, and drawing back in his turn, he said, with much bitterness,

"Ah! it is right. Pardon me, monsieur."

"No, it is I who should ask your pardon. Am I not a prisoner like you? I should only think of the service you have rendered me; you have saved my life. Your hand, monsieur, I entreat you. I pray you, your hand."

"Thank you; now it is useless. The first movement is everything. If you had at first given me your hand, that would have given me pleasure; but, on reflection, it is I who do not wish it. Not because I am a prisoner, like you, but," he added, in a hesitating and gloomy manner, "because, before I was here, I was—"

"The keeper has told me all," replied Germain, interrupting him; "but you have none the less saved my life."

"I have done but my duty and pleasure, for I know who you are, Monsieur Germain."

"You know me?"

"A little, my nephew; I answer you as if I were your uncle!" said the Chourineur, resuming his tone of habitual carelessness; "and you would be very wrong to place my arrival at '*La Force*' on the back of chance. If I had not known you, I should not have been here."

Germain looked at the Chourineur with the utmost surprise.

"How? it is because you have known me—

"That I am here—a prisoner in '*La Force*.'"

"I wish to believe you; but—"

"But you do not believe me."

"I wish to say, that it is impossible for me to comprehend how it can be that I have anything to do with your imprisonment."

"Have anything to do? You have everything."

"I have this misfortune?"

"A misfortune! on the contrary, it is I who am indebted to you; and very much, that is more."

"To me—you indebted to me!"

"Yes, for having procured me the advantage of making a tour in '*La Force*.'"

"Truly," said Germain, passing his hand over his face, "I do not know whether the terrible shock I received has impaired my reason, but it is impossible for me to understand you. The keeper has just told me that you were accused of—of—"

And Germain hesitated.

"Of robbery, pardieu! yes, burglary; and at night, into the bargain! everything under full sail," cried the Chourineur, shouting with laughter. "Nothing was wanting—my robbery had '*toutes les herbes de la Saint Jean*,'* as the saying is."

Germain, painfully affected by the audacious boldness of the Chourineur, could not prevent himself from saying, "How, you, you so brave, so generous, do you talk thus? Do you not know the terrible punishment that awaits you?"

* This proverb cannot be rendered: it means that every exertion was made to have the robbery take place

"Twenty years in the galleys, and the pillory! I am a headstrong scoundrel, heiu! to take it so coolly? But what would you have when one is in for it? And yet to say that it is you, Monsieur Germain," added the Chourineur, uttering a heavy sigh, in a manner jokingly contrite, "you who are the cause of my misfortune?"

"When you explain yourself more clearly, I shall understand you. Joke as much as you please, my gratitude for the service you have rendered me will be none the less," said Germain, sadly.

"I ask your pardon, Monsieur Germain," answered the Chourineur, becoming more serious; "you do not like to see me laugh at this; let us speak no more about it. I must have a little explanation with you, and force you, perhaps, once more to offer me your hand."

"I do not doubt it; for, notwithstanding the crime of which you are accused, and of which you accuse yourself, everything in you announces courage and frankness. I am sure you are unjustly suspected; appearances, perhaps, compromise you."

"Oh! as to that, you are wrong, Monsieur Germain," said the Chourineur, so seriously this time, and with such an accent of sincerity, that Germain was forced to believe him. "As true as that I have a protector" (the Chourineur took off his cap), "who is for me what the 'bon Dieu' is for the good priests, I robbed at night, by breaking into a window; I was caught in the fact, and secured, with the stolen goods in my possession."

"But want, hunger, drove you, then, to this extremity?"

"Hunger? I had one hundred and twenty francs when they arrested me—the change of a note of a thousand francs, without counting that the protector of whom I have spoken, who does not know that I am here, will never let me want anything. But since I have spoken to you of my protector, you ought to believe that I am speaking the truth, because, you see, it is like going down on your knees. Thus, the torrent of blows that I rained down on Le Squelette is a fashion of his, which I copied after nature. The idea of the robbery—it is on account of him it came into my head. In fine, if you are here instead of being strangled by Le Squelette, thanks to him."

"But this protector?"

"Is also yours."

"Mine?"

"Yes! Monsieur Rodolphe protects you. When I say monsieur, it is monseigneur that I ought to say, for he is at least a prince; but I am accustomed to call him M. Rodolphe, and he allows it."

"You mistake," said Germain, more and more surprised; "I do not know the prince."

"Yes, but he knows you; you do not doubt it? It is possible—it is his way. He knows that there is a good man in trouble—'*crac*,' the good man is relieved; and he, nor seen nor known. I perplex you; for him happiness falls from the clouds, like a tile on the head. Thus, patience! some day or other you will receive your tile."

"Truly, what you say confounds me."

"You will have a good deal more of the same! To return to my protector: some time since, after a service which he pretended I had rendered him, he procured me a superb position I have no need to tell you what—it would be too long; in a word, he sent me to Marseilles to embark for my 'superb position.' I left Paris contented as a beggar! good! but soon that changed. A supposition: let us say that I left on a fine sunny day; well! the next day is cloudy; the day after very cloudy, and every succeeding day more and more so, until, at length, it became as black as the devil. Do you comprehend?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, let us see. Have you had a dog?" "What a singular question." "Have you had a dog that loved you well and that was lost?" "No."

"Then I will tell you at once, that when at a distance from M. Rodolphe, I was restless, uneasy, alarmed, like a dog that had lost his master. It was brutish, but the dogs also are brutes, and this does not prevent them from being attached to their masters, and remembering quite as much the good mouthfuls as the kickings they are accustomed to receive; and M. Rodolphe had given me better than good mouthfuls, for, do you see, for me M Rodolphe is all in all. From a wicked, brutal, savage, and riotous rascal, he has made me a kind of honest man, by saying only two words to me; but these words, '*voyez vous*,' were like magic."

"And those words, what are they? What did he say to you?"

"He told me that I had still a heart and honour, although I had been to the galleys—not for having robbed, it is true. Oh! that, never, but for what is worse, perhaps—for having killed. Yes," said the Chourineur, in a sad tone, "yes, killed in a moment of anger, because from my childhood, brought up like a brute, without father or mother, abandoned in the streets of Paris, I knew neither God nor the devil, nor good nor evil, nor strong nor weak. Sometimes the blood rushed to my eyes, I saw red, and if I had a knife in my hand, I stabbed—I stabbed. I was like a real wolf; what! I could not frequent any other places than those where I met beggars and bandits; I did not put a crape on my hat for that. I was obliged to live in the mire; I did not even know I was there. But, when M. Rodolphe told me that since, in spite of the contempt of the world and misery, instead of stealing, as others did, I had preferred to work as much as I could, and at what I could, that showed I still had a heart and honour. Thunder! do you see, these two words had the same effect upon me as if some one had caught me by the hair and raised me a thousand feet in the air above the beggars with whom I lived, and showed me in what mire I wallowed. Then, of course, I said, 'Thank you, I have enough.' Then my heart beat with something besides anger, and I swore to myself always to keep this honour of which M. Rodolphe had spoken. You see, Monsieur Germain, by telling me with kindness that I was not as bad as I thought, M. Rodolphe encouraged me, and, thanks to him, I have become better than I was."

On hearing this language, Germain comprehended still less how the Chourineur could have committed the robbery of which he accused himself.

CHAPTER XXX.

DELIVERANCE.

"No," thought Germain, "it is impossible; this man, who suffers himself to be thus carried away by the simple words honour and heart, cannot have committed this robbery of which he speaks with so much '*nonchalance!*'"

The Chourineur continued, without remarking the astonishment of Germain:

"Finally, the reason why I am to M. Rodolphe like a dog to his master, is that he has raised me in my own estimation. Before I knew him, I was only sensible to the touch; but he, *he* made me feel within, and deep down, I tell you. Once separated from him and the place where he dwelt, I found myself like a body without a soul. As I travelled on, I said to myself, 'He leads such a droll life! he mingles with such great scoundrels (I know something about it) that he will risk his bones twenty times a day,' and it is under these circumstances that I could play the dog for him and defend my master; for I have good teeth. But, on the other hand, he had told me, 'You must, *mon garçon*, make yourself useful to others; go, then, where you may be of some good.' I had a great desire to answer him, 'For me, there is no one to serve but you, Monsieur Rodolphe.' But I did not dare. He told me, 'Go.' I went; and I have obeyed him as well as I was able. But, thunder! when the time came to get into the tub, leave France, and place the sea between Monsieur Rodolphe and me, without the hope of ever seeing him again, in truth, I had not the courage. He told his correspondent to give me a heap of money as tall as I am when I should embark. I went to see the gentleman. I told him, 'It is impossible just now; I prefer the solid ground. Give me enough to get back to Paris on foot. I have good legs. I cannot embark. Monsieur Rodolphe shall say what he pleases; he will be angry; he will not see me any more. Possibly I shall see him; I shall be where he is; and if he continues the life he leads, sooner or later, I shall arrive in time, perhaps, to put myself between a knife and him. And, besides, I cannot go so far away from him.' At length they gave me enough for my journey. I arrived at Paris. I do not fear trifles; but once back, fear seized me. What could I say to M. Rodolphe to excuse myself for having returned without his permission? Bah! after all, he will not eat me. What shall be, shall be. I go to find his friend, a great, fat, bald man—another trump, this one. Thunder! when M. Murph came in, I said, 'My fate will be decided.' I felt my throat dry—my heart beat a tattoo. I expected to be scolded soundly. Well, yes! the worthy man received me as if he had left me the evening previous. He told me that M. Rodolphe, far from being angry, wished to see me at once. In short, he took me to my protector. Thunder! when I found myself again face to face with him—him who has such an open hand and so good a heart—who is terrible as a lion and gentle as a child—who is a prince, and who has worn a blouse like me—to have the opportunity (which I bless) of dealing out some fisticuffs to me. Faith, Monsieur Germain, on thinking of all these fascinations which he possesses, I felt myself done up. I wept like a doe. Well! instead of laughing—for imagine my sconce when I weep—M. Rodolphe said to me, seriously,

"'So you are back again, my good fellow?'

"'Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; pardon if I am wrong, but I could not go. Make me a little nest in a corner of your court, give me my food, or let me earn it here; that is all I ask from you; and, above all, do not be angry because I have returned.'

"'I am so far from that, my good friend, that you have returned just in time to render me a service.'

"'I, Monsieur Rodolphe? Can it be possible! Well, do you see, it must be, as you told me, that there is something *above;* otherwise, how explain that I arrive here just at the moment when you have need of me? and what is it, then, I can do for you, Monsieur Rodolphe—jump from the top of the towers of Nôtre Dame?'

"'Less than that, my man. An honest and excellent young man, for whom I am as much interested as if he were my son, is unjustly accused of robbery, and confined in *La Force;* he is called Germain, and is of a mild and gentle disposition; the scoundrels with whom he is imprisoned have taken an aversion to him; he may be in great danger; you, who have unfortunately the experience of a prison life, and know a great number of prisoners, could you not, in case some of your old comrades should be at *La Force*, could you not go and see them, and, by promises of money which shall be faithfully kept, engage them to protect this unhappy young man?'"

"But who, then, is this generous and unknown man, who takes so much interest in my fate?" said Germain, more and more surprised.

"You will know, perhaps; as for me, I am ignorant. To return to my conversation with M. Rodolphe: while he was talking, an idea struck me, but an idea so farcical, that I could not keep from laughing before him.

"'What is the matter?' said he.

"'Dame! Monsieur Rodolphe, I laugh because I am content, and I am content because I have the means of placing your M. Germain out of all dangers, by giving him a protector who will defend him bravely; for, once the young man is under the wing of the fellow of whom I speak, there is not one of them will dare to come and look under his nose."

"'Very well, my friend; it is doubtless one of your old companions?'

"'Exactly, M. Rodolphe; he entered *La Force* some days ago; I learned this on my arrival; but we must have some money.' 'How much?'

"'A thousand francs.' 'Here they are.'

"'Thank you, Monsieur Rodolphe; in two days you shall hear from me; your servant, messieurs. Thunder! the king was not my master; I could render a service to M. Rodolphe by joining you: it was that which was famous."

"I begin to understand, or rather, mon Dieu, I tremble to understand," cried Germain; "such fidelity cannot be possible! to come to protect me, defend me in this prison, you have, perhaps, committed a robbery? oh! this would be the sorrow of my whole life." "A moment: M. Rodolphe had told me that I had a heart and honour; these words are my law, do you see; and he can tell me so yet; for if I am no better than formerly, at least I am no worse."

"But this robbery? this robbery? If you have not committed it, how are you here?"

"Stop a moment. Here is the farce: with my thousand francs I went and bought a black

rug; I shaved off my whiskers; I put on blue spectacles; I stuck a pillow in my back, and made up a hump. I began at once to look for one or two rooms on a ground floor in a retired street. I found my affair in the Rue du Provence; I paid my rent in advance under the name of M. Grégoire. The next day I went to the Temple to buy furniture for my two rooms, always wearing my black wig, my hump, and my blue spectacles, so that I might be well known. I sent the things to the Rue du Provence, and six silver spoons and forks which I bought on the Boulevard Saint Denis, still in my disguise as a hunchback.

"I returned to put all in order in my domicil. I said to the porter that I should not sleep there for two days, and I carried away my key. The windows of the two rooms were fastened by strong shutters. Before I went away, I left one unfastened on the inside. At night I took off my wig, my spectacles, and my hump, with which I had been to make my purchases and hire my rooms. I put this disguise in a trunk, which I sent to the address of M. Murph, the friend of M. Rodolphe, begging him to take care of it. I bought this blouse and blue cap, and an iron bar, and at one o'clock in the morning I came to the Rue du Provence to hang about my lodgings, waiting until the patrol should pass, to commence my robbery, my burglary, in order to be taken up."

And the Chourineur was unable to suppress a hearty fit of laughter.

"Ah! I comprehend," cried Germain.

"But you will see if I had not ill luck: no patrol passed. I could have robbed myself twenty times at my ease. At length, about two o'clock, I heard the land-crabs at the end of the street; I opened my window, and broke two or three panes of glass to make a devil of a noise; I dashed in the window, jumped into the room, and seized the box of silver and some clothes. Happily, the patrol had heard the jingling of the glass just as I got out of the window. I was nabbed by the guard, who, at the noise of breaking glass, had come to see what was the matter.

"They knocked at the door; the porter opened it; they sent for the commissary; he came; the porter said that the rooms had been fixed the evening previous by a gentleman with a hunchback, with black hair and blue spectacles, and who was named Grégoire. I had the flaxen mane which you see; I had my eyes open like a hare in her form; I was straight as a Russian at the command, 'carry arms!' They could not then take me for the hunchback, with blue spectacles and black locks. I confessed everything; I was arrested; they took me to the dépôt—from the dépôt here; and I arrived at a good moment, just in time to snatch from the claws of the Squelette the young man of whom M. Rodolphe had said, 'I am as much interested for him as for my own son.'" "Ah! monsieur, what do I not owe you for such services!" cried Germain.

"It is not to me—it is to M. Rodolphe you owe it."

"But the cause of his interest for me?"

"He will tell you, unless he does not choose to do so; for often he is pleased to do good, and if you take it into your head to ask him why, he will not mind answering, 'Attend to what concerns you.'"

"And does M. Rodolphe know that you are here?"

"Not so stupid as to tell him my idea; he would not, perhaps, have allowed me this farce—and, without bragging, heiu! it is famous!"

"But the risks you have run, and still run?"

"What did I risk? not to be conducted to *La Force*, where you were, that is true. But I counted on the protection of M. Rodolphe, to have my prison changed and join you; a lord like him can do everything. And when I was once shut up, he would have wished me to be of service to you."

"But when your trial comes on?"

"Well! I will beg M. Murph to send me my trunk; I will put on before my judge the black wig, the blue spectacles, and the hump, and I will become M. Grégoire again, send for the porter who hired me the chamber, and for the shopkeepers who sold me the furniture; so much for the robbed. If they wish to see the robber again, I will throw off my disguise, and it will be as clear as day that the robbed and the robber make the sum total of the Chourineur, neither more nor less. Then, what the devil would you have them do to me, when it shall be proved that I have robbed myself?"

"That's true!" said Germain, more assured; "but since you felt so much interest for me, why did you not speak to me on entering the prison?"

"I knew at once the plot which was formed against you; I could have exposed it before Pique-Vinaigre had commenced his story; but to denounce even such bandits does not go down with me. I preferred to depend upon my fists to drag you from the paws of Le Squelette. And, besides, when I saw this brigand, I said to myself, 'Here is a fine occasion to practice the hail-storm of fisticuffs, after the manner of M. Rodolphe, to which I am indebted for the honour of his acquaintance.'"

"But if all the prisoners had taken part against you, what could you have done?"

"Then I should have screamed like an eagle, and called for help! But it suited me to do my own cooking myself; to be able to say to M. Rodolphe, 'No one but I meddled in the affair. I have defended, and I will defend, your young man, the tranquil!'"

At this moment the keeper entered quickly.

"Monsieur Germain, come, make haste, to the director's room. He wishes to speak to you at once. And you, Chourineur, my boy, descend to the *Fosse aux Lions*. You shall be prevost, if it suits you, for you have every requisite to fill the office, and the prisoners will not joke with a '*gaillard*' of your calibre."

"All the same to me—as well be captain as soldier while one is here."

"Will you still refuse my hand?" said Germain, cordially, to the Chourineur.

"'*Ma foi!*' no, Monsieur Germain, '*ma foi!*' no; I believe that now I can allow myself this pleasure, and I do it with all my heart."

"We shall see each other again, for I am now under your protection. I shall have nothing more to fear, and from my cell I shall descend each day to the court."

"Be assured, if I wish it, they shall not speak to you except on all fours. But, now I think of it, you know how to write; put down on paper what I have just related to you, and send it to M. Rodolphe; he will know that he need have no more uneasiness about you, and that I am here for a good motive; for if he should learn elsewhere that the Chourineur had stolen, and he did not know the game—thunder! that would not suit me."

"Rest satisfied: this very night I will write to my unknown protector; to-morrow you will give me his address, and the letter shall be sent. Adieu once more; thank you, my good fellow."

"Adieu, Monsieur Germain; I go to return among this band of rascals, of whom I am provost; they will have to march pretty straight, or stand from under!"

"When I think that on my account you go to live for some time among these wretches—"

"What is that to me, now that there is no risk of their contaminating me? M. Rodolphe has washed me too well. I am insured against fire!"

And the Chourineur followed the keeper.

Germain entered the apartment of the director. What was his surprise—he found Rigolette there.

Rigolette, pale, in deep emotion, her eyes bathed in tears, and yet smiling through these tears, her face expressed a sentiment of joy, of happiness indescribable.

"I have good news to tell you, monsieur," said the director. "The judges have just declared that no action lies against you, and I have the order to set you immediately at liberty."

"Monsieur, what do you say? Can it be possible?"

Rigolette wished to speak; her too lively emotion prevented her; she could only make to Germain an affirmative sign with her head.

"Mademoiselle arrived here a few moments after I received the order to set you at liberty," added the director. "A letter of all-powerful recommendation which she brought me, has informed me of the touching devotion she has shown you during your stay in prison, monsieur. It is, then, with lively pleasure that I have sent for you, certain that you would be very happy to give your arm to mademoiselle on leaving this place."

"A dream! surely it is a dream!" said Germain. "Ah, monsieur, what kindness! Pardon me if surprise—joy—prevents me from thanking you as I ought."

"And I, too, Monsieur Germain, I cannot find a word to say," added Rigolette. "Judge of my happiness: on leaving you, I found the friend of M. Rodolphe waiting for me."

"M. Rodolphe again!" said the astonished Germain.

"Yes; now I can tell you all. M. Murph said to me then, 'Germain is free; here is a letter for the director of the prison; before you arrive, he will have received the order to set Germain at liberty, and you can bring him away.' I could not believe what I heard, and yet it was true. Quick—quick—I took a hack—I arrived—and it is now below waiting for us."

* * * * * *

We renounce the attempt to describe the delights of the two lovers when they left *La Force*; of the evening they passed in the little chamber of Rigolette, which Germain left at eleven o'clock for a modest furnished apartment.

Let us sum up in a few words the practical or theoretical ideas we have endeavoured to place in relief in this episode of a prison life.

We shall esteem ourselves very happy if we have shown,

The insufficiency, the impotency, and the danger of imprisonment in common.

The disproportion which exists between the appreciation and punishment of certain crimes, and those of certain offences.

And, finally, the material impossibility for poorer classes to enjoy the benefits of the civil laws.

PART VIII.

CHAPTER I.

PUNISHMENT.

We will conduct the reader again to the office of the notary, Jacques Ferrand.

Thanks to the habitual loquacity of the clerks, almost constantly occupied with the increasing caprices of their patron, we shall thus expose the events that occurred since the disappearance of Cécily.

"One hundred sous against ten, if the present state of his health continues; before a month the patron will be as dead as a musket!"

"The fact is, that since the servant who had the air of an Alsatian has left the house, he has nothing but skin on his bones."

"And what kind of skin!"

"'*Ah, ça!*' he was then in love with this Alsatian, for it is since her departure that he has shrivelled up so?"

"He, the patron, in love? what nonsense! on the contrary, he sees the priests more than ever; and the 'curé' of the parish, a very respectable man (one must be just), went away yesterday, saying (I overheard him) to another priest who accompanied him, 'This is admirable! M. Ferrand is the *beau ideal* of charity and generosity.' "The 'curé' said that? all alone? without effort?"

"What?" "That the patron was the *beau ideal* of charity and generosity?"

"Yes! I heard him."

"Then I can't understand it at all. The curé has the reputation, and he deserves it, of being what is called a right good pastor."

"It is true; and of him we must speak seriously and with respect; he is as good and charitable as the 'Little Blue Mantle,'* and when one says that of a man, he is judged."

"Ay, that is not a little to say."

"No. For the Little Blue Mantle, as well as for the good priest, the poor have only one voice, and a good voice it is, from the heart."

"Then I return to my idea; when the 'curé' affirms a thing, he must be believed, as he is incapable of telling a falsehood; and yet to think as he does, that the patron is charitable and generous—that sticks in my throat."

"Oh! how pretty that is, Chalamel! how pretty!" "Seriously, I would just as soon believe that as I would a miracle. It would not be more difficult." "M. Ferrand generous! he who would skin an egg!" "And yet, messieurs, the forty sous for our breakfast!" "Beautiful proof! It is like a pimple on the end of a man's nose—it is an accident."

"Yes, but, on the other hand, the head clerk told me that three days ago he sold out an enormous amount of treasury bonds, and that—"

"Well! Speak then." "It is a secret."

"So much the more reason for telling it."

"Your word and honour that you won't mention it?"

* M. Champion, a philanthropist of Paris.

"On the heads of our children we give it."

"And besides, messieurs, let us remember what the great king Louis XIV. majestically said to the Doge of Venice before his assembled court :

'Lors qu'un secret est possédé par un clerc,
Ce secret, il doit la dire, c'est clair.'"

"*Allons*, good! there is Chalamel with his proverbs!"

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"Proverbs are the wisdom of nations; it is on this account I require your secret."

"Come, none of your nonsense. I tell you the head clerk made me promise not to speak of it to any one."

"Yes; but he did not say that you should not tell it to every one?"

"It shall not go out of the office. Go on."

"He is dying with desire to tell us the secret."

"Well! the patron is about selling his notary's business. At this present moment, perhaps, it is done."

"Ah bah!"

"Here is droll news!"

"Let us see, without charge, *who* charges himself with the charge which he discharges?"

"Dieu! how insupportable this Chalamel is with his riddles."

"Do you think I know to whom he sells it?"

"If he sells it, it is because, perhaps, he wishes to come out, give fêtes, routs, as they call them, in the gay world. After all, there is something in it."

"I think so, indeed! The head clerk spoke of more than a million, including the value of the business."

"More than a million!"

"It is said that he has been gambling in stocks secretly with the Commandant Robert, and that he has made much money."

"Not to speak of his living like a curmudgeon."

"But these misers, when once they begin to spend money, become as prodigal as they were once mean."

"Well, I agree with Chalamel; I think that now the patron is coming out."

"And he would be most stupendously in the wrong not to bury himself in voluptuousness, and not to plunge into the delights of Golconda, if he has the means; for, as the vaporous Ossian says, in the grotto of Fingal,

"'Tout notaire qui bambochera
S'il a du *quibus* raison aura.'"

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"It is absurd!"

"Yes, and the patron looks very much like a man who thinks of amusing himself. He has a face that might cause the devil to appear on earth."

"And then M. Curé, who boasts of his charity?"

"Well! a well-ordered charity begins at home!"

"You do not know your ten commandments, heathen? If the patron asks from himself the alms of great pleasures, it is his duty to grant them."

"What astonishes me is, that this intimate friend, who seems to have dropped from the clouds, never leaves him."

"Not to mention his ugly face."

"He is as red-haired as a carrot."

"I am rather inclined to believe that this intruder is the fruit of a '*faux pas*' which M. Ferrand has committed in the springtime of life, for, as the Eagle of Meaux said concerning the taking of the veil by the tender La Valliere,

"'Qu'on aime jeune homme où vieux bibard,
Souvent la fin est un moutard.'"

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"In truth, with him it is impossible to talk reason a moment."

"What stupidity! To say that this unknown is the son of the patron, when he is the oldest, that is easy to be seen."

"Well, what of that?"

"How? what of that? That the son should be older than the father?"

"It is very plain; in that case, the intruder must have made the '*faux pas*,' and be the father of M. Ferrand, instead of being his son."

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"Do not listen to him; you know, when once he is in the way of saying stupid things, there is no end to it."

"What is certain is, that this intruder has a bad face, and does not leave M. Ferrand for a moment."

"He is always with him in his cabinet; they eat together; one does not move without the other."

"I think I have seen the man before."

"I think not."

"Tell me, messieurs, have you not also remarked, that for some days past, there comes regularly almost every two hours a man with great light mustaches and a military air, who asks the porter for the intruder? The intruder comes down, talks for a moment with the man with mustaches, after which the latter makes a half turn like an automaton, to come again in two hours after."

"It is true; I have remarked him. It seems to me, also, that I meet some men when I go into the street who appear to be watching the house."

"Seriously, there is something extraordinary going on here."

"Who lives long enough will see."

"On this subject the head clerk, perhaps, knows more than we do. But he plays the diplomatist."

"Exactly; and where is he, then, for so long a time?"

"He has gone to the house of the countess who was stabbed; it appears that she is now out of danger."

"The countess, Sarah M'Gregor?"

"Yes; this morning she sent for the patron to come at once, but he sent the head clerk in his place."

"It is perhaps for a will."

"No, because she is better."

"Hasn't he work enough now, the head clerk, since he has taken Germain's place also?"

"Speaking of Germain, here is another strange thing."

"What is it?"

"The patron, in order to have him set at liberty, has declared that it was he himself who made an error in his accounts, and that he had

found the money which he accused Germain of stealing."

"I do not find this strange, but just; you recollect I have always said that Germain was incapable of theft."

"It must, nevertheless, have been very disagreeable for him to be arrested and confined as a thief."

"If I were in his place I would sue Jacques Ferrand for damages."

"The least he could do would be to reinstate him as cashier, in order to prove that Germain was not culpable."

"Yes, but perhaps Germain would not be willing."

"Is he still at the farm, where he went on coming out of prison, and from which he wrote us to announce M. Ferrand's discontinuance of the suit?"

"Probably, for yesterday I went to the place where he directed us to go; they told me that he was still in the country, and that I could write to him at Bouqueval, near Ecouen, at Madame George's."

"Ah! messieurs, a carriage!" said Chalamel, leaning over towards the window. "Dame! it is not a dashing equipage like that of the famous vicomte. Do you recollect this dashing vicomte with his '*chasseur*' laced with silver, and his fat coachman with the white wig?"

"This time it is nothing but a hack."

"And who gets out?"

"Stop a moment! Ah! a black robe!"

"A woman! a woman! Oh! let us see."

"Dieu! this 'gutter-jumper' is indecently sensitive at his age; he only thinks of women; we shall have to chain him up, or he will carry off the Sabines from the streets; for, as said the Swan of Cambray in his *Treatise on Education* for the Dauphin,

> 'Defrez-vous der saute-ruisseau
> Au beau sexe qui donne l'assaut.
>
> Of *gutter-jumper* have a care
> Who assaults the lovely fair.'"

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"Dame! Monsieur Chalamel, you said a black robe, I thought."

"It is M. le Curé, goose! Let him be an example for you."

"The curé of the parish? The good pastor?"

"Himself, messieurs."

"Here is a worthy man!"

"He is no Jesuit, not he."

"I think not; and if all the priests were like him, everybody would be devout."

"Silence! some one opens the door."

And all the clerks, bending over their desks, began to scratch away with apparent industry, making their pens pass rapidly over the paper.

The pale face of this priest was at once mild and grave, intelligent and venerable; its expression full of benevolence and serenity.

A small black cap concealed his "*tonsure*," and his long gray hair floated on the collar of his maroon-coloured surtout.

Let us add, that from his simple credulity, this excellent priest had always been and was still the dupe of Jacques Ferrand's deep and cunning hypocrisy.

"Your worthy patron, is he in his cabinet, my children?" asked the curé.

"Yes, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Chalamel, rising respectfully. And he opened for the priest the door leading into a room adjoining the office.

Hearing some one speaking with vehemence in the cabinet of the notary, the abbé, not wishing to hear, walked rapidly towards the door and knocked.

"Come in," said a voice with an Italian accent, and the priest found himself face to face with Jacques Ferrand and Polidori.

It would seem that the clerks were not wrong when they prophesied the death of their patron at no distant day.

Since the flight of Cécily the notary was hardly to be recognised.

"Although his visage was of a frightful thinness, and of a cadaverous hue, a hectic flush coloured his hollow cheeks; a nervous shivering, except when interrupted by convulsive spasms, agitated his frame continually; his bony hands were dry and burning; his large green spectacles concealed his blood-shot eyes, which sparkled with the fire of a consuming fever; in a word, this sinister face betrayed the ravages of a rapid consumption.

The physiognomy of Polidori formed a contrast with that of the notary; nothing could be more bitterly, more coldly ironical than the expression of this scoundrel; a forest of fiery red hair, interspersed with some silvered locks, crowned his high and wrinkled forehead; his penetrating eyes, green as the ocean wave, were close to his hooked nose; his mouth, with its thin lips, expressed wickedness and sarcasm. Polidori, completely dressed in black, was seated beside the desk of Jacques Ferrand.

At the sight of the priest they both arose.

"Well! how do you get on, my worthy Monsieur Ferrand?" said the abbé with solicitude; "are you a little better?"

"I am always in the same state, Monsieur l'Abbé; the fever does not leave me," answered the notary; "the want of sleep is killing me. But the will of God be done!"

"See, Monsieur l'Abbé," added Polidori, with emphasis, "what pious resignation! my poor friend is always the same; he only finds a solace for his sufferings in doing good."

"I do not deserve these praises; have the goodness to dispense with them," said the notary, dryly, with difficulty concealing his anger. "To the Lord alone belongs the appreciation of good and evil; I am only a miserable sinner."

"We are all sinners," answered the abbé, gently; "but we have not all the charity which distinguishes you, my respected friend. There are very few who, like you, dispossess themselves of so much of their earthly wealth to employ it during their lifetime in a manner so Christian-like. Do you still persist in selling your business, in order to devote yourself more entirely to the practice of religion?"

"Since yesterday, my business is sold, Monsieur l'Abbé; some concessions have enabled me to realize (a rare thing) the cash down: this sum, added to others, will enable me to found the institution of which I have spoken, and of which I have definitively arranged the plan that I am about to submit to you."

"Ah! my worthy friend," said the abbé, with deep and reverential admiration, "to do so

much good—so unostentatiously—and, I may say, so naturally! I repeat to you, people like you are rare; they will receive their reward."

"It is true that very few persons unite, like Jacques Ferrand, riches to piety, intelligence to charity," said Polidori, with an ironical smile, which escaped the notice of the good abbé.

At this new and sarcastic eulogium, the hand of the notary was clutched; he cast from under his spectacles a look of deadly hatred on Polidori.

"You see, Monsieur l'Abbé," the "intimate friend" of Jacques Ferrand hastened to say, "he has continually these nervous spasms, and he will do nothing for them. He worries me; he is his own executioner, my poor friend!"

At these words of Polidori, the notary shuddered still more convulsively, but he composed himself again.

A man less simple than the abbé would have remarked, during this conversation, and, above all, during what is about to follow, the notary's constrained manner of speaking; for it is hardly necessary to say that a will superior to his own, the will of Rodolphe, in a word, imposed on this man words and acts diametrically opposed to his true character.

Thus, sometimes pushed to extremities, the notary appeared reluctant to obey this all-powerful and invisible authority; but a look from Polidori put an end to his indecision; then, constraining with a sigh of rage his most violent feelings, Jacques Ferrand submitted to the yoke which he could not break.

"Alas! Monsieur l'Abbé," said Polidori, who seemed to take delight in torturing his victim, as is said vulgarly, by pricks of a pin, "my poor friend neglects his health too much. Tell him to be more careful of himself, if not for his own sake, for his friends', or, at least, for the unfortunates of whom he is the hope and support."

"Enough! enough!" murmured the notary.

"No, it is not enough," said the priest, with emotion; "we cannot repeat to you too often that you do not belong to yourself, and that it is wrong to thus neglect your health. In ten years that I have known you, I have never seen you ill; but for a month past you are no longer recognisable. I am so much the more struck with this alteration of your features, as I was for some time without seeing you. Thus, at our first interview, I could not conceal my surprise; but the change I have remarked in you for the last few days is much more serious; you sink every hour, you give us much uneasiness. I implore you, my worthy friend, take care of your health."

"I am very sensible of your solicitude, Monsieur l'Abbé; but I assure you that my condition is not so alarming as you think."

"Since you are so obstinate," said Polidori, "I will tell everything to the abbé; he loves you—he esteems you—he honours you much; how much the more will he honour you when he shall know your new merits—when he shall know the true cause of your wasting away?"

"What is this?" asked the abbé.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said the notary, with impatience, "I begged you to come here to communicate to you projects of high importance, and not to hear me ridiculously praised by *my friend*."

"You know, Jacques, that from me you must be resigned to hear everything," said Polidori, looking fixedly at the notary, who cast down his eyes, and remained silent. Polidori continued:

"You perhaps remarked, Monsieur l'Abbé, that the first symptoms of his nervous complaint appeared a short time after the abominable scandal which Louise Morel caused in this house."

The notary shuddered.

"You know the crime of this unhappy girl, monsieur?" demanded the astonished priest; "I thought you had arrived but a few days since at Paris?"

"Without doubt, Monsieur l'Abbé; but Jacques has related everything to me, as his friend—as his physician, for he attributes these nervous attacks almost entirely to the indignation which the crime of Louise Morel caused him. This is nothing, as yet; my poor friend, alas! had new trials to endure, which, you see, have ruined his health. An old servant, who for many years was attached to him by the ties of gratitude—"

"Madame Séraphin?" said the curé, interrupting Polidori; "I have heard of the death of this unfortunate, drowned by her own imprudence, and I comprehend the grief of M. Ferrand: it is not easy to forget ten years of faithful services; such regrets do credit to the master as well as the servant." "Monsieur l'Abbé" said the notary, "I entreat you, do not speak of my virtues—you confuse me—it is painful."

"And who will speak of them then—will it be yourself?" answered Polidori, affectionately; "but you will be obliged to praise him still more, Monsieur l'Abbé: you perhaps do not know who is the servant that took the place of Louise Morel and Madame Séraphin. You do not know what he has done for this poor Cécily, Monsieur l'Abbé, for so she is named."

The notary started from his seat, his eyes sparkling under his spectacles, a burning red diffused over his livid face.

"Hush! be silent!" he cried; "not a word more. I forbid it."

"Come, come, calm yourself," said the abbé, smiling benevolently; "another good action to reveal? As for myself, I strongly approve of the generous indiscretion of your friend. I did know this servant, for it was just after her arrival that my worthy friend, overwhelmed with business, was obliged momentarily, to my great regret, to interrupt our relations."

"It was to conceal from you this new good action he meditated, Monsieur l'Abbé; thus, although his modesty revolts at the mention of it, he must hear me, and you shall know all," said Polidori, smiling.

Jacques Ferrand was silent; he leaned on his desk, and concealed his face in his hands.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANK FOR THE POOR.

"Imagine then, Monsieur l'Abbé," resumed Polidori, addressing the curé, but emphasizing, as it were, each phrase by an ironical glance

at Jacques Ferrand, "imagine that my friend found in his new servant, who, as I have already told you, was called Cécily, the best qualities, great modesty, angelic sweetness, and, above all, much piety. This is not all; Jacques, you know, owes to his long practice in business affairs, an extreme penetration; he soon saw that this young woman, for she was young and very pretty, Monsieur l'Abbé—that this young and pretty woman was not made for a servant, and that, to principles most virtuously austere, she added solid accomplishments very diversified."

"Ah, indeed, this is strange," said the abbé, much interested. "I was entirely ignorant of these circumstances; but what is the matter, my good M. Ferrand? You seem to be suffering."

"In truth," said the notary, wiping the cold sweat from his brow, "I have a slight headache, but it will soon pass away."

Polidori shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "Observe, Monsieur l'Abbé," he added, "that Jacques is always thus when any one unveils his hidden charities; he is so hypocritical on the subject of the good he does! Happily, I am here, and justice shall be done him. Let us return to Cécily. In her turn she had soon found out the excellence of his heart, and, when he interrogated her as to the past, she confessed to him that, a stranger, without resources, and reduced by the misconduct of her husband to the most humble condition, she regarded it as a boon from Heaven that she had been enabled to enter the house of a man so venerable as M. Ferrand. At the sight of so much misfortune, resignation, virtue, Jacques did not hesitate; he wrote to the native country of this unfortunate to ascertain the truth of her story; the answer confirmed it in every particular; then, sure of not misplacing his benefactions, Jacques blessed Cécily as a father, sent her back to her own country with a sum of money which will enable her to wait for better days, and the chance of improving her condition. I will not add a word of praise for Jacques; the facts are more eloquent than my words."

"Good, very good," cried the curé, much affected. "Monsieur l'Abbé," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hollow voice, "I do not wish to trespass upon your precious moments; speak no more of me, I implore you, but of the project for which I have begged you to come here and favour me with your advice."

"I perceive that the praises of your friend wound your modesty; let us occupy ourselves, then, with your new good deeds, and forget that you are the author; but, first, let us speak of the business you intrusted to my care. I have, according to your wishes, deposited in the Bank of France, and in my name, the sum of one hundred thousand crowns, destined to the restitution of which you are the intermediate agent, and which was to pass through my hands. You have preferred that this deposite should not remain in your possession, although it seems to me it had been quite as secure there as in the bank."

"In that respect, M. l'Abbé, I have conformed to the intentions of the unknown author of this restitution. It is an affair of conscience. At his request I have placed this sum in your hands, and begged you to remit it to madame, the widow Fermont, whose maiden name was Renneville" (the voice of the notary trembled slightly in uttering these names), "when she should present herself to you, and prove herself to be entitled to the same."

"I will accomplish the mission which you confided to me," said the priest.

"It is not the last, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"So much the better, if the others resemble this; for, without wishing to seek for the motives which impel it, I am always touched by a voluntary restitution. These lofty acts, which conscience alone dictates, are always the indications of sincere repentance, and it is no barren expiation."

"In truth, Monsieur l'Abbé, to restore a hundred thousand francs at once is rare; as for me, I have been more curious than you; but what availed my curiosity against the unshaken discretion of Jacques? Thus, I am still ignorant of the person's name who has made this noble restitution."

"Whoever he may be," said the abbé, "I am certain that he stands very high in the esteem of Monsieur Ferrand."

"This honest man is indeed, Monsieur l'Abbé, placed very high in my esteem," answered the notary, with a bitterness badly disguised.

"And this is not all, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Polidori, looking at Jacques Ferrand in a significant manner; "you will see how far these generous scruples of this unknown extend; and, if I must speak plainly, I suspect our friend of having contributed not a little to awaken these scruples, and of having found the means to calm them."

"How is that?" asked the priest.

"What do you mean to say?" added the notary.

"And the Morels? this good and virtuous family?"

"Ah! yes, yes; in truth, I forgot," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hollow voice.

"Imagine, Monsieur l'Abbé," resumed Polidori, "that the author of this restitution, without doubt advised by Jacques Ferrand, not content with restoring this considerable sum, wishes still—but I will leave my worthy friend to explain; it is a pleasure of which I will not deprive him."

"I listen to you, my dear Monsieur Ferrand," said the priest.

"You know," said Jacques Ferrand, with involuntary emotions of revolt against the part which was imposed on him—feelings which were betrayed by the alteration of his voice and the hesitancy of his speech; "you know, Monsieur l'Abbé, that the misconduct of Louise Morel was such a terrible blow for her father, that he has become mad. The numerous family of the artisan ran the risk of dying from want, deprived of their sole support. Happily, Providence has come to their succour; and the person who has made the voluntary restitution of which you are the agent, Monsieur l'Abbé, has not thought this a sufficient expiation for a great abuse of confidence. He asked me if I did not know any deserving family in want of assistance. I mentioned the Morels, and he begged me, at the same time giving me the necessary funds, which I will hand to you presently, to

request you to settle an annuity of two thousand francs on Morel, revertible to his wife and children."

"But, in truth," said the abbé, "in accepting this new charge, doubtless very responsible, I am astonished that it was not bestowed on you."

"The unknown person has thought, and I coincide with him, that his good works would acquire an additional value, would be, thus to speak, sanctified by passing through hands as pious as yours, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"To that I have nothing to answer; I will purchase an annuity of two thousand francs for Morel, the worthy and unfortunate father of Louise. But I think with your friend here that you have not been a stranger to the resolution which has dictated this new expiatory gift."

"I have pointed out the Morel family, nothing more; I beg you to believe me, Monsieur l'Abbé," answered Jacques Ferrand.

"Now," said Polidori, "you are going to see, Monsieur l'Abbé, what noble philanthropic views my friend Jacques has concerning the charitable establishment of which we have already had some conversation; he is going to read to you the plan which he has definitively arranged; the money necessary for the capital is there in the chest; but, since yesterday, he has had some scruples, and if he does not mention them to you, I will do it for him."

"It is useless," replied Jacques Ferrand, who sometimes chose rather to wound his feelings by his own words than to submit in silence to the ironical praises of his tormentor. "Here is the fact, Monsieur l'Abbé. I have thought that it would be more modest—more Christian-like, that this establishment should not be instituted in my name."

"But this humility is overstrained," cried the abbé. "You can—you ought to pride yourself on your charitable investment. It is right, almost a duty, for you to attach your name to it."

"I prefer, Monsieur l'Abbé, to preserve the 'incognito;' I am resolved on it; and I count on your kindness to make all the necessary arrangements, and select the inferior officers of the establishment; I reserve alone for myself the nomination of the director and porter."

"Even if it were not a real pleasure for me to assist you in your good works, it would be my duty to accept the office"

"Now, Monsieur l'Abbé, if you will allow it, my friend will read you the plan decided upon."

"Since you are so obliging, *my friend*," said Jacques Ferrand, with bitterness, "read it yourself. Spare me this trouble, I pray you."

"No, no," answered Polidori, casting a look at the notary which he well understood, "it gives me great pleasure to hear from your own lips the noble sentiments which have guided you in this work of philanthropy."

"So be it—I will read," said the notary, hastily, taking up a paper which lay upon his desk.

Polidori, for a long time the accomplice of Jacques Ferrand, knew the crimes and secret thoughts of the scoundrel; thus he could not suppress a malicious smile on seeing him forced to read this paper dictated by Rodolphe. As is seen, the prince showed himself inexorable in the logical manner with which he punished the notary.

Luxurious—he tortured him by luxury.
Covetous—by covetousness.
Hypocritical—by hypocrisy.

For, if Rodolphe had chosen this venerable abbé to be the agent for the restitutions and expiations imposed on Jacques Ferrand, it was because he wished doubly to punish him for having, by his detestable hypocrisy, obtained the esteem and affection of the good priest. Was it not, in effect, a great punishment for this hideous impostor—this hardened criminal, to be constrained to practise, at length, the Christian virtues which he had so often feigned to possess, and this time *really* to deserve the just eulogiums of a respectable priest who had been his dupe?

Jacques Ferrand read the following note with feelings easily imagined.

"*Establishment of the Bank for workmen without work.*

'Let us love one another.'

"These divine words contain the germe of all duties, of all virtues, of all charities.

"They have inspired the humble founder of this institution.

"To God alone belong the benefits that it may confer.

"Limited, as to the means of action, the founder has wished that the greatest number possible of his brothers should participate in the succour offered.

"He addresses himself, in the first place, to honest, industrious workmen, with families, whom the want of work often reduces to the most cruel extremities.

"It is not a degrading alms which he gives to his brothers, it is a gratuitous loan which he offers.

"May this loan, as he hopes, prevent them often from resorting to those cruel pledges which they are forced to make (while awaiting the return of work), for the purpose of sustaining a family of which they are the sole support.

"The only guarantee for this loan which he demands from his brothers, is their oath and honour.

"It has a revenue of twelve thousand francs, which will be loaned without interest to workmen with families and destitute of work, in sums of from twenty to forty francs.

"These loans shall only be made to workmen or women who shall bring a certificate of good conduct from their last employer, who will state the cause and date of the suspension of employment.

"These loans will be reimbursable monthly by sixths or twelfths, at the choice of the borrower, commencing from the day on which he finds employment."

"He will subscribe a simple engagement of honour to reimburse the loan at stated periods.

"To this will be added, as endorsers, the names of two of his companions.

"The workman who shall not reimburse the amount borrowed by him, cannot, he or his endorsers, have any claims for a new loan; for he will have forfeited a sacred engagement, and, above all, deprived several of his brothers of the advantages which he has enjoyed.

"The sums loaned, on the contrary, being scrupulously repaid, the same benefit can be bestowed on others.

"Not to degrade man by alms.

"Not to encourage idleness by a fruitless charity.

"To stimulate sentiments of honour and innate probity among the labouring classes.

"To come in a brotherly manner to the aid of the workman, who, living already with difficulty from day to day, cannot, when no work can be procured, *suspend* his wants or those of his family, because his work is suspended.

"Such are the thoughts which have given rise to this institution.

"May he who has said, '*Love one another*,' be glorified."

"Ah! monsieur," cried the abbé, with religious admiration, "what a charitable idea! how well I can comprehend your emotion on reading these lines of such touching simplicity."

In truth, while finishing this reading, the voice of Jacques Ferrand was broken, his impatience and temper were at an end; but, watched by Polidori, he dared not, he could not transgress the least orders of Rodolphe. Let his rage be imagined at being forced to dispose so liberally of his fortune in favour of a class whom he had so unmercifully persecuted in the person of Morel the lapidary.

"Is not the idea of Jacques excellent, Monsieur l'Abbé?" asked Polidori.

"Ah! monsieur, I, who am acquainted with all kinds of poverty, I can comprehend better than any one, of what importance this loan would be to poor and honest workmen without employ.

* * * * * * * *

"Indigence without employment never finds credit, or, if obtainable, it is at a most usurious rate; they will lend thirty sous at eight days, and then forty must be returned; and even these loans are very difficult to be obtained; those from the pawnbrokers cost often near three hundred per cent. The artisan without work often pledges for forty sous the only covering which, during the nights of winter, defends him and his from the rigour of the cold. But," added the abbé, with enthusiasm, "a loan of thirty or forty francs without interest, and reimbursable by twelfths, when work returns—for honest workmen, it is their safety, it is hope, it is life. And with what fidelity they would pay it back! It is a sacred debt, which they have contracted to give bread to their wives and children!"

"How precious the eulogiums of Monsieur l'Abbé must be to you, Jacques," said Polidori; "and how many more will he pronounce when he hears of your establishment of a gratuitous 'Mont de Piété.'"*

"How?"

"Certainly, M. l'Abbé, Jacques has not forgotten this; it is a kind of appendage to his Bank for the Poor."

"Can it be true?" cried the priest, clasping his hands with admiration.

"Continue, Jacques," said Polidori.

The notary proceeded to read with a rapid voice, for the whole scene was odious and hateful to him:

"These loans have for their object the remedy for one of the gravest incidents in the life of a labourer—intermission of work. They shall therefore be granted only to those out of employment.

"But it remains to provide for the other cruel embarrasments, which reach even those with employment.

"Often, the loss of one or two days, caused sometimes by fatigue, by the attentions necessary to bestow on a wife or sick child, deprives the workman of his daily resources. Then he has recourse to the Mont de Piété, or to unlawful lenders of money, at an enormous rate of interest.

"Wishing, as much as possible, to lighten the burden of his brothers, the founder of the Bank for the Poor sets apart an income of twenty-five thousand francs a year, for the purpose of lending on pledges, not to exceed the amount of ten francs for each loan.

"The borrowers will pay neither costs nor interest, but they must prove that they follow an honourable profession, and produce a declaration from their employers, which will prove their morality.

"At the end of two years, the articles which have not been redeemed will be sold, without costs; the proceeds arising from the surplus of this sale shall be placed, at five per cent. interest, to the profit of the owners.

"At the end of five years, if this sum shall not be reclaimed, it shall be added to the Bank for the Poor.

"The administration and the office of said Bank shall be placed in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, in a house bought for this purpose, in the centre of this populous quarter. A revenue of ten thousand francs shall be appropriated to the expenses and to the administration of the Bank for the Poor, of which the director for life shall be—"

Polidori interrupted the notary, and said to the priest, "You will see, Monsieur l'Abbé, by the choice of the director of this establishment, whether Jacques knows how to repair the wrong which he has involuntarily done. You know that, by an error which he deplores, he had falsely accused his cashier of taking a sum which he afterward discovered." "Doubtless."

"Well! it is to this honest young man, named François Germain, that Jacques assigns the direction for life, of this bank, with a salary of four thousand francs. Is it not admirable, M. l'Abbé?" "Nothing astonishes me now, or, rather, nothing has astonished me," said the priest. "The fervent piety, the virtues of our worthy friend could hardly fail of such a result. To consecrate all his fortune to such an institution—ah! it is admirable!"

"More than a million, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Polidori—"more than a million amassed by force of order, economy, and probity; and yet there are those who accuse Jacques of avarice! How, said they, his office brings him in fifty or sixty thousand francs a year, and he lives like a miser?"

"To such as these," replied the abbé, with enthusiasm, "I would answer: During fifteen years he has lived liked a poor man, in order to be able at the present time magnificently to solace the poor."

"Be, then, at least proud and joyous at the good you have done," cried Polidori, addressing

* A pawnbroker's shop.

Jacques Ferrand, who, gloomy and cast down, seemed absorbed in profound meditation.

"Alas!" said the abbé, sadly, "it is not in this world that one receives the recompense of so many virtues; he has a more exalted ambition."

"Jacques," said Polidori, touching the notary lightly on the shoulder, "finish your reading." The notary started, passed his hand over his face, and said to the priest,

"Pardon, Monsieur l'Abbé, but I was thinking—I was thinking of the immense extension that this bank for the poor might have from the returned loans. If the loans of each year were regularly repaid at the end of four years, it would have already loaned about fifty thousand crowns on pledge or gratuitously. It is enormous—enormous; and I felicitate myself on it," he added, thinking of the value of the sacrifice imposed upon him. He resumed: "I was, I believe, at—"

"At the nomination of François Germain, for director of the bank," said Polidori.

Jacques Ferrand continued:

"A revenue of ten thousand francs shall be set aside for the expenses and the administration of the bank for the poor without work, of which the perpetual director shall be François Germain, and the porter and keeper shall be the present porter of the house, named Pipelet.

"M. l'Abbé Dumont, with whom the funds necessary for this undertaking shall be deposited, will institute a superior council of supervision, composed of the mayor and the justice of the peace of the arrondissement, who will add to their number the persons whose assistance they shall consider useful to the extension of the Bank for the Poor; for the founder will esteem himself a thousand times paid for the little that he has done, if some charitable persons will aid in the work.

"The opening of this bank will be announced by every means of publicity possible.

"The founder repeats, in conclusion, that he takes no credit for what he has done for his brothers.

"His sole thought is but the echo of this Divine command:

"'*Let us love one another.*'"

"And your place above shall be assigned to you beside him who pronounced these immortal words," cried the abbé, pressing with much warmth the hands of Jacques Ferrand in his own.

The notary was overpowered. Without replying to the encomiums of the abbé, he hastened to give him in treasury bonds the considerable sum necessary for the establishment of this institution and for the annuity of Morel the lapidary.

"I dare hope, Monsieur l'Abbé," at length said Jacques Ferrand, "that you will not refuse this new mission confided to your charitable care. Besides, a stranger, called Sir Walter Murphy, who has given me some advice about the drawing up of this project, will partake of your labour, and will visit you to-day to converse with you on the practicability of the plan, and to place himself at your service, if he can be of any use. Except with him, I pray you to preserve the most profound secrecy, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"You are right. God knows what you are doing for your poor brothers. What matters the rest? All my regret is that I have nothing but my zeal to contribute in aid of this most noble institution; it will be, at least, as ardent as your charity is untiring. But what is the matter? You turn pale. Do you suffer?"

"A little, Monsieur l'Abbé. This long reading, the emotions caused by your kind words, the indisposition from which I am suffering. Pardon my weakness," said Jacques Ferrand, seating himself as if in pain; "there is nothing serious in it, but I am exhausted."

"Perhaps you had better go to bed," said the priest, with an air of lively interest, "and send for your physician?"

"I am a physician, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Polidori. "The situation of Jacques Ferrand demands great care; I will give him all my attention." The notary shuddered.

"A little repose will relieve you, I hope," said the curé. "I leave you; but before I go, I wish to give you a receipt for this money. Come, take courage, be of good cheer!" said the priest, handing the receipt, which he wrote at the desk, to Jacques Ferrand. "Farewell; to-morrow I will call and see you again. Adieu, monsieur—adieu, my friend, my worthy, pious friend!"

The priest went out, and Jacques Ferrand and Polidori remained alone.

CHAPTER III.

THE ACCOMPLICES.

Hardly had the abbé gone when Jacques Ferrand uttered a terrible imprecation.

His despair and rage, so long restrained, burst forth with fury; breathless, his face convulsed, his eyes rolling in their sockets, he walked up and down in the cabinet like a wild beast confined by a chain.

Polidori, presenting the greatest composure, observed the notary attentively.

"Thunder and blood!" cried Jacques, in a voice choked with rage: "my fortune entirely swallowed up in these stupid good works! I, who despise and execrate men; I, who have only lived to deceive and despoil them; I found philanthropic establishments—to be forced to do it, by infernal means!—But is it the devil, then, who is your master?" he cried with fury, and stopping abruptly before Polidori.

"I have no master," he answered, coldly. "Like you, I have a judge!"

"To obey like a fool the orders of this man!" said Jacques Ferrand, with renewed rage. "And this priest, whom I have so often laughed at, because he was the dupe of my hypocrisy; every one of the praises he gave me was like a thrust with a dagger. And to be compelled—"

"Or the scaffold, as an alternative."

"Oh! not to be able to escape this fatal power! There is more than a million that I have given up. If I have left, with this house, a hundred thousand francs, it is the very outside. What more do they want?"

"You are not at the end yet. The prince knows, through Badinot, that your man of

straw, Petit Jean, was only a name borrowed by you for the purpose of making the usurious loans to the Vicomte de Saint Rémy. The sums which Saint Rémy repaid you were loaned to him by a great lady; probably another restitution awaits you; but it stands adjourned, doubtless, because it is a more delicate affair."

"Chained, chained here!"

"As securely as with an iron cable."

"You—my jailer—wretch!"

"What would you have? According to the system of the prince, nothing more logical: he punishes crime by crime, accomplice by accomplice."

"Oh! rage! madness!"

"Oh! unfortunately, powerless rage! for, as long as I am not told, 'Jacques Ferrand is free to quit this house,' I will remain like your shadow. Listen, then; as well as you, I merit the scaffold. If I fail to execute the orders given to me, my head falls! You cannot, then, have a more incorruptible guardian. As for flying, both of us—impossible; we could not take a step outside of this house without falling into the hands of those who are watching it night and day."

"Death and fury, I know it!"

"Be resigned, then, for this flight is impossible; even should we succeed in escaping, it would only make our situation more precarious, for they would send the police in search of us. On the contrary, you, in obeying, and I, in watching the accuracy of your obedience, we are certain of not having our throats cut. Once more, I say, let us be resigned."

"Do not exasperate me by this indifference, or—"

"Or what? I do not fear you: I am on my guard, I am armed; and even if you were to find the poisoned dagger of Cécily to kill me—"

"Be quiet!"

"It would be of no use; you know that every two hours I am obliged to give a bulletin of your precious health, an indirect way of hearing from us both. On not seeing me appear, they will suspect you of the murder; you will be arrested. And—but hold—I do you an injury in supposing you capable of this crime. You have sacrificed a million to save your life, and you would not risk your head for the foolish and fruitless vengeance of killing me! Come, come, you are not fool enough for that."

"It is because you know I cannot kill you that you increase my torments by your sarcasms."

"Your position is so original, you do not see it yourself; but on my honour it is '*piquant*.'"

"Oh misfortune! misfortune irretrievable! on whatever side I turn it is death! And what I most dread now, is destruction! Curses on myself, on you, on the whole world!"

"Your misanthropy is more extensive than your philanthropy. The former embraces the whole world; the latter but one of the wards of Paris."

"Go on—rail, monster!"

"Would you prefer that I should crush you with reproaches?"

"Whose fault is it that we are reduced to this position?"

"Yours. Why preserve around your neck, suspended as a relic, that letter of mine relative to the murder which was worth a hundred thousand crowns to you—the murder which we had so adroitly passed off as a suicide?"

"Why? wretch! Did I not give you fifty thousand francs for your co-operation in the crime, and for this letter, which I required that I might have a guarantee against your denouncing me? My life and fortune were, then, dependant on its possession; that is the reason why I always wore it around my neck."

"It is true, it was cunning on your part, for I would gain nothing by denouncing you, except the pleasure of going to the scaffold side by side with you. And yet your cunning has ruined us, while mine would have assured impunity for the crime to the present moment."

"Impunity?"

"Who could foresee what has come to pass? But, in the ordinary march of events, our crime would have been unpunished, thanks to me."

"Thanks to you?"

"Yes: when we had blown this man's brains out, you wished simply to counterfeit his signature, and write to his sister that, ruined completely, he had killed himself from despair. You thought that you would make a great stroke of policy by not speaking in this letter of the deposite he had confided to you. It was absurd. This deposite being known to his sister, she would have unquestionably reclaimed it. It was necessary, then, on the contrary, to mention it as we did, in order that, if there were any suspicions of the reality of the suicide, you might be the last person to be suspected. Then what happened? The suicide was believed; from your reputation for probity, you were enabled to deny the deposite, and it was thought that the brother killed himself after having dissipated the fortune of his sister."

"But what matters all this at present? the crime is discovered."

"And thanks to whom? Was it my fault if my letter was a double-edged sword, cutting both ways? How could you be so weak, so stupid, as to deliver such a terrible weapon to this infernal Cécily?"

"Hush—do not pronounce that name!" cried Jacques Ferrand, with a frightful expression.

"So be it: I do not wish to make you epileptic. You will see that, in guarding against ordinary justice, our mutual precautions were sufficient; but the extraordinary justice of him who holds us in his power defied all calculations."

"Oh! I know it but too well."

"He believes that to cut off the head of a criminal does not sufficiently repair the evil he has done. With the proofs which he holds, if he were to deliver us to the tribunals, what would be the result? Two corpses, at the most only good to fatten the graveyard."

"Oh! yes—it is tears, and anguish, and tortures which this prince demands—this demon. But I do not know him, I have never done him any harm. Why does he pursue me thus?"

"In the first place, he pretends to reward the good, and punish the evil done to others; and, besides, he knows those whom you have injured, and he punishes you in his own way."

"But by what right?"

"Come, come, Jacques, between us, do not speak of right; he had the power to have your

head taken off in a judicial manner. What would have been the result? Your relations are all dead—the state would have profited by your fortune instead of those whom you have despoiled. On the contrary, in redeeming your life at the price of your money, all your victims will be remunerated for their sufferings, in the manner already decided upon. So in this point of view, we can confess to each other that if society would have gained nothing by your death, it gains much by your living."

"And it is this which causes my rage—and this is not my only torture."

"The prince knows it well. Now what will he decide to do with us? I am ignorant. He has promised to spare us our lives if we faithfully obey his orders. He will keep his promise. But if he does not believe our crimes sufficiently expiated, he will know how to make us prefer death a thousand times to the life he grants us. You do not know him. Besides, he has more than one devil in his service—for this Cécily—whom may the thunder blast!"

"Once more, be still—not that name—not that name!"

"Yes, yes! may the thunder blast her who bears that name! it is she who has ruined all. Our heads would now be in security on our shoulders, but for your silly love for this creature."

Instead of storming with rage, Jacques Ferrand answered, with a deep sigh,

"Do you know her—this woman? speak! Have you ever seen her?"

"Never. They say she is beautiful."

"Beautiful!" answered the notary, shrugging his shoulders. "Hold!" he added, with a kind of bitter desperation: "be still! do not speak of what you do not know. Do not accuse me. What I have done, you would have done in my place."

"I! place my life at the mercy of a woman!"

"Of that one—yes—and I would do it again!"

"By h—ll! he is still under the charm," cried Polidori, amazed.

"Listen," answered the notary, in a low, calm voice, "listen: you know if I love gold? you know what I have braved to acquire it? To reckon up the sums I possessed, to see them doubled by my avarice, to endure every privation, and know myself the master of a treasure—it was my joy, my happiness. Yes, to possess, not to enjoy, but to theorize, was my life. One month since, if they had said to me, 'Between your fortune and your head choose,' I would have given up my head."

"But of what use to have money when one dies?"

"Ask me, then, Of what use to possess it, when one makes no use of what one possesses? I, a millionaire, did I lead the life of a millionaire? No: I lived like a poor beggar. I loved, then, to possess, for possession's sake."

"But, once more I ask you, of what use is it when one dies?"

"To the possessing! Yes, to enjoy that even to the last moment for which you have braved privations, infamy, the scaffold: yes, to say once more, the head under the axe, *I possess!!* Oh! do you see, death is sweet compared to the torments that are endured on seeing one's self during life dispossessed, as I am, of all that I have amassed at the price of so much pain, so much danger! Oh! to say, at each moment of the day, 'I, who had more than a million—I, who have endured every privation to preserve it—I who, in ten years, would have doubled it, tripled it—I have no longer anything.' It is cruel it is to die, not each day, but each moment of the day. Yes, to this horrible agony, which may endure for years, perhaps, I would have preferred death a thousand times. Once more, I could have said in dying, *I possess.*"

Polidori looked at his accomplice with profound astonishment.

"I cannot comprehend you. Then why have you obeyed the commands of him who might have caused your head to roll from the scaffold? Why have you preferred life, without your treasure, if this life seems so horrible to you?"

"It is, do you see," answered the notary, in a voice sunk to a whisper, "it is not the thought of death—it is annihilation. And Cécily!"

"And you hope!" cried Polidori, astonished.

"I hope not: I possess—"

"What?"

"The remembrance."

"But you will never see her again: she has delivered up your head!"

"But I love her still, and more madly than ever," cried Jacques Ferrand, with an explosion of tears, of sobs, which strangely contrasted with the calmness of his last words. "Yes, I love her always, and I do not wish to die, so that I can plunge myself deeper and deeper with wild delight into this furnace where I am consumed by inches. For you do not know—that night—that night in which I saw her so beautiful—that night is always present to my thoughts—that picture of voluptuousness is there, there—always there—before my eyes. Let them be open or shut, in feverish weakness or burning watchfulness, I see her black eyes and inflaming glances, which boil the marrow of my bones. I feel her breath upon my face—I hear her voice."

"But these are frightful torments!"

"Frightful! aye, frightful! But death! but annihilation! but to lose forever this remembrance, as vivid as reality; but to renounce these recollections, which torture me, devour me, and consume me! No! no! no! Live! live—poor, despised, scorned—live in the galleys, but live! so that thought remains—since this infernal creature has all my thought—is all my thought!"

"Jacques," said Polidori, in a grave tone, which strangely contrasted with his habitual bitter irony, "I have seen much suffering, but never tortures that approached yours. He who holds us in his power could not have been more unmerciful. He has condemned you to live—or, rather, to await death in terrible agonies—for this avowal explains to me the alarming symptoms which every day develops in you, and of which I sought in vain the cause."

"But these symptoms are nothing serious! It is exhaustion; it is the reaction of my sorrows! I am not in danger. Is it not so?"

"No, no; but your position is a critical one; you must not make it worse. Certain thoughts must be driven away, otherwise you run great risk."

"I will do what you wish, so I may live, for

I do not wish to die. Oh! the priests talk of the damned! never could one imagine for them a punishment equal to mine. Tortured by passion and avarice, I have two bleeding wounds instead of one, and I feel both of them equally. The loss of my gold is frightful to me, but death would be more frightful still. I wish to live; my life may be a torture without end, and I dare not call upon death, for death annihilates my fatal happiness, this phantom of my thoughts, in which Cécily constantly appears."

"You have at least the consolation," said Polidori, resuming his usual calmness, "of thinking upon the good that you have done in expiation of your crimes."

"Yes, rail—you are right; turn me over on the burning coals. You know well, wretch, that I hate humanity; you know well that these expiations which are imposed upon me, only inspire me with hatred against those who oblige me to act thus, and against those who profit by it. Thunder and blood! To think that, while I drag along a frightful life, these men whom I execrate have their misery solaced; that this widow and her daughter will thank God for the fortune I restore them—that this Morel and his daughter will live in ease and comfort—that this Germain will have an honourable situation assured to him for life! And this priest! this priest, who blessed me when my heart was swimming in gall and blood—I could have stabbed him! Oh! it is too much! No! no!" he cried, covering his face with his hands: "my head bursts—my ideas are confused—I cannot resist such attacks of impotent rage! And all this for you! Cécily! Cécily! do you know how much I suffer? do you know, Cécily—demon—brought out from h–ll!"

And Jacques Ferrand, exhausted by this frightful raving, fell back foaming on his chair, and threw his arms wildly about, uttering hollow and inarticulate sounds.

This fit of convulsive and despairing rage by no means astonished Polidori.

Possessing a consummate medical experience, he at once saw that Ferrand's anguish at seeing himself dispossessed of his fortune, joined to his passion for Cécily, had lighted up the flames of a devouring fever.

* * * * * * *

Suddenly, some one knocked hurriedly at the door of the cabinet.

"Jacques!" said Polidori, to the notary; "Jacques! recover yourself; here is some one."

The notary did not hear him. Half lying on his desk, he writhed with convulsive spasms. Polidori went to open the door, and saw the head clerk, who, pale and alarmed, cried,

"I must speak at once to Monsieur Ferrand."

"Silence! he is at this moment very ill; he cannot understand you," said Polidori, in a whisper; and, coming out from the cabinet, he closed the door after him.

"Ah! monsieur," cried the clerk, "you are the best friend of M. Ferrand's; come to his assistance; there is not a moment to be lost."

"What do you mean?"

"I went, according to the orders of M. Ferrand, to tell Madame la Comtesse M'Gregor that he could not visit her to-day as she desired."

"Well?"

"This lady, who appears to be now out of danger, made me come into her room. She cried, in a threatening tone, 'Return, and tell M. Ferrand that if he is not here in an hour he shall be arrested for forgery, for the child which he pretended was dead is yet alive. I know to whom he delivered her—I know where she is.'"*

"The woman is crazy," answered Polidori, coldly, shrugging his shoulders.

"You think so, monsieur?"

"I am sure of it."

"I thought so at first; but the assertions of Madame la Comtesse—"

"Her head, doubtless, has been weakened by illness, and the visionary always believe in their visions."

"I ought to tell you also, monsieur, that at the moment when I left the chamber of the countess, one of her women entered precipitately, saying, 'His highness will be here in an hour!'"

"It is the prince," thought Polidori. "He at the house of the Countess Sarah, whom he was never to see again! I do not know wherefore, but I do not like this meeting; it may make our position worse." Then turning to the clerk, he said, "Once more I repeat that this is nothing. I will, however, inform M. Ferrand of what you have just related to me."

CHAPTER IV.

RODOLPHE AND SARAH.

We will conduct the reader to the Countess Sarah's, whom a salutary crisis had snatched from the delirium and sufferings which, during several days, had caused the most serious fears for her life.

The day began to close. Sarah, seated in a large arm-chair, and supported by her brother, Thomas Seyton, was attentively surveying herself in a mirror, which was held by one of her women kneeling before her.

This scene passed in the saloon where La Chouette had made her murderous attempt.

The countess was as pale as marble, which gave a bolder relief to her dark eyes and hair; a large "*peignoir*" of white muslin completely concealed her form.

"Give me the '*bandeau*' of coral," she said to one of her women, in a weak but imperious voice.

"Betty will fasten it," said Thomas Seyton; "you will fatigue yourself; you are already so imprudent."

"The *bandeau!* the *bandeau!*" repeated Sarah, impatiently, as she took the jewel and placed it on her brow. "Now fasten it, and leave me," she added, to her women.

As they were retiring she said,

"Let them show M. Ferrand into the little blue saloon; and," she continued, with an expression of ill-concealed pride, "as soon as his royal highness the Grand-duke of Gerolstein arrives, he must be ushered in here.

"At length," said Sarah, throwing herself back in her chair as soon as she was alone

* The reader will remember that the countess thought Fleur de Marie was still at Saint Lazare, according to La Chouette's account.

with her mother, "at length I touch this crown—the dream of my life! The prediction is about to be accomplished!"

"Sarah, calm your emotion," said her brother, earnestly. "Yesterday, they still despaired of your life; disappointment now might cause a relapse."

"You are right, Tom. The fall would be dreadful, for my hopes have never been nearer being realized than now! I am certain that what has prevented me from sinking under my sufferings has been my constant hope to profit by the important revelation which this woman made me at the moment when she stabbed me."

"Even during your delirium you constantly referred to this idea."

"Because this idea alone sustained my flickering life. What a hope! Sovereign princess! almost a queen!" she added, with rapture.

"Once more, Sarah, no mad dreams; the awakening will be terrible."

"Mad dreams? How! when Rodolphe shall know that this young girl, now a prisoner at Saint Lazare, is our child, do you think that—"

Seyton interrupted his sister:

"I believe," he replied, with bitterness, "that princes place reasons of state and political proprieties, before natural ties."

"Do you count so little on my address?"

"The prince is not the same fond and enamoured youth whom you seduced in days gone by."

"Do you know why I have wished to ornament my hair with this band of coral? and why I have put on this white robe? It is because, the first time Rodolphe saw me at the court of Gerolstein, I was dressed in white, and I wore this same bandeau of coral in my hair."

"How?" said Thomas Seyton, looking at his sister with surprise; "you wish to evoke these memories; do you not, on the contrary, dread their influence?"

"I know Rodolphe better than you. Doubtless, my features, now changed by age and sufferings, are no longer those of the young girl of sixteen he so wildly loved—whom he has alone loved—for I was his first love. And this love, unique in the life of man, leaves always in his heart ineffaceable traces. Thus, believe me, my brother, the sight of this ornament will awaken in Rodolphe, not only the memories of his love, but also those of his youth; and to men the recollection of their first emotions is always sweet and precious."

"But to these soft memories are joined others of terrible import. Do you forget the fatal termination of your love? The conduct of the prince's father towards you? Your obstinate silence when Rodolphe, after your marriage with the Comte M'Gregor, demanded your child, then quite an infant? your daughter, of whose death, ten years before, you informed him in a cold letter? Do you forget that since that time the prince has only felt for you concontempt—hatred?"

"Pity has taken the place of hatred. Since he has known that I was in a dying state, each day has he sent the Baron de Graün to make inquiries."

"From humanity."

"Just now he answered my note; said that he would come here. This concession is immense, my brother."

"He believes you dying. He supposes that he is coming to take a last farewell. You were wrong not to write to him what you are now about to disclose."

"I know why I act thus. This revelation will fill him with surprise and joy, and I shall be present to profit by his first burst of tenderness. To-day, or never, he shall say to me, 'A marriage would make the birth of our child legitimate.' If he says so, his word is sacred, and the hope of all my life will at length be realized."

"If he makes you this promise—yes."

* * * * * * *

At this moment was heard the noise of a carriage which entered the courtyard.

"It is he—it is Rodolphe," cried Sarah.

"Yes, it is the prince; he is getting out of the carriage."

"Leave me alone—this is the decisive moment," said Sarah, with immovable self-control; for a towering ambition and unbounded selfishness had always been and still were the ruling motives of this woman.

After a momentary hesitation, Thomas Seyton drew near to his sister and said,

"It is I who will inform the prince how your daughter has been saved; this interview will be too dangerous for you; a violent emotion would kill you."

"Your hand, my brother," said Sarah.

Then placing on her impassible heart the hand of Thomas Seyton, she added, with a forced and icy smile,

"Am I agitated?"

"No, in truth, not at all," said Seyton, with surprise; "I know what command you have over yourself. But at such a moment—wherefore you will be decided—a crown—or death—your calmness absolutely confounds me."

"Why this astonishment, my brother? did you not know that nothing—no, nothing has ever caused this marble heart to quicken its pulsations? it will only palpitate when I shall feel placed on my brow the sovereign crown. I hear Rodolphe—leave me."

"But—"

"Leave me," cried Sarah, in a tone so imperious, so resolute, that her brother left the apartment some moments before the prince was introduced. When Rodolphe entered the saloon, his countenance expressed pity; but seeing the countess seated in the chair decked with her jewels, he drew back with surprise, and his physiognomy became immediately sombre and suspicious.

The comtesse, divining his thoughts, said to him in a soft and feeble voice, "You thought to find me dying: you came to receive my last 'adieux?'"

"I have always regarded as sacred the last wishes of the dying, but it appears that I have been deceived."

"Reassure yourself," said Sarah, interrupting Rodolphe, "reassure yourself. I have not deceived you; there remain for me but a few hours to live. Pardon me a last act of coquetry; I wished to spare you the usual attendants of a deathbed. I wished to die dressed as I was the first time I saw you. Alas! after

ten years of separation, I see you again! Thanks—oh, thanks! But, in your turn, render praise to God for having moved you to come to listen to my last prayer. If you had refused me, I had carried with me to the tomb a secret which is going to make the joy, the happiness of your life. Joy mixed with some tears, like all other human felicity; but this felicity! you would buy it at the price of half the remaining days of your life!"

"What do you mean to say?" demanded the prince, with surprise.

"Yes, Rodolphe, if you had not come, this secret would have followed me to the tomb—it had been my sole vengeance; and yet—no, no, I should not have had this terrible courage. Although you would have caused me much suffering, I should have divided with you this supreme happiness, which, more fortunate than I, you will a long time enjoy."

"But, once more, madame, what is all this?"

"When you know it, you will comprehend my delay in informing you, for you will regard this revelation as a miracle from heaven. But, strange thought—I, who with one word can cause you the greatest happiness that you have ever experienced—I feel, although now the minutes of my life are counted—I feel an indescribable satisfaction in prolonging your suspense; and, besides, I know your heart, and, in spite of the firmness of your character, I should fear to announce to you, without preparation, a discovery so incredible. The emotions of sudden joy have also their dangers."

"Your pallor increases—you with difficulty restrain a violent agitation," said Rodolphe; "all this proves that something grave and important—"

"Grave and important!" repeated Sarah, in a faltering voice, for, notwithstanding her habitual immobility, in reflecting upon the immense importance of the revelation she was about to make to Rodolphe, she felt herself more agitated than she could have thought possible. After a moment's silence, Sarah, no lenger able to restrain herself, cried,

"Rodolphe, our child is not dead."

"Our child!"

"I tell you, she lives!"

These words, the accent of truth with which they were pronounced, moved the prince to the very bottom of his heart. "Our child!" he repeated, advancing hastily towards Sarah; "our child! my daughter!"

"She is not dead; I have certain proofs; I know where she is—to-morrow you shall see her."

"My daughter! my child!" repeated Rodolphe, as if in a dream; "can it be possible! she is alive!"

Then suddenly reflecting on the great improbability of this relation, and fearing to be the dupe of Sarah, he cried, "No, no; it is a dream! it is impossible! you deceive me; it is a '*ruse*,' an unworthy deceit!"

"Rodolphe, listen to me!"

"No, I know your ambition—I know of what you are capable: I can fathom the object of this fabrication!"

"Well! you speak the truth. I am capable of everything. Yes, I did wish to deceive you. Yes, some days before I received my mortal wound, I did wishtto find a young girl, whom I would have presented to you in the place of our child—whom you regret so bitterly."

"Enough—oh! enough, madame."

"After this confession you will believe me, perhaps; or, rather, you will be forced to give credence to the proofs."

"To the proofs?"

"Yes, Rodolphe: I repeat it, I have wished to deceive you, to substitute an obscure girl in the place of her we mourn; but God willed that, at the moment when I was about to carry the project into execution, I should be stricken down."

"You! at this moment!"

"God has also willed that they should propose to me to play this part—do you know whom? our daughter."

"Are you delirious? In the name of Heaven—"

"I am not delirious, Rodolphe. In this casket, among some papers and a portrait, which will prove to you the truth of what I say, you will find a paper stained with my blood."

"With your blood?"

"The woman who informed me that our child was still living dictated to me this revelation—then I was stabbed with a poniard."

"And who was she? how did she know?"

"It was to her our child was delivered—quite an infant—after having falsely reported her death."

"But this woman—her name? can she be believed? where did you become acquainted with her?"

"I tell you, Rodolphe, that all this is fate—providential. Some months since, you rescued a poor girl from poverty, to send her to the country—is it not so?"

"Yes, to Bouqueval."

"Jealousy and hatred drove me wild. I caused this young girl to be carried off by the woman of whom I have spoken."

"And she took the unhappy child to Saint Lazare?"

"Where she yet is."

"She is there no longer. Ah! you do not know, madame, the frightful evil you have caused by tearing this poor child from the retreat where I had placed her; but—"

"This young girl is no longer at Saint Lazare?" cried Sarah, with alarm; "and you speak of a frightful evil!"

"A monster of cupidity had an interest in her death. They have drowned her, madame; but answer, you say—"

"My daughter!" cried Sarah, interrupting Rodolphe, and rising on her feet, immovable as a marble statue.

"What does she say? my God!" cried Rodolphe.

"My child!" repeated Sarah, whose face became livid and frightful from despair; "they have killed my child!"

"The Goualeuse your child!" repeated Rodolphe, recoiling with horror.

"The Goualeuse! yes! that is the name the woman mentioned—this woman called La Chouette. Dead—dead!" cried Sarah, still motionless, her eyes fixed and glaring; "they have killed her!"

"Sarah!" replied Rodolphe, as pale and alarmed as she; "calm yourself—answer me

—La Goualeuse—this young girl whom you have caused to be carried off by La Chouette from Bouqueval, was—"

"Our child!"

"She!"

"And they have killed her!"

"Oh! no, no—you rave—this cannot be. You know not, no, you know not how frightful this is. Sarah! compose yourself; speak to me tranquilly. Seat yourself—calm yourself. Often there are appearances — resemblances which deceive; one is inclined to believe what one desires. It is not a reproach I make you; but explain to me well—tell me all the reasons you have to credit this, for it cannot be—no, no! it must not be!—it is not so!"

After a moment's pause, the countess collected her thoughts, and said to Rodolphe in an expiring voice,

"Hearing of your marriage, thinking to be married myself, I could not keep our daughter with me; she was then four years old."

"But at this epoch I asked you for her with prayers," cried Rodolphe, in a heart-rending tone, "and my letters remained unanswered. The only one you wrote me announced her death!"

"I wished to avenge myself for your contempt by refusing you your child. That was unworthy; but listen to me: I feel it—my life is drawing to a close; this last blow has overwhelmed me."

"No, no! I do not believe you—I do not wish to believe you! La Goualeuse my child! Oh, mon Dieu! you would not this should be so!"

"Listen to me, I say. When she was four years old my brother commissioned Madame Séraphin, widow of one of his old servants, to bring up the child until she was old enough to be placed at school. The sum destined for her future support was placed by my brother with a notary renowned for his probity. The letters of this man, and of Madame Séraphin, addressed at this period to me and my brother, are there, in that casket. At the end of a year they wrote me that the health of my child failed; eight months after, that she was dead; and they sent me the official notification of her decease. At this time, Madame Séraphin entered the service of Jacques Ferrand, after having delivered our child to La Chouette by the hands of a wretch now in the galleys at Rochefort. I began to write this confession of La Chouette when she wounded me. This paper is there with a portrait of our daughter at the age of four years. Examine all—letters, confession, portrait—and you, who have seen her—this unfortunate child—judge."

At these words, which exhausted her strength, Sarah fell back almost lifeless in her chair.

Rodolphe was thunderstruck at this revelation.

There are some misfortunes so unlooked for, so horrible, that we are unwilling to believe them until compelled by overwhelming evidence. Rodolphe, persuaded of the death of Fleur de Marie, had but one hope left, which was to convince himself that she was not his child.

With a frightful calmness, which alarmed Sarah, he approached the table, opened the casket, and fell to reading the letters one by one and examining, with scrupulous attention, the papers which accompanied them.

These letters, stamped at the postoffice, written to Sarah and her brother by the notary and by Madame Séraphin, related to the childhood of Fleur de Marie, and to the investment of the funds destined for her support. Rodolphe could not doubt the authenticity of this correspondence.

The confession of La Chouette was confirmed by the information obtained (of which we have spoken at the commencement of this history) by order of Rodolphe, and which pointed out a man named Pierre Tournemine, a prisoner at Rochefort, as the man who had received Fleur de Marie from Madame Séraphin to deliver her to La Chouette—to La Chouette, whom the unfortunate child herself had recognised before Rodolphe, at the tapis-franc of the Ogresse.

Rodolphe could no longer doubt the identity of these persons and of the Goualeuse.

The official notice concerning her death appeared in conformity to law; but Ferrand had himself acknowledged to Cécily that this forged notice had served for the spoliation of a considerable sum formerly settled as an annuity on the young girl whom he had caused to be drowned by Nicolas Martial, at the Island of the Ravageur.

It was, then, with growing and alarming anguish that Rodolphe acquired, in spite of himself, the terrible conviction that the Goualeuse was his daughter, and that she was dead.

Unfortunately for him, all seemed to confirm this belief. Before condemning Jacques Ferrand on the proofs given by the notary himself to Cécily, the prince, in his deep interest for the Goualeuse, having caused inquiries to be made at Asnières, had learned that, in effect, two women, one old and the other young, and dressed in a peasant's costume, had been drowned in going to the Island of the Ravageur, and that rumour accused the Martials of this new crime.

Here we must state that, in spite of the attention of Doctor Griffon, of the Comte de Saint Rémy, and of La Louve, Fleur de Marie, for a long time in a desperate situation, had hardly become convalescent, and that her weakness, mental and physical, was such, that she had not been able up to this time to inform Madame Georges or Rodolphe of her position.

This concourse of circumstances could not leave the slightest hope to the prince.

A last proof was reserved for him.

At length he cast his eyes on the miniature, which he had almost feared to look at.

The blow was frightful.

In this infantine and charming face, already radiant with that divine beauty which belongs to the cherubims, he recognised in a striking manner the features of Fleur de Marie: her Grecian nose, her noble forehead, her little mouth, already slightly serious. For, said Madame Séraphin to Sarah, in one of her letters which Rodolphe had just read, "*The child asks always for its mother, and is very sad.*"

There were her large blue eyes, of a blue so pure and soft; a blue of "bluet,"* as La Chou-

* The blue-bottle.

ette had said to Sarah on recognising in this miniature the features of the unfortunate child, whom she had persecuted, in her infancy, under the name of Pegriotte, and as a young girl, under the name of La Goualeuse.

At the sight of this miniature, the tumultuous and violent feelings of Rodolphe were stifled by his tears.

He fell back, heart-broken, on a chair, and concealed his face in his hands, sobbing convulsively.

CHAPTER V.

VENGEANCE.

While Rodolphe wept bitterly, the features of Sarah changed perceptibly.

At the moment when she thought she was about to realize the dream of her ambitious life, the last hope, which until now had sustained her, was crushed forever.

This dreadful disappointment could not fail to have on her health, momentarily ameliorated, a mortal reaction.

Fallen back in her chair, trembling with a feverish agitation, her hands crossed and clasped on her knees, her eyes fixed, the comtesse awaited with alarm the first word from Rodolphe. Knowing the impetuous character of the prince, she feared that the sad grief, which drew so many tears from this inflexible and resolute man, would be succeeded by some terrible transports of passion.

Suddenly Rodolphe raised his head, wiped away his tears, arose, and approached Sarah, his arms crossed on his bosom, his manner menacing and without pity. He looked at her for some moments in silence; then he said, in a hollow voice,

"This ought to be. I have drawn the sword against my father; I am stricken in my child. Just punishment of the parricide. Listen to me, madame—"

"Parricide! you, mon Dieu! Oh! fatal day; of what are you going to inform me?"

"It is necessary that you should know, in this awful moment, all the evils caused by your implacable ambition, by your unbounded selfishness. Do you understand me, woman without heart and without conscience? Do you hear me, unnatural mother?"

"Oh, have pity! Rodolphe—"

"No pardon for you, who, formerly without pity for a sincere love, coldly trifled, in the furtherance of your execrable pride, with a generous and devoted passion, of which you feigned to partake. No mercy for you, who armed the son against the father! No grace for you, who, instead of watching piously over your child, abandoned her to mercenary hands, in order to satisfy your cupidity by a rich marriage, as you had already served your mad ambition by inciting me to marry you. No mercy for you, who, after having refused me my child, have now caused her death by your unholy deceptions! Maledictions on you—you, my evil genius, and that of my family!"

"Oh! mon Dieu! he is without pity! leave me, leave me!"

"You shall hear me, I tell you! Do you remember the last day I saw you—it is seventeen years since—you could no longer conceal the fruits of our secret union, which, like you, I believed indissoluble. I knew the inflexible character of my father. I knew what political marriage he projected for me. Braving his indignation, I declared to him that you were my wife before God and before man—that in a short time I should become a father. His anger was terrible; he would not give credence to my marriage—so much deception seemed impossible to him. He threatened me with his displeasure if I allowed myself to speak before him again of such folly. Then I loved you like a madman, dupe of your seductions. I thought that your rigid heart of brass had beaten for me. I answered to my father that I would never have any wife but you. At these words, his anger had no bounds; he called you the most outrageous names; swore that our marriage was null; and that, in order to punish your presumption, he would place you in the pillory. Yielding to my mad passion, to the violence of my temper, I dared to forbid my father, my sovereign, to speak thus of my wife. I dared to threaten him. Exasperated at this insult, my father struck me; rage blinded me. I drew my sword. I threw myself upon him. Except for M. Murph, who turned aside the blow, I had been a parricide in reality, as I was in intention! Do you hear? parricide! And to defend you—you!"

"Alas! I was ignorant of all this!"

"In vain I have thought my crime expiated; the blow I have received to-day is my punishment."

"But have I not also suffered from the obduracy of your father, who broke our marriage? Why accuse me of not having loved you? when—"

"Why?" cried Rodolphe, interrupting Sarah, and casting upon her a glance of withering scorn. "Know it then, and be no more surprised at the horror with which you inspire me. After this fatal scene, in which I had threatened the life of my father, I gave up my sword. I was imprisoned with the greatest secrecy. Polidori, through whom our marriage had been concluded, was arrested. He proved that this union was null; that the clergyman was only a mock one; and that you, your brother, and myself had all been deceived. To disarm my father's anger against him, Polidori did more; he gave him one of your letters to your brother, which he had intercepted."

"Heavens! can it be possible?"

"Is my contempt for you explained now?"

"Oh! enough, enough!"

"In this letter you unfolded your ambitious projects with revolting coolness. You treated me with an icy disdain; you sacrificed me to your infernal pride; I was only the instrument by whose means you were to obtain the fulfilment of your destiny. You found that my father lived a very long time."

"Unfortunate that I am! Now I understand all."

"And to defend you, I had threatened the life of my father. When, on the morrow, without addressing me a word of reproach, he showed me this letter—this letter, which in every line revealed the blackness of your heart, I could only fall on my knees and ask for pardon. Since that day I have been pursued by unceasing remorse. Soon I left Germany on a long journey; then commenced the penance which I imposed upon myself. It will only finish with my life. To recompense the good, punish the bad, solace

those who suffer, probe all the wounds of humanity, to endeavour to snatch souls from perdition —such is the noble task that I have imposed upon myself."

"It is noble and holy; it is worthy of you."

"If I speak of this vow," replied Rodolphe, with as much disdain as bitterness; "of this vow, which I have fulfilled, according to my power, wherever I have been, it is not to be praised by you. Listen to me, then. Not long since I arrived in France; my sojourn in this country was not to be lost to the expiation. In wishing to assist honest unfortunates, I also wished to know those classes whom poverty crushes, hardens, and depraves, knowing that timely succour and kind words have often saved many a poor wretch from the abyss of despair. In order to be my own judge, I assumed the disguise and language of the people whom I wished to observe. It was on one of these excursions, that, for the first time, I—I met—" Then, as if he recoiled from this terrible revelation, Rodolphe added, "No, no, I have not the courage." "What have you still to inform me?"

"You will only know it too soon; but," said he, with irony, "you feel so lively an interest in the past that I ought to speak to you of events which preceded my return to France. After a long journey, I returned to Germany; I married a Prussian princess. During my absence, you had been driven away from the grand-duchy. Learning that you were married to the Comte M'Gregor, I wrote to entreat you to send me my child; you did not reply. In spite of all my efforts, I could never find out where you had sent this unfortunate child. Ten years ago only, a letter from you informed me that our child was dead. Alas! would to God that she had then been dead; I should not have known the incurable grief which henceforth will imbitter my life."

"Now," said Sarah, in a feeble voice, "I am no more astonished at the aversion with which I have inspired you, since you have read this letter. I feel it, I shall not survive this last blow. Eh bien! yes; pride and ambition have ruined me! Under the appearance of passion, I concealed a frozen heart. Not knowing what good reason you had to despise and hate me, my foolish hopes were renewed. Since we were both free again, I again believed in this prediction which promised me a crown; and when chance discovered my daughter, I seemed to see in this unhoped-for fortune a providential design!

"Yes; I went so far as to think that your aversion for me would yield to your love for your child; and that you would give me your hand in order to restore her to the rank which was her due."

"Well! let your execrable ambition be then satisfied and punished! Yes, notwithstanding the horror you inspire me with; yes, from attachment—what do I say? from respect for the frightful misfortunes of my child, I should have, although decided to live afterward separated from you—I should have, by a marriage which would legitimate my child, rendered her position as dazzling, as lofty as it had been miserable!"

"I was not deceived, then! Malheur! malheur! it is too late!"

"Oh! I know it; it is not for the death of your child you weep; it is the loss of that rank which you have pursued with untiring pertinacity! Well! may these infamous regrets be your last punishment!"

"The last; for I shall not survive."

"But, before you die, you shall know what has been the existence of your child since you abandoned her."

"Poor child! very miserable, perhaps!"

"Do you recollect," said Rodolphe, with terrible calmness, "do you recollect that night when you and your brother followed me to the cité?"

"I do recollect; but why this question? your look freezes me."

"On coming from this den, you saw, did you not, at the corner of the wretched streets, some unhappy creatures, who—but no, no—I dare not," said Rodolphe, concealing his face in his hands, "I dare not; my words alarm me."

"Me also—they alarm me; what is it now, mon Dieu?"

"You have seen them?" resumed Rodolphe, with an effort. You have seen them, these women, the shame of their sex? Well! among them did you remark a young girl of sixteen? beautiful, oh! beautiful as an angel; a poor child, who, in the midst of the degradation in which she had been plunged, preserved an expression so pure, so virginal, that the robbers and assassins among whom she lived, madame, had given her the name of Fleur de Marie; did you remark this young girl? speak, speak, tender mother."

"No, I did not notice her," said Sarah, almost mechanically.

"Really?" cried Rodolphe, with a burst of sardonic laughter. "It is strange. I remarked her on this occasion; listen: well, during one of the excursions of which I have spoken just now, and which then had a double object, I found myself in la cité; not far from the den whither you followed me, a man wished to beat one of those unfortunate creatures; I defended her against his brutality. You cannot guess who was this creature; speak, good and provident mother, speak! You do not guess?"

"No, I do not guess. Oh! leave me, leave me!"

"This unfortunate was Fleur de Marie."

"Oh! mon Dieu!"

"And you do not guess who was Fleur de Marie, irreproachable mother?"

"Kill me! oh! kill me!"

"She was La Goualeuse—she was your daughter," cried Rodolphe, with a heart-rending emotion. "Yes, this unfortunate, whom I had rescued from the violence of a liberated galley-slave, was my own child—mine—Rodolphe of Gerolstein's! Oh! there was something in this rencounter with my child, whom I saved without knowing her, something terrible, providential; a recompense for the man who seeks to succour his fellow-men, a punishment for the parricide."

"I die cursed and condemned," murmured Sarah, falling back in her chair, and concealing her face in her hands.

"Then," continued Rodolphe, with difficulty restraining his feelings, and wishing, in vain, to suppress his sobs, which almost choked him, "when I had rescued her from the hands of her assailant, struck with the inexpressible sweetness of her voice, the angelic expression of her features, it had been impossible not to have become interested in her. With what profound emotion have I listened to the 'naïf' and touching recital of her life of abandonment, of sorrow, and of misery; for, do you see, there have been frightful passages in the life of your daughter, madame."

"Oh! you must know the tortures that your child suffered; yes, Madame la Comtesse, while in the midst of your opulence you were dreaming of a crown, your child—your little child, covered with rags, went at night to beg in the streets, suffering with cold and hunger. During the nights of winter she shivered on a little straw in the corner of a garret, and then, when the horrible woman who abused her was tired of beating the poor little thing, only thinking how she could torture her, do you know what she did, madame? She drew out some of her teeth!"

"Oh! would that I could die! it is bitter agony."

"Listen again. Escaping at length from the hands of La Chouette, wandering without bread, without shelter, hardly eight years of age, she was arrested as a vagabond, and put in prison. Ah! these were the best days of your daughter, madame. Yes, in her prison-house, each night she thanked God that she suffered no more from cold and hunger, and was beaten no more. And it is in a prison that she has passed the most precious years of a young girl's life, those years which a tender mother always surrounds with so jealous and pious a solicitude; yes, instead of being protected with maternal care, your daughter has only known the brutal indifference of jailers; and then, one day, society, in its cruel carelessness, cast her, innocent and pure, beautiful and ingenuous, into the filth and mire of this great city. Unhappy child, abandoned, without support, without advice, delivered to all the chances of misery and vice! Oh!" cried Rodolphe, giving free vent to the sobs which overpowered him; "your heart is hardened, your selfishness cruel, but you would have wept—yes, *you* would have wept, on hearing the touching story of your child. Poor girl! sullied, but not corrupted, still chaste in the midst of this horrible degradation, which was for her a frightful dream; for each word told her horror for the life to which she was so fatally enchained. Oh! if you knew how at each moment were revealed the most adorable instincts—how much goodness—how much touching charity; yes, for it was to relieve an unfortunate more wretched than herself, the poor little thing had spent the little money she had, and which then separated her from the abyss of infamy into which she was plunged. Yes! for the day came—a frightful day—when, without work, without bread, without shelter—horrible women met her, exhausted from weakness—from hunger—and—"

Rodolphe could not finish, but cried in a heart-rending voice,

"And this was my daughter! my child!"

"Imprecations on my head!" murmured Sarah, concealing her face in her hands, as if she had feared the light of day.

"Yes," cried Rodolphe, "imprecations on you! for it is your abandonment of this child which has caused all these horrors. Maledictions on you! for when, rescuing her from this filth, I had placed her in a peaceful retreat, you had her torn away by your miserable accomplices. Maledictions on you! for this again placed her in the power of Jacques Ferrand."

At this name Rodolphe stopped suddenly. He shuddered as if he had pronounced it for the first time.

It was because he now pronounced this name for the first time since he had known that his daughter was the victim of this monster.

The features of the prince assumed then a frightful expression of rage and hatred.

Silent, immovable, he remained, as it were, crushed by this thought—that the murderer of his child still lived.

Sarah, notwithstanding her increasing weakness, was struck by his sinister look; she feared for herself.

"Alas! what is the matter with you?" she murmured, in a trembling voice. "Is it not enough of suffering? Mon Dieu!"

"No; it is not enough! it is not enough!" said Rodolphe, responding to his own thoughts. "I have never before experienced this—never! this desire for vengeance—this thirst for blood—this calm and reflecting rage! When I did not know that one of the victims of the monster was my own child, I said to myself, the death of this man will be steril, while his life will be fertile, if, to redeem it, he accept the conditions which I impose. To condemn him to be charitable, to expiate his crimes, appeared to me just; and then, life without gold, life without sensuality, would be for him a long and double torture. But it is my child whom he has delivered to all the horrors of infamy and misery! but it is my daughter whom he has murdered! I will kill this man!"

And the prince sprang towards the door.

"Where are you going? Do not abandon me!" cried Sarah, half rising, and extending towards Rodolphe her supplicating hands. "Do not leave me alone! I am going to die!"

"Alone! no! no! I leave you with the spectre of your daughter, whose death you have caused!"

Sarah, frantic, threw herself on her knees, uttering a cry of affright, as if an alarming phantom had appeared to her.

"Pity! I die!"

"Die, then, accursed!" answered Rodolphe, frightful with rage. "Now I must have the life of your accomplice, for it is you who delivered your daughter to her executioner!"

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And Rodolphe ordered himself to be rapidly driven to the house of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE AND MADNESS.

The night closed in while Rodolphe was on his way to the notary's.

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The pavilion occupied by Jacques Ferrand is buried in profound obscurity.

The wind howled.

The rain fell.

The wind howled, the rain fell also during that gloomy night, when Cécily fled forever from the house of the notary.

Extended on a bed in his sleeping apartment, feebly lighted by a lamp, Jacques Ferrand was dressed in black pantaloons and vest; one of the sleeves of his shirt was turned back, and a ligature around his attenuated arm announced that he had just been bled.

Polidori was standing near the bed, with one hand on the bolster, and appeared to regard the features of his accomplice with inquietude.

Nothing could be more hideously frightful than the face of Jacques Ferrand, who was then plunged in that torpor which ordinarily succeeds to violent attacks.

Of a mortal pallor, strongly relieved by the shadows of the alcove, his face streaming with a cold sweat, announced the last stage of consumption; his closed eyelids were so swollen and injected with blood, that they appeared like two reddish lobes in the middle of this visage of cadaverous lividity.

"One more attack like the last, and he is dead," said Polidori in a low tone, and, retiring from the bed, he commenced walking slowly up and down the room.

"Just now," he resumed, "during the attack which nearly proved fatal, I thought myself in a dream, as I heard him describe all the monstrous hallucinations which crossed his brain. * * * * * * His sense of hearing was of a sensibility so incredibly painful that, although I spoke to him as low as possible, yet it seemed to him, he said, that his head was a bell, and that an enormous clapper of brass, set in motion by the least sound, struck against it from time to time with a deafening and horrid noise."

Polidori again drew near the bed, and remained in a contemplative attitude.

The tempest raged without; it soon burst forth in violent gusts of wind and rain, which shook all the windows of the dilapidated mansion. Notwithstanding his audacious wickedness, Polidori was superstitious; dark presentiments agitated him; he felt an indefinable uneasiness; the howlings of the storm, which alone disturbed the mournful silence of the night, inspired him with an alarm against which he struggled in vain.

To drive away these gloomy thoughts, he again examined the features of his accomplice.

"Now," said he, leaning over him, "his eyelids fill with blood. * * * * What sufferings! how protracted! and under what varied forms! Oh!" added he with a bitter smile, "when nature becomes cruel, and plays the part of tormentor, she defies the most ferocious combinations of men. * * * * * * * * * * * *

"Ah! this face is frightful. These frequent convulsions which overspread it contract it, and at times render it fearful."

Without, the tempest redoubled its fury.

"What a storm!" said Polidori, throwing himself into a chair, and leaning his face on his hands. "What a night! what a night! Nothing could be more fatal for the situation of Jacques."

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After a long silence Polidori resumed:

"When I think of the past, when I think of the ambitious projects which, in concert with Sarah, I founded on the youth and inexperience of the prince—how many events! by what degrees have I fallen into the state of criminal degradation in which I live! I, who had thought to effeminate this prince, and make him the docile instrument of the advancement of which I had dreamed! From preceptor I expected to become minister. And notwithstanding my learning, my mind, from misdeed to misdeed I have attained the last degree of infamy. Behold me, in fine, the jailer of my accomplice.

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"Oh, yes! the prince is without pity. Better a thousand times for Jacques Ferrand to have placed his head on the block; better a thousand times the wheel, fire, the molten lead which burns and sinks into the flesh, than the torments this wretch endures. As I see him suffer, I begin to be alarmed for my own fate. What will they do with me—what is reserved for me, the accomplice of Jacques? To be his jailer will not suffice for the vengeance of the prince. He has not saved me from the scaffold to let me live. Perhaps an eternal prison awaits me in Germany. Better that than death. I can only place myself blindly at the discretion of the prince; it is my sole chance for safety.

At this moment the storm was at its height; a chimney, blown down by the violence of the wind, fell on the roof and into the court with a noise like thunder.

Jacques Ferrand, suddenly aroused from his state of torpor, moved on the bed. A hollow groan attracted the attention of Polidori.

"He is awakening from his stupor," said he, approaching him slowly.

"Polidori," murmured Jacques Ferrand, still stretched on the bed, and with his eyes closed. "Polidori, what is this noise?"

"A chimney has fallen down," answered Polidori in a low tone; "a frightful hurricane shakes the house to its foundations. The night is horrible, horrible!"

The notary did not hear, and half turning his head, whispered,

"Polidori, are you there?"

"Yes, yes. I am here," said Polidori in a louder voice; "but I answered softly, fearing to affect your hearing, as I did a few moments ago."

"No, now your voice reaches my ear without causing me those painful sufferings; for it seemed to me at the least noise, as if a thunderbolt had broken in my head. And yet, in the midst of all this noise, of these sufferings without name, I distinguished the voice of Cécily calling me."

"Always this infernal woman—always. But drive away these thoughts; they will kill you."

"Drive them away," cried Jacques Ferrand; "oh! never, never!" * * * *

"What mad fury! It alarms me."

"Hold, now," said the notary, in a husky voice, with his eyes fixed on an obscure corner of the alcove. "I see already—like a form—a shape appearing—there—there."

And he pointed with his bony finger in the direction of the vision.

"Hush, be quiet, unhappy man."

"Ah! there."

"Jacques, it is death."

"Oh! I see her," added Ferrand, his teeth set. "There she is! how handsome she is! how handsome! See her long black hair; it floats in disorder upon her shoulders! And her small teeth, which are seen through her half-opened lips; her lips so red and humid! What pearls! Oh! her large eyes seem in turn to sparkle and die. Cécily! Cécily! I adore you!"

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"Jacques," cried Polidori, alarmed, "do not excite yourself by these phantoms."

"It is not a phantom."

"Take care; a short time ago, you know, you imagined also that you heard the songs of this woman, and your hearing was suddenly affected by fearful sufferings—take care!"

"Leave me," cried the notary, with impatience, "leave me! Of what use is the hearing, except to listen to her?—the sight, except to see her?"

"But the tortures which ensue, miserable fool!" * * * * *

The notary did not finish.

He uttered a sharp cry of pain, throwing himself backward on the bed.

"What is the matter?" asked Polidori, with astonishment.

"Put out that light; its glare is too vivid. I cannot support it; it blinds me!"

"How?" said Polidori, more and more surprised. "There is but one lamp with a shade, and its light is very feeble."

"I tell you that the light increases here. Hold! more! more! Oh, it is too much! it becomes intolerable!" added Jacques Ferrand, shutting his eyes with an expression of increasing pain.

"You are mad! This chamber is hardly lighted, I tell you. I have just turned down the lamps: open your eyes, you will see."

"Open my eyes! But I shall be blinded by the torrents of dazzling light which flood this apartment. Here, there, everywhere, spouts of fire—thousands of shining atoms," cried the notary, raising himself; then, uttering a cry of agony, he placed his hands on his eyes. "But I am blinded! this burning light pierces my eyelids! it consumes me! Put out that light! it casts a flame infernal."

"No more doubt," said Polidori; "his sight is stricken in the same manner as his hearing was just now. He is lost! To bleed him anew in this state would be fatal. He is lost!"

A new, sharp, terrible cry from Jacques Ferrand resounded throughout the chamber.

"Executioner! put out the lamp! Its burning splendour penetrates through my hands; they are transparent! I see the blood! it circulates in my veins! I did well to close my eyelids! this fiery lava would have entered! Oh, what torture! It is as if my eyes were pierced with redhot needles! Help! mon Dieu! help!" cried he, struggling in his bed, a prey to horrible convulsions.

Polidori, alarmed at the violence of this attack, extinguished the light.

And both were left in utter darkness.

At this moment was heard the noise of a carriage, which stopped at the door of the street.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE VISIONS.

When the chamber of Jacques Ferrand became darkened, his agony ceased by degrees, and he said to Polidori, "Why did you wait so long before you put out this lamp? Was it to make me endure all the torments of the damned? Oh, what I have suffered! Mon Dieu! how I have suffered!"

"Now do you suffer less?"

"I still experience a violent irritation, but it is nothing to what I felt just now."

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"I hold to life, because the memory of Cécily is all my life."

"But this memory kills, exhausts, consumes you."

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The notary did not hear his accomplice, who foresaw a new hallucination.

In effect, Jacques Ferrand resumed, with a burst of convulsive and sardonic laughter,

"To take Cécily from me! But they do not know that, by concentrating all the power of one's faculties on a single object, the impracticable is gained. Thus, directly, I am going to the chamber of Cécily, where I have not dared to go since her departure. Oh, to see, to touch the vestments which have belonged to her; the glass before which she dressed—it will be to see herself! Yes; in fixing my eyes on this glass, soon shall I see Cécily appear. It will not be an illusion—a mist; it will be she; I shall find her there, as the sculptor finds the statue in the block of marble."

"Where are you going to?" said Polidori, hearing Jacques Ferrand getting up from his bed, for the most profound obscurity still reigned in the apartment.

"I go to find Cécily."

"You shall not go. The sight of her chamber will kill you."

"Cécily awaits me there."

"You shall not go—I hold you," said Polidori seizing the notary by the arm.

Jacques Ferrand, arrived at the last stage of weakness, could not struggle against Polidori, who held him with a vigorous hand.

"You wish to prevent me from going to find Cécily?"

"Yes; and, besides, there is a lamp lighted in the next room; you know what effect the light produced just now upon your sight?"

"Cécily is there; she awaits me. I would traverse a blazing furnace to join her. Let me go. She told me I was her old tiger. Take care, my claws are sharp."

"You shall not go. I will rather tie you on your bed as a madman."

"Polidori, listen: I am not mad—I have all my reason. I know very well that Cécily is not materially there; but, for me, the phantoms of my imagination are worth more than realities."

"Silence!" cried Polidori, suddenly, listening; "just now I thought I heard a carriage stop at the door. I was not mistaken. I hear now the sound of voices in the court."

"You wish to distract my thought. The trick is too plain."

"I hear some one speak, I tell you, and I think I recognise—"

"You wish to deceive me," said Ferrand, interrupting Polidori; "I am not your dupe."

"But, wretch, listen then—listen. Ah! do you not hear?"

"Let me go—Cécily is there—she calls me. Do not make me angry, in my turn, I tell you. Take care—do you understand? take care."

"You shall not go out."

"Take care—"

"You shall not go out from here; it is my interest that you should remain."

"You prevent me from going to find Cécily; my interest wills that you should die. Hold then!" said the notary, in a hollow voice.

Polidori uttered a cry.

"Scoundrel! you have stuck me in the arm; but the wound is slight; you shall not escape me."

"Your wound is mortal. It is the poisoned dagger of Cécily which has stabbed you; I always carried it about me; await the effects of the poison. Ah! you loosen your grasp: you are going to die. You should not have hindered me from going to find Cécily," added Jacques Ferrand, feeling in the dark for the door.

"Oh!" murmured Polidori, "my arm stiffens—a mortal coldness seizes me—my knees tremble under me—my blood thickens in my veins—my head turns. Help!" cried the accomplice

of Jacques Ferrand, collecting all his strength for a last cry; "help! I die!!!"

And he sank under his own weight upon the floor. The crash of a glass door, opened with so much violence that several panes were broken to pieces, the resounding voice of Rodolphe, and a noise of hasty footsteps, seemed to respond to Polidori's cry of anguish.

Jacques Ferrand, having at length found the lock in the dark, opened the door leading into an adjoining apartment, and rushed into it, his dangerous weapon in his hand.

At the same moment, threatening and formidable as the genius of vengeance, the prince entered this room from the opposite side.

"Monster!" cried Rodolphe, advancing towards Jacques Ferrand, "it is my daughter whom you have killed! You are going—"

The prince did not finish; he recoiled alarmed. One would have said that his words had pierced Jacques Ferrand.

Throwing his poignard aside, and placing both his hands before his eyes, the wretch fell with his face to the floor, uttering a cry that was anything but human.

In consequence of the phenomenon of which we have spoken, and of which a profound darkness had suspended the action, when Jacques Ferrand entered this chamber, brilliantly lighted, he was struck with a vertigo (similar to that which we have already described), more intolerable than if he had been exposed to a torrent of light as incandescent as that of the disk of the sun.

And the agony of this man was a fearful spectacle: he writhed in frightful convulsions, tearing the floor with his nails, as if he wished to dig a hole to escape from the horrible tortures caused by this glaring light.

Rodolphe, one of his servants, and the porter of the house, who had been compelled to conduct the prince to this apartment, were transfixed with horror.

Notwithstanding his just horror, Rodolphe felt an emotion of pity for the unheard-of sufferings of Jacques Ferrand; he ordered him to be laid on a sofa. This was not done without difficulty; for, fearing to be submitted again to the direct action of the light, the notary struggled violently, but when it streamed in his face he uttered another cry.

A cry which filled Rodolphe with terror.

After protracted torments, these attacks ceased, exhausted by their own violence.

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Arrived at the mortal period of his delirium, he remembered still the words of Cécily, who had called him her tiger; by degrees, his mind again wandered; he imagined himself a tiger.

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Crouched in one of the corners of the room, as in his den, he thought himself a tiger; his hoarse, furious cries, the grinding of his teeth, the spasmodic contortions of the muscles of his forehead and face, his glaring look, gave him a vague and frightful resemblance to this ferocious beast.

"Tiger—tiger—tiger I am," said he in a broken voice, gathering himself up in a heap, "yes, tiger. How much blood! In my cave—corpses—torn to pieces! La Goualeuse—the brother of this widow—the child of Louise—here are corpses; my tigress Cécily shall take her share." Then, looking at his bony fingers, of which the nails had grown very long during his illness, he added these words: "Oh! my sharp nails: an old tiger I am, but more active, and strong, and bold. No one shall dare dispute my tigress Cécily. Ah! she calls! she calls!" said he, looking around, and seeming to listen. After a moment's pause he groped his way along the wall, saying,

"No; I thought I heard her; she is not there, but I see her, oh! always, always! Oh! there she is! She calls me—she roars—she roars there I come, I come."

And Jacques Ferrand dragged himself towards the middle of the chamber on his hands and knees. Although his strength was exhausted, from time to time he advanced by a convulsive spring; then he would pause, seeming to listen attentively.

"Where is she? where is she? I approach, she flies. Ah! there; oh! she awaits me; go! go, Cécily, your old tiger is yours," cried he.

And with a desperate effort he succeeded in getting on his knees.

But suddenly falling backward with alarm, the body crouched on his heels, his hair standing on end, his look wild, his mouth distorted with terror, his hands stretched out, he seemed to struggle with rage against an invisible object, and cried in a broken voice,

"What a bite—help—my arms break—I cannot take it off—sharp teeth. No, no, oh! not the eyes—help—a black serpent—oh! its flat head—its burning eye-balls. It looks at me—it is the devil. Ah! he knows me—Jacques Ferrand—at the church—holy man—always at the church—get out—the sign of the cross—get out." And the notary, raising himself a little and sustaining himself with one hand on the floor, tried with the other to make the sign of the cross.

His livid face was covered with sweat, and all the symptoms of approaching death were manifested. * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

He fell immediately backward, stiff and inanimate; his eyes seemed to start from their sockets; horrible convulsions stamped his features with unearthly contortions, like those forced from dead bodies by a galvanic battery; a bloody foam inundated his lips, and the life of this monster became extinct in the midst of one of his horrid visions, for he muttered these words,

"Night—dark! dark spectres—brazen skeletons—red-hot—twine around me their burning fingers—my flesh smokes—spectre—bloody—no! no—Cécily—fire—Cécily!"

Such were the last words of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOSPITAL.

It will be remembered that Fleur de Marie, saved by La Louve, had been conveyed to the country house of Dr. Griffon, not far from the Island of the Ravageur.

The worthy doctor, one of the physicians of the civil hospital, where we shall conduct our readers, and who had obtained this situation through a powerful interest, regarded his "wards" as a sort of place where he experimented on the poor the treatment which he applied afterward to his rich patients, never hazarding on the last any new cures before having first tried and retried the application *in anima vili*, as he

said, with that kind of "naïve" barbarity which a blind passion for the science produces.

Thus, for example, if the doctor wished to convince himself of the comparative effect of some new and hazardous treatment, in order to be able to deduce consequences favourable to such or such a system, he took a certain number of patients,

Treated these according to the new system,

Those by the ancient method;

Under some circumstances, he abandoned others to the care of nature,

After which he counted the survivers.

These terrible experiments were, truly, a human sacrifice on the altar of science.

Dr. Griffon did not seem to think of this. In the eyes of this *prince of science* (as they phrase it) the patients of his hospital were only subjects for study and experiment; and as, after all, there resulted sometimes from these essays *in animâ vili* a fact, or discovery useful to science, the doctor showed himself as entirely satisfied and triumphant as a general after a victory sufficiently *costly* in soldiers.

Homœopathy had never a more violent adversary than Dr. Griffon. He looked upon this method as absurd and homicidal; thus, strong in his convictions, and wishing, as he said, to drive the homœopathists to the wall, he offered to abandon to their care a certain number of patients, on whom they might experiment to their liking. But he affirmed in advance, sure of not being contradicted by the result, that, out of twenty patients submitted to this treatment, not over five, at the outside, would survive.

The homœopathists gave the go-by to this proposition, to the great chagrin of the doctor, who regretted the loss of this occasion to prove, *by figures*, the vanity of homœopathic practice. Doctor Griffon would have been stupified if any one had said to him, in reference to this free and autocratic disposition of his subjects,

"Such a state of things would cause the barbarism of those days to be regretted when condemned criminals were exposed to undergo newly-discovered surgical operations; operations which they dared not practice on the uncondemned. If it were successful, the condemned was pardoned.

"Compared to what you do, monsieur, this barbarity was charity.

"After all, a chance for life was thus given to a poor creature for whom the executioner was waiting, and an experiment was rendered possible which might be useful to all.

"But to try your hazardous medicaments on unfortunate artisans, for whom the hospital is the sole refuge when sickness overtakes them; to *try* a treatment, perhaps fatal, on people whom poverty confides to you, trusting and powerless; to you, their only hope; to you, who will only answer for their life to God—do you know that this is to push the love of science to inhumanity, monsieur?

"How! the poorer classes people already the workshops, the fields, the army; in this world they only know misery and privations; and when, at the end of their sufferings and fatigues, they fall exhausted—half dead—sickness even does not preserve them from a last and sacrilegious 'experiment!'

"I ask your heart, monsieur, would not this be unjust and cruel?"

Alas! Doctor Griffon would have been touched, perhaps, by these severe words, but not convinced.

Man is made the creature of circumstances. The captain thus accustoms himself to consider his soldiers as nothing more than the pawns of the bloody game called battle. And it is because man is thus made that society ought to protect those whom fate exposes to the action of these *humane necessities*. Now the character of Doctor Griffon once admitted (and it can be admitted without much hyperbole), the inmates of his hospital had then no guarantee, no recourse against the scientific barbarity of his experiments; for there exists a grievous *hiatus* in the organization of the civil hospitals.

We will point it out here, so that we may be understood.

The military hospitals are each day visited by a superior officer charged to receive the complaints of the sick soldiers, and to attend to them if they appear reasonable. This "surveillance," completely distinct from the government of the hospital, is excellent; it has always produced the best results. It is, besides, impossible to see establishments better kept than the military hospitals; the soldiers are nursed with much care, and treated, we would say, almost with respectful commiseration.

Why not have a similar "surveillance" established in the civil hospitals, by men completely independent of the government and medical faculty? The complaints of the poor (if they were well founded) would thus have an impartial organ, while at present this organ is absolutely wanting.

* * * * * * *

Thus, the doors of the hospital of Doctor Griffon once shut on a patient, he belonged, body and soul, to science. No friendly or disinterested ear can hear his griefs. He is told plainly that, being admitted out of charity, he becomes henceforth a part of the experimental domain of the doctor, and that patient and malady must serve as subjects of study, observation, analysis, or instruction, to the young students who accompany assiduously the visits of M. Griffon.

In effect, the *subject* soon had to answer to interrogations often the most painful, the most sorrowful; and that, not to the doctor alone, who, like the priest, fulfils a duty, and has the right to know everything—no, he must reply in a loud voice before a curious and greedy crowd of students.

Yes, in this pandemonium of science, old or young, maid or wife, were obliged to abjure every feeling or sentiment of shame, and to make the most confidential communications, submit to the most material investigations, before a numerous public; and almost always these cruel formalities aggravated their disease.

And this is neither humane nor just; it is because the poor enter the hospital in the holy name of *charity* that they should be treated with compassion and with respect, for misfortune has its dignity.

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On reading the following lines, it will be perceived why we have caused them to be preceded by these reflections.

* * * * * * *

Nothing could be more sad than the nocturnal aspect of the vast ward of the hospital, where we will introduce our readers.

Along the whole length of its gloomy walls were ranged two parallel rows of beds, vaguely lighted by the sepulchral glimmerings of a lamp suspended from the ceiling: the narrow windows were barred with iron, like those of a prison.

The atmosphere is so sickening, so filled with disease, that the new patients did not often become acclimated without danger: this increase of suffering is a kind of *premium* which every new-comer inevitably pays for—a hospital residence.

The air of this immense hall is, then, heavy and corrupted.

At intervals, the silence of night is interrupted, now by plaintive moans, now by profound sighs, uttered by the feverish sleepers: then all is quiet, and naught is heard but the regular and monotonous tickings of a large clock, which strikes the hours so long, so long for sleepless suffering.

One of the extremities of this hall was almost plunged into obscurity.

Suddenly was heard a great stir, and the noise of rapid footsteps: a door was opened and shut several times: a sister of charity, whose large white cap and black dress were visible from the light which she carried in her hand, approached one of the last beds on the right side of the hall.

Some of the patients awaking, with a start, sat up in bed, attentive to what was passing.

Soon the folding doors were opened.

A priest entered, bearing a crucifix—the two sisters knelt.

By the pale light which shone like a glory around this bed, while the other parts of the hall remained in obscurity, the almoner of the hospital was seen leaning over this couch of misery, pronouncing some words, the slow sounds of which were lost in the silence of night.

At the end of a quarter of an hour the priest took a sheet, which he threw over the bed.

Then he retired.

One of the kneeling sisters arose, closed the curtains, and returned to her prayers alongside of her companion.

Then everything became once more silent.

One of the patients had just died.

Among the women who did not sleep, and who had witnessed this mute scene, were three persons, whose names have already been mentioned in the course of this history:

Mademoiselle de Fermont, daughter of the unhappy widow ruined by the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand;

La Lorraine, the poor washerwoman, to whom Fleur de Marie had formerly given what money she had left;

And Jeanne Duport, sister of Pique-Vinaigre, the "*conteur*" of La Force.

We know Mademoiselle de Fermont and the sister of the "*conteur*." As to La Lorraine, she was a woman of about twenty, with a sweet face, but extremely pale and thin; she was in the last stage of a consumption; there was no hope of saving her; she knew it, and was wasting away slowly.

The distance was not so great between the beds of these two women but they could speak in a low tone, and not be overheard by the sisters.

"There is another one gone," whispered La Lorraine, thinking of the dead, and speaking to herself. "She will not suffer more—she is very happy!"

"She is very happy, if she has left no children," added Jeanne.

"Ah! you are not asleep, neighbour," said La Lorraine to her. "How do you get on, for your first night here? Last night, as soon as you were brought in, you were placed in bed, and I did not dare to speak to you; I heard you sob."

"Oh! yes; I have wept much."

"You are, then, in much pain?"

"Yes, but I am used to pain; it is from sorrow I weep. At length I fell asleep; I was still sleeping when the noise of the doors awoke me. When the priest came in, and the good sisters knelt, I soon saw it was a woman who was dying; then I said to myself a *pater* and an *ave* for her."

"I also; and, as I have the same complaint as this woman had, who is just dead, I could not prevent myself from saying, 'Here is another whose sufferings are ended; she is very happy!'"

"Yes, as I told you, if she has no children."

"You have children, then?"

"Three," said the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, with a sigh. "And you?"

"I had a little girl, but I did not keep her long. I am a washerwoman at the boats; I worked as long as I could. But everything has an end; when my strength failed me, my bread failed me also. They turned me out of my lodgings; I did not know what would have become of me, except for a poor woman who gave me shelter in a cellar, where she had concealed herself to escape from her husband, who wished to kill her. There I was confined on the straw; but, happily, this good woman knew a young girl, beautiful and charitable as an angel from heaven; this young girl had a little money; she took me from the cellar, and placed me in a furnished room, paying the rent in advance, giving me, besides, a willow cradle for my child, and forty francs for myself, with some clothes."

"Good little girl! I also have met, by chance, with one who may be called her equal, a young dressmaker, very obliging. I had gone to see my poor brother, who is a prisoner," said Jeanne, after a moment of hesitation; "and I met in the '*parloir*' this young girl of whom I speak; having heard me say to my brother that I was not happy, she came to me, much embarrassed, to offer what services were in her power."

"How kind that was in her!"

"I accepted; she gave me her address, and, two days after, this dear little Mademoiselle Rigolette—she was called Rigolette—gave me employment."

"Rigolette!" cried La Lorraine.

"You know her?"

"No; but the young girl who was so generous to me, several times mentioned the name of Mademoiselle Rigolette: they were friends together."

"Eh bien!" said Jeanne, smiling sadly, "since we are neighbours in sickness, we should be friends like our two benefactresses."

"Willingly; my name is Annette Gerbier, called La Lorraine, washerwoman."

"And mine, Jeanne Duport, fringe-maker. Ah! it is so good, at the hospital, to be able to find some one who is not altogether a stranger, above all, when you come for the first time, and you have many troubles! But I do not wish to think of this. Tell me, La Lorraine, what was the name of the young girl who has been so kind to you?"

"She was called La Goualeuse. All my sorrow is that I have not seen her for a long time. She was as beautiful as the Holy Virgin, with fine flaxen hair and blue eyes, so sweet—so sweet! Unfortunately, notwithstanding her assistance, my poor child died at two months:" and Lorraine wiped away a tear.

* * * * * * *

"Poor Lorraine!"

"I regret, my child, for myself, not for her, poor little dear! She would have too much to struggle with, for she soon would have been an orphan. I have not a long time to live."

"You should not have such ideas at your age. Have you been sick for a long time?"

"It will soon be three months. Dame! when I had to work for myself and my child, I increased my labour; the winter was cold, I caught a cold on my chest; at this time I lost my little girl. In watching her I forgot myself. To that add sorrow, and I am what you see me, consumptive, condemned—as was the actress who has just died."

"At your age there is always hope."

"The actress was only two years older, and you see—"

"She whom the good sisters are watching now, was she an actress?"

"Mon Dieu! yes—what is fate! She had been beautiful as day. She had plenty of money, equipages, diamonds; but, unfortunately, the smallpox disfigured her; then want came, then poverty—behold her dead in the hospital. Yet, she was not proud; on the contrary, she was kind and gentle to everybody; she told us that she had written to a gentleman whom she had known in her prosperity, and who had loved her; she wrote to him to come and reclaim her body, because it hurt her feelings to think she would be dissected—cut in pieces."

"And this gentleman—has he come?"

"No."

"Ah! it is very cruel."

"At each moment the poor woman asked for him, saying continually, 'Oh! he will come: oh! he will surely come;' and yet she is dead, and he has not come."

"Her end must have been so much the more painful."

"Oh! mon Dieu! yes; for she dreaded so much what they would do to her body."

"After having been rich, happy, to die here is sad! But as for us, it is only a change of misery."

CHAPTER IX.

THE VISIT.

"Speaking of that," resumed La Lorraine, after a moment's hesitation, "I wish you would render me a service."

"Speak."

"If I should die, as is probable, before you leave this, I wish you would reclaim my body—I have the same dread as the actress; and I have put aside the small amount of money I have left, so that I can be buried."

"Do not have such ideas.

"Never mind—do you promise me?"

"Yes! but, Dieu merci, that will not happen."

"But, if it does happen, I shall not have, thanks to you, the same misfortune as the actress."

"Poor lady, after having been rich, to end thus!"

"The actress was not the only one in this room who has been rich, Madame Jeanne."

"Call me Jeanne, as I call you La Lorraine."

"You are very kind."

"Who is it that has been rich besides?"

"A young person not over fifteen, who was brought here last night, before you came. She was so weak that they were obliged to carry her. The sister said that this young girl and her mother were very respectable people, who had been ruined."

"Her mother is also here?"

"No: the mother was so sick, so sick, that she could not be moved. The poor child would not leave her, and they profited by a fainting fit to bring her here. It is the proprietor of a wretched lodging-house who, from fear that they would die in his abode, applied for their admission."

"And where is she?"

"There, in the bed opposite to yours."

"And she is fifteen?"

"Mon Dieu! at the very most."

"The age of my eldest daughter!" said Jeanne, unable to restrain her tears.

"Pardon me," said La Lorraine, sadly, "pardon me, if I cause you pain, unintentionally, by speaking of your children. Perhaps they are sick also?"

"Alas! mon Dieu! I do not know what will become of them if I stay here more than eight days."

"And your husband?"

After a pause, Jeanne answered, drying her tears, "Since we are friends together, La Lorraine, I can tell you my troubles, as you have told me yours—it will solace me. My husband was a good workman; he has become dissipated; he abandoned me and my children, after having sold all that we possessed; I worked hard; charitable people aided me; I began again to raise my head; I brought up my little family as well as I could, when my husband came back, with a bad woman, and again took all I had, leaving me to commence anew."

"Poor Jeanne! could you not prevent that?"

"I could have procured a separation by law, but the law is too dear, as my brother says. Alas! mon Dieu! you shall see what effect this has upon us poor folks: some days since, I returned to see my brother: he gave me three francs, which he had collected from those who listened to his stories in prison."

"It is plain to see that you are a kind-hearted family," said La Lorraine, who, from a rare

instinctive delicacy, did not interrogate Jeanne as to the cause of her brother's imprisonment.

"I took courage, then; I thought that my husband would not return for a long time, for he had taken from me all that he could take. No, I am mistaken," added the unhappy mother, shuddering: "there remained my daughter—my poor Catharine."

"Your daughter?"

"You shall see—you shall see. Three days since, I was at work, with my children around me; my husband came in. I saw at once that he had been drinking. 'I come after Catharine,' said he. I caught my daughter by the arm, and asked Duport, 'Where do you wish to take her?' 'That does not concern you—she is my daughter; let her tie up some clothes and follow me.' At these words, my blood curdled in my veins; for, imagine, La Lorraine, that this woman who is with my husband—it makes me shudder to say it, but—" * * *

"Ah! yes, she is a real monster."

"'Take Catharine away!' I answered, to Duport: 'never!' 'Tiens!' said my husband, whose lips were already white with rage, 'do not provoke me, or I'll knock you down.' Then he took my child by the arm, saying, 'Come with me, Catharine.' The poor little thing threw her arms around my neck; bursting into tears, she cried, 'I wish to stay with mamma!' Seeing this, Duport became furious: he tore my child from me, giving me a blow with his fist, which knocked me down; and once down—but, do you see, La Lorraine," said poor Jeanne, interrupting herself, "it is very certain he would not have been so cruel, except he had been drinking; in fine, he trampled upon me, loading me with curses."

"How bad he must be, mon Dieu!"

"My poor children fell on their knees, begging for mercy; Catharine also. Then he said to my daughter, swearing like a madman, 'If you do not come with me, I will finish the job with your mother!' I vomited blood. I felt myself half dead; but I cried to Catharine, 'Rather let him kill me! but do not follow your father!' 'Will you not be silent, then?' said Duport, giving me another blow, which made me lose all consciousness."

"What misery! what misery!"

"When I came to myself I found my two little boys beside me, weeping."

"And your daughter?"

"Gone!" cried the poor mother, sobbing convulsively; "yes, gone! My other children told me that their father had struck her, threatening to take what life I had remaining on the spot. Then, what could you expect? the poor child was bewildered; she threw herself upon me for a last embrace, kissed her little brothers, and then my husband carried her off! Ah! that bad woman waited for them at the door, I am sure!"

"And could you not complain to the '*commissaire?*'"

"At first, I could think of nothing but Catharine's departure, but I soon felt great pains all over my body. I could not walk. Alas! mon Dieu! what I had so much dreaded arrived. Yes; I had said to my brother, 'Some day my husband will beat me so hard—so hard, that I shall be obliged to go to a hospital. Then, my children, what will become of them!' And now here I am, at the hospital, and I say, What will become of my children?"

"But is there not any justice, then, mon Dieu! for the poor?"

"Too dear! too dear for us, as my brother said," answered Jeanne Duport, with bitterness. "My neighbours went to seek the '*commissaire*;' his register came; it was painful for me to denounce Duport, but on account of my daughter it was necessary. I said only that, in a quarrel I had with him about his taking away my daughter, he had *pushed* me; that it was nothing, but that I wanted my daughter back again."

"And what did he reply?"

"That my husband had a right to take away his child, not being separated from me. 'You have only one way,' said the register to me: 'commence a civil suit, demand a separation of body, and then the blows which your husband has given you, his conduct with this vile woman, will be in your favour, and they will force him to deliver up your daughter; otherwise, he can keep her in his own right.' But to commence a suit! I who have not the means! Mon Dieu! I have my children to feed. 'What can I do?' said the register; 'so it is.' Yes," repeated Jeanne, sobbing, "he was right; so it is; and because that so it is, in three months, perhaps, my daughter will be a 'street-walker!' while, if I had had the means to commence a suit, it would not have happened."

"But that will never happen, your daughter must love you so much."

"But she is so young! At that age, fear, bad treatment, bad counsels, bad examples—mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Poor Catharine! so gentle, so loving! and I, who only this year wished her to renew her first communion!"

"Ah! you have much sorrow. And I complained of mine!" said La Lorraine, wiping her eyes. "And your other children?"

"On their account I did what I could to keep out of the hospital. I was obliged to give up. I vomit blood three or four times a day; I have a fever which prostrates me; I am unable to work. At least, by being cured quickly, I can return to my children, if, before this, they are not dead with hunger or imprisoned as beggars. I here—who will they have to take care of them and feed them?"

"Oh! this is terrible! You have no good neighbours, then?"

"They are as poor as I am, and they have five children of their own; thus two children more is a heavy burden; however, they have promised me to feed them *a little*, during eight days. It is all they can do; it is taking from them bread, of which they themselves have none too much; so I must be cured in eight days; oh yes! cured or not, I shall go out, all the same."

"But why have you not thought of this good Mademoiselle Rigolette, whom you met in prison? She would surely have taken care of them."

"I did think of her; and, although the dear little soul has, perhaps, as much as she can do to get along, I sent her word by a neighbour of my troubles. Unfortunately, she is in the country, where she is going to be married; so the portière of the house said."

"Thus, in eight days, your poor children—but no, your neighbours will not have the heart to send them away."

"But what would you have them to do? They do not eat now as much as they want, and they are obliged to take it out of the mouths of their own to give it to mine. No, no—do you see, I must be cured in eight days. I have already demanded it from all the doctors I have seen since yesterday, but they answered me, laughing, 'You must address yourself to the chief physician for that.' When will he come, La Lorraine?"

"Chut! I think he is there. We must not talk while he is making his visit," answered La Lorraine.

During the conversation of the two women the day commenced to dawn.

A confused movement announced the arrival of Dr. Griffon, who soon entered the hall, accompanied by his friend the Comte de Saint Rémy, who having, as is known, a lively interest in Madame de Fermont and her daughter, was far from expecting to find this unfortunate young girl in the hospital.

As he came into the ward, the cold and stern features of Dr. Griffon seemed to light up with a glow of satisfaction. Casting around him a look of complacency and authority, he answered with a patronising bend of the head the eager greetings of the sisters.

The rough and austere physiognomy of the Comte de Saint Rémy was stamped with deep sadness. The vanity of his attempts to discover the traces of Madame de Fermont, the ignominious conduct of the vicomte, who had preferred an infamous life to death, crushed him to the ground with sorrow.

"Eh bien!" said Doctor Griffon to the comte, with a triumphant air, "what do you think of my hospital?"

"In truth," answered M. de Saint Rémy, "I do not know why I have yielded to your desire: nothing is more heart-rending than the aspect of these wards filled with sick. Since my entrance here my feelings quite overcome me."

"Bah! bah! in fifteen minutes you will think more about it; you, who are a philosopher, will find ample matter for observation; and then it would have been a shame that you, one of my oldest friends, should not visit the theatre of my labours—of my glory; that you should not see me at my work. All my pride is in my profession; is it wrong?"

"No, certainly not; and after your excellent care of Fleur de Marie, whom you have saved, I could refuse you nothing. Poor child! what touching charms her features have preserved, notwithstanding her dangerous illness!"

"She has furnished me with a very curious medical fact; I am enchanted with her! By-the-by, how has she passed this night? Did you see her this morning before you left Asnières?"

"No; but La Louve, who nurses her with unceasing assiduity, told me that she had slept perfectly well. Can we allow her to write to-day?"

After a moment's hesitation, the doctor answered, "Yes. As long as the subject was not completely convalescent, I feared the slightest emotion for her, the slightest application of mind; but now I do not see that any inconvenience can arise from her writing."

"At least, she could inform her friends?"

"Doubtless. Ah ça! have you heard nothing more concerning the fate of Madame de Fermont and her daughter?"

"Nothing," said M. de Saint Rémy, sighing. "My constant researches have no success. I have no more hope but in Madame la Marquise d'Harville, who, as I am told, also takes a lively interest in these unfortunates; perhaps she may have some information which might lead to her discovery. Three days ago I went to her residence; she was expected to arrive every moment. I have written to her on this subject, begging her to answer me as soon as possible."

During the conversation of M. de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon, several persons had slowly assembled around a large table occupying the middle of the hall; on this table was a register, where the students attached to the hospital, who might be recognised by their long white aprons, came in turn to sign their names as being present; a large number of young students arrived successively to swell the scientific cortège of Doctor Griffon, who, arriving a few moments in advance of his usual hour, waited until it struck.

"You see, my dear Saint Rémy, that my staff is quite considerable," said Doctor Griffon, with pride, pointing to the crowd who came to attend to his practical instructions.

"And these young men follow you to the bed of each patient?"

"They only come for that."

"But all these beds are occupied by women."

"Well!"

"The presence of so many men must cause them much painful confusion?"

"Allons donc, a patient has no sex."

"In your eyes, perhaps; but in their own—modesty, shame."

"All these fine things must be left at the door, my dear Alceste; here we commence on the living experiments and studies which we finish in the dissecting room on the corpse."

"Hold, doctor: you are the best and the most honest of men; I owe you my life; I recognise your excellent qualities; but habit and the love of your profession make you view certain questions in a manner that is revolting to me. I leave you," said M. de Saint Rémy, turning to leave the hall.

"What childishness!" cried the doctor, detaining him.

"No, no—there are some things which wound me and make me indignant; I foresee that it will be torture for me to accompany you. I will not go, but I will await you here, near this table."

"What a man you are with your scruples! But I will not let you off. I admit it may be unpleasant for you to go from bed to bed; remain, then, there; I will call you for two or three cases which are very curious."

"Very well; since you are so very urgent, that will be enough, and more than enough."

The clock struck half past seven.

"Come, gentlemen," said Doctor Griffon, and he commenced his visits, followed by a numerous train.

On arriving at the first bed of the range on the right, of which the curtains were closed, the sister said to the doctor,

"Monsieur, number one died this morning, at half past four."

"So late? that surprises me; yesterday morning I would not have given her the day: has the body been claimed?"

"No, Monsieur le Docteur."

"So much the better—we can proceed with the autopsy; I can make some one happy;" then, addressing one of the students, the doctor added, "My dear Dunoyer, you have wished for a *subject* for a long time; you are the first on the list; this one is yours."

"Ah! monsieur, how kind you are!"

"I could wish oftener to recompense your zeal, my dear friend; but mark the *subject*, and take possession."

And the doctor passed on.

The student, with the aid of a scalpel, cut very delicately on the arm of the actress an F and a D, in order to take possession, as the doctor said.

"La Lorraine," whispered Jeanne Duport to her neighbour, "who are all these people that follow the doctor?"

"They are pupils and students."

"Oh! mon Dieu! will all these young men be there when he examines me?"

"Alas! yes."

"But it is on my chest I am injured. Will they examine me before all these men?"

"Yes, yes, it must be so—they wish it. I wept enough the first time—I was dying with shame; I resisted, they threatened to turn me away; I was obliged to submit, but it affected me so much that I was worse. Judge, then, almost naked before so many people—it is very painful, allez."

"Before the physician alone—I comprehend that—if it is necessary—and even that costs much. But why before all these young men?"

"They are learning; they teach them with us. What would we have? we are here for that; it is on this condition that we are received here."

"Ah! I comprehend," said Jeanne Duport, with bitterness: "they do not give us something for nothing. But yet, there are occasions where this could not be. Thus, if my poor daughter Catharine, who is but fifteen, should come to a hospital, would they dare before all these young men? Oh! no, I think I would prefer to see her die at home."

"If she came here, she would have to obey the rules, like you, like me."

"Hush, La Lorraine; if this poor demoiselle who is opposite should hear us—she who was rich, who perhaps has never before left her mother—it is going to be her turn—judge how confused and unhappy she will be."

"It is true, mon Dieu! it is true; I shudder when I think of it, poor child!"

"Silence, Jeanne, here is the doctor!" said La Lorraine.

CHAPTER X.

MADEMOISELLE DE FERMONT.

After having rapidly visited several patients whose cases presented no great interest, the doctor at length reached the bed of Jeanne Duport.

At the sight of this eager crowd, who, anxious to see and to know, to understand and learn, pressed around her bed, the unha woman, seized with a tremour of fear and sha wrapped herself closely in the covering. severe and intelligent face of Doctor Griffon, penetrating look, his brow habitually contra ed, his rough manner of speaking, augmen still more the alarm of Jeanne.

"A new *subject!*" said the doctor, casting eye on the card where was inscribed the ture of the malady of the new-comer.

He preserved a profound silence, while his sistants, imitating the *prince of the science*, fi their eyes on the patient with curiosity. S to throw aside as much as possible all the pa ful emotions caused by so many spectato looked steadily at the doctor, with deep angui

After an examination of several minutes, t doctor, remarking something anomalous in t yellowish tint of the globe of the eye, approa ed nearer to her, and with the end of his fin pushing back the eyelid, he examined the cr talline lens.

Then several students, answering to a ki of mute invitation of their professor, went, turn, to observe the appearance of the eye.

Afterward the doctor proceeded to this terrogatory:

"Your name?"

"Jeanne Duport," murmured the patient, m and more alarmed.

"Your age?"

"Thirty-six and a half."

"Louder. The place of your birth?"

"Paris."

"Your occupation?"

"Fringemaker."

"Are you married?"

"Alas! yes, monsieur," answered Jean with a deep sigh.

"How long since?"

"Eighteen years."

"Have you any children?"

Here, instead of answering, the unhap mother gave vent to her tears, for a long ti restrained.

"We do not want tears, but an answer. Ha you any children?"

"Yes, monsieur; two little boys and a gir

"How long have you been sick?"

"For four days, monsieur," said Jeanne, w ping her eyes.

"Tell me how you became sick."

"Monsieur, it is that—there are so ma people, I do not dare."

"Ah, ça! where do you come from, my dear said the doctor, impatiently. "Would you n like me to bring a confessional here? Com speak, and be quick.

"Be composed, we are quite a family party quite a large family, as you see," added t prince of the science, who was on that day a gay humour. "Come, let us finish."

More and more intimidated, Jeanne sai stammering and hesitating at each word, ' have had, monsieur, a quarrel with my husban on the subject of my children; I mean to sa of my eldest daughter. He wished to take h away. I—you comprehend, monsieur—I did n wish it on account of a vile woman, who mig give bad advice to my child; then my hu band, who was drunk—oh! yes, monsieur, e

cept for that he would not have done it—my husband pushed me very hard; I fell, and—then, a short time after, I began to throw up blood."

"Ta, ta, ta; your husband pushed you, and you fell. You set it off very nicely. He has certainly done more than push you; he must have struck you very hard in the stomach, and, what is more, several times. Perhaps, also, he has trampled you under foot. Come, answer! tell the truth."

"Ah! monsieur, I assure you he was drunk, otherwise he would not have been so wicked."

"Good or wicked, drunk or sober, it has nothing to do with present matters; I am not a magistrate, my good woman; I only wish to establish a fact. You have been knocked down and trampled upon, have you not?"

"Alas! yes, monsieur," said Jeanne, bursting into tears; "and yet I have never given him cause for complaint. I work as much as I can, and I—"

"The epigastrium must be painful? you must feel a great heat there?" said the doctor, interrupting Jeanne; "you must experience lassitude, uneasiness, nausea?"

"Yes, monsieur. I only came here at the last extremity, otherwise I would not have abandoned my children, for whom I am so much worried; and then Catharine—ah! it is on her account that I fear the most. If you knew—"

"Your tongue!" said the doctor, again interrupting the patient.

This order appeared so strange to Jeanne, who had thought to excite feelings of compassion in the doctor, that she did not at first comply with it, but looked at him with amazement.

"Let us see this tongue of which you make so good use," said the doctor, smiling; then he held down, with the end of his finger, her under jaw.

After causing the students to examine the tongue closely, in order to ascertain its colour and dryness, the doctor stepped back a moment. Jeanne, overcoming her fear, cried in a trembling voice,

"Monsieur, I am going to tell you: some neighbours, as poor as myself, have been kind enough to take charge of my children, but for eight days only. That is a great deal. At the end of this time, I must return home. Thus, I entreat you, for the love of Heaven! cure me as soon as possible—or *almost* cure me, so that I can get up and work. I have only eight days before me, for—"

"Face discoloured—state of prostration complete; yet the pulse hard, strong, and frequent," said the imperturbable doctor, looking at Jeanne. "Remark it well, messieurs: oppression—heat at the epigastrium, all these symptoms certainly announce an *hématémèse*, probably complicated, with hepatatis, caused by domestic sorrows, as the yellowish coloration of the globe of the eye indicates; the subject has received violent blows in the regions of the epigastrium and abdomen; the vomiting of blood is necessarily caused by some organic lesion of certain viscera. On this subject I will call your attention to a very curious point—very curious. The *post mortem* examinations of those who die with the complaint of which this *subject* is attacked, offer results singularly variable; often the malady, very acute and very serious, carries off the patient in a few days, and leaves no traces of its existence; at other times the spleen, the liver, the pancreas, present lesions more or less serious. It is probable that the *subject* before us has suffered some of these lesions; we are going, then, to try to assure ourselves of this fact, and you—you will also assure yourselves by an attentive examination of the patient." And, with a rapid movement, Dr. Griffon, throwing the bedclothes back, almost entirely uncovered Jeanne. It is repugnant to our feelings to depict the piteous struggles of this poor creature, who wept bitterly from shame, imploring the doctor and his auditory to leave her.

But at this threat, "*You will be turned out of the hospital if you do not submit to the established usages*"—a threat so overwhelming for those to whom the hospital is the last resource, Jeanne submitted to a public investigation, which lasted for a long time—a very long time; for the doctor analyzed and explained each symptom, and the more studious of the assistants wished to join practice to theory, and have an ocular assurance of the state of the patient.

As a consequence of this cruel scene, Jeanne experienced an emotion so violent that she had a severe nervous attack, for which Doctor Griffon gave an additional prescription.

The visit was continued.

The doctor soon reached the bed of Mademoiselle Claire de Fermont, a victim, as well as her mother, of the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand.

Mademoiselle de Fermont, wearing the linen cap furnished by the hospital, leaned her head in a languishing manner on the bolster of her bed: through the ravages of sickness could be traced, on this ingenuous and sweet face, the remains of distinguished beauty.

After a night of bitter anguish, the poor child had fallen into a kind of feverish stupor before the doctor and his scientific cortège entered the hall; thus the noise attending his visit had not yet awakened her.

"A new *subject*, messieurs," said the prince of the science, running his eyes over the card which a student presented to him. "Disease, *slow fever*—nervous. Peste!" cried the doctor, with an expression of profound satisfaction; "if the attending physician is not mistaken in his diagnostic, it is a most excellent windfall; I have desired a slow nervous fever for a long time, as this is not a malady of the poor. These affections are caused in almost every case by serious perturbations in the social position of the *subject*; and it cannot be denied that the more the position is elevated, the more profound are the perturbations. It is, besides, an affection the more to be remarked from its peculiar character. It is traced back to the highest antiquity: the writings of Hippocrates leave no doubt on this subject—it is very plain; this fever, as I have said, is almost always caused by violent sorrows. Now, sorrow is as old as the world; yet, what is singular, before the eighteenth century, this malady was not described by any author; it is Huxman, who did so much honour to the profession at this epoch—it is Huxman, I say, who was the first to give a monography of the nervous fever—a monography which has become clas-

sic; and yet it was a malady of the old school," added the doctor, laughing. "Eh! eh! eh! it belongs to this grand, ancient, and illustrious *febris* family, of which the origin is lost in the night of time. But do not let us rejoice too much; let us, in effect, see if we have the happiness to possess a specimen of this curious affection. It would be doubly desirable, for I have wished for a long time to test the internal use of phosphorus—yes, messieurs," repeated the doctor, on hearing a kind of murmur of curiosity among his auditory, "yes, messieurs, phosphorus; it is a very curious experiment which I wish to make—it is bold! but *audaces fortuna juvat*—and the occasion will be excellent. We are going, in the first place, to examine if the *subject* presents on all parts of the body, and especially on the breast, this miliary eruption, so symptomatic, according to Huxman; and you will assure yourselves, by feeling the subject, of the kind of rugosity this eruption causes. But do not let us sell the skin of the bear before we bring him to the ground," added the prince of the science, who was unusually jocular.

And he slightly touched the shoulder of Mademoiselle de Fermont, to arouse her.

The young girl shuddered, and opened her large eyes, sunken by disease.

Let her terror and alarm be imagined. While a crowd of men surrounded her bed and followed her every motion with their eyes, she felt the hand of the doctor throw back the covering, and slipped into the bed in order to feel her pulse.

Collecting all her strength, with a voice of anguish and affright she cried,

"Mother! help! my mother!"

By a chance almost providential, at the moment when the cries of Mademoiselle de Fermont made the old Count de Saint Rémy start from his chair, for he recognised the voice, the door of the hall opened, and a young woman, dressed in mourning, entered precipitately, accompanied by the director of the hospital.

This woman was the Marquise d'Harville.

"In mercy, monsieur," said she to the director, with the greatest anxiety, "conduct me to Mademoiselle de Fermont."

"Be good enough to follow me, Madame la Marquise," answered the director, respectfully. "This demoiselle is at No. 17, in this hall."

"Unfortunate child! here—here!" said Madame d'Harville, wiping her eyes; "ah! it is frightful."

The marquise, preceded by the director, advanced rapidly towards the group assembled around the bed of Mademoiselle de Fermont, when these words were heard, pronounced with indignation:

"I tell you that it is murder—you will kill her, monsieur."

"But, my dear Saint Rémy, listen, then—"

"I repeat to you, monsieur, that your conduct is atrocious. I regard Mademoiselle de Fermont as my daughter. I forbid you to approach her; I will have her immediately removed hence."

"But, my dear friend, it is a case of slow nervous fever, very rare. I wish to try phosphorus. It is a unique occasion. Promise me at least that I shall take care of her. What matters it where you take her, since you c prive my clinique of a *subject* so precious?"

"If you were not mad, you would be a mc ster," answered the Comte de Saint Rémy.

Clémence listened to these words with creasing anguish; but the crowd was so den that the director was obliged to say in a lo voice,

"Make room, messieurs, if you please—ma room for Madame la Marquise d'Harville, w comes to see No. 17."

At these words, the students fell back wi as much eagerness as respectful admiration, seeing the charming face of Clémence, to whi emotion had given a most lively colour.

"Madame d'Harville," cried the Comte Saint Rémy, pushing the doctor rudely asi and advancing towards Clémence. "Ah! it God who sends here one of his angels. M dame, I knew that you had interested yours for these unfortunates. More fortunate than you have found them; as for me, it was chan which brought me here, to behold a scene unheard-of barbarity. Unfortunate child! you see, madame—do you see! And you, mc sieurs, in the name of your daughters, or yo sisters, have pity on a child of sixteen, I e treat you; leave me alone with madame a the good sisters. As soon as she recovers little, I will have her removed hence."

"So be it. I will sign an order for her d parture; but I will follow her steps—I w cling fast to her. It is a *subject* which belon to me, and she will do well. I will take ca of her. I will not experiment with the phc phorus—well understood—I will pass the nigh with her if it is necessary, as I have pass them with you, ungrateful Saint Rémy; t this fever is quite as singular as yours. Th are two sisters, who have the same claim my interest."

"Confounded man, why have you so mu science?" said the comte, knowing that, truth, he could not confide Mademoiselle Fermont to more skilful hands.

"Eh! mon Dieu! it is very plain," whispe ed the doctor in his ear. "I have much s ence, because I experiment, because I risk a practise much on my *subjects*. Ah ça! shal have my slow fever, old growler?"

"Yes; but can this young girl be removed

"Certainly."

"Then, for Heaven's sake! retire."

"Come, messieurs," said the prince of t science, "our clinique will be deprived of precious study; but I will keep you inform of the case."

And Doctor Griffon, accompanied by his n merous attendants, continued his visit, leavi M. de Saint Rémy and Madame d'Harville wi Mademoiselle de Fermont.

CHAPTER XI.

FLEUR DE MARIE.

During the scene which we have just d scribed, Mademoiselle de Fermont, still in h fainting fit, was delivered to the tender care a attentions of Clémence and the sisters; one the latter sustained the drooping head of t

young girl, while Madame d'Harville, leaning over the bed, wiped away with her handkerchief the cold sweat from the brow of the patient. Profoundly affected, M. de Saint Rémy contemplated this touching picture, when a sudden thought struck him, and he drew near Clémence, and said, in a low tone,

"And the mother of this unfortunate, madame?"

The marquise turned towards M. de Saint Rémy, and answered, with sadness,

"This child has no longer a mother, monsieur."

"Grand Dieu! dead!"

"I only learned last night, at my return, the address of Madame de Fermont, and her alarming situation. At one o'clock in the morning I was with her, accompanied by my physician. Ah! monsieur, what a picture! poverty in all its horrors—and no hope of saving the expiring mother!"

"Oh! how frightful must have been her agony, if the thought of her daughter was present!"

"Her last words were—my daughter!"

"What a death! mon Dieu! she, the tender mother—so devoted. It is terrible!"

Here one of the sisters entered, interrupting the conversation of M. de Saint Rémy and Madame d'Harville, and said to the latter,

"The young demoiselle is very feeble—she scarcely has any consciousness; in a short time she may revive. If you do not fear to remain there, madame, and wait until she comes to herself, I will offer you my chair."

"Give it to me," said Clémence, taking a seat alongside of the bed. "I will not take my eyes from her; I wish that she should, at least, see a friendly face when she recovers; then I will take her with me, since the doctor decides that she can be removed without danger."

"Ah! madame, may God bless you for what you do," said M. de Saint Rémy; "but pardon me for not having told you my name—so much sorrow! so much emotion!—I am Comte de Saint Rémy; the husband of Madame de Fermont was my most intimate friend. I live at Angers. I left that city because I was uneasy at not having received any news from these two noble and worthy women. I have since heard that they have been completely ruined."

"Ah! monsieur, you do not know all. Madame Fermont has been most cruelly despoiled!"

"By her notary, perhaps? For a moment I had such a suspicion."

"The man was a monster, monsieur! Alas! this cruel crime is not his only one. But, happily," said Clémence, thinking of Rodolphe, "he has been compelled to make restitution; and in closing the eyes of Madame Fermont I have been able to assure her that her daughter is provided for. Her death thus had fewer pangs."

"I comprehend; knowing that her daughter was under your protection, madame, my poor friend died more tranquilly."

"Not only is my protection forever secured to Mademoiselle de Fermont, but her fortune will also be restored."

"Her fortune! How? The notary—"

"Has been forced to restore her money, which he had appropriated to himself by a horrid crime!"

"A crime?"

"This man assassinated the brother of Madame Fermont, and made her believe that this unfortunate man had committed suicide, after having dissipated her fortune."

"This is horrible! it can hardly be credited; and yet I have had my doubts about this notary, for Renneville was honour itself. And this money—"

"Is deposited with a venerable priest, M. le Curé, of Bonne-Nouvelle; he will hand it to Mademoiselle de Fermont."

"This restitution is not sufficient for human justice, madame! The scaffold claims this notary, for he has not only committed one murder, but two. The death of Madame de Fermont, the sufferings which her daughter has endured on this hospital bed, have been caused by the infamous abuse of confidence of this wretch!"

"And this wretch has committed another murder, quite as frightful!"

"What do you say, madame?"

"If he made away with the brother of Madame Fermont by a pretended suicide, only a few days since he cruelly murdered a young girl, in whose destruction he was interested, by causing her to be drowned, certain that this would be attributed to accident."

M. de Saint Rémy shuddered, looked at Madame d'Harville with surprise, and thinking of Fleur de Marie, cried,

"Ah! mon Dieu! what a strange coincidence!"

"What is the matter, monsieur?"

"This young girl! Where was it he wished to drown her?"

"In the Seine, near Asnière, I am told."

"It is she! it is she!" cried M. de Saint Rémy.

"Of whom do you speak, monsieur?"

"Of the young girl this monster had an interest—"

"Fleur de Marie?"

"Do you know her, madame?"

"Poor child! I loved her tenderly. Ah! if you had known, monsieur, how beautiful she was! But how did you—"

"Doctor Griffon and myself gave her the first assistance."

"The first assistance? to her? and where?"

"At the Island of the Ravageurs, when she was saved."

"Saved! Fleur de Marie! saved?"

"By a good creature, who, at the risk of her life, drew her out of the Seine. But what is the matter, madame?"

"Ah! monsieur, I dare not believe in so much happiness. I entreat you, tell me—this young girl—describe her."

"Of admirable beauty, and an angel face—"

"Large blue eyes—flaxen hair?"

"Yes, madame."

"And when they tried to drown her, was she with an aged woman?"

"In fact, it was only yesterday she could speak. She then mentioned that an old woman accompanied her."

"God be praised!" cried Clémence, clasping her hands fervently. "I can inform *him* that his protégée still lives. What joy for him, who, in his last letter, spoke of this poor child with such painful regret! Pardon me, monsieur;

but if you knew how happy your information makes me, as well as another, who, still more than myself, has loved and protected Fleur de Marie! But I pray you, where is she at this moment?"

"Near Asnières, in the house of one of the physicians of this hospital — Doctor Griffon, who, notwithstanding some oddities which I deplore, has excellent qualities."

"And she is now out of danger?"

"Yes, madame; but only since two or three days. To-day she is allowed to write to her protectors."

"Oh! it is I, monsieur—it is I who will do this, or, rather, it is I who will have the joy of conducting her to those who, believing her dead, regret her so bitterly."

"I appreciate these regrets, madame; for it is impossible to know Fleur de Marie without being charmed with her angelic qualities: her grace and sweetness exercise on all those who approach her an unbounded influence. The woman who saved her, and who has since watched her night and day, as she would have watched her own child, is a courageous and devoted person, but of a temper so habitually violent, that she has been called *La Louve*—judge! Well! a word from Fleur de Marie can calm her. I have heard her sob and utter cries of despair, when, at one time, Doctor Griffon had but little hopes of saving Fleur de Marie."

"That does not astonish me—I know La Louve."*

"You, madame?" said M. de Saint Rémy, surprised; "you know La Louve?"

"It must surprise you, truly, monsieur," said the marquise, smiling sweetly, for Clémence was happy—oh! very happy—in thinking of the joyful surprise she would cause the prince. What would have been her delight, if she had known that it was a daughter whom he believed dead—that she was about to restore to Rodolphe!

"Ah! monsieur," said she to M. de Saint Rémy, "this is so joyful a day for me, that I wish it to be so for others; it seems to me that there must be many unfortunate persons here to succour; this would be an excellent way to express my gratitude, my joy, for the news you have given me." Then addressing one of the sisters, who had just given a drink to Mademoiselle de Fermont, she said, "Well, my sister, is she yet sensible?"

"Not yet, madame—she is so weak. Poor demoiselle! her pulse can hardly be felt."

"I will wait until she is able to be removed in my carriage. But, tell me, my sister, among all these unhappy sick, do you not know some who particularly merit my interest and pity, and to whom I can be useful before I leave the hospital?"

"Ah! madame, it is God who sends you," said the sister; "there is," added she, pointing to the bed of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, "a poor woman, very sick, and very much to be pitied: she mourns continually about two small children, who have no one to look to for support but herself. She told the doctor just now that she would leave here, cured or not cured, in eight days, as her neighbour had promised to take care of her children for that time only."

"Conduct me to her bed, I pray you, my sister," said Madame d'Harville, rising, and following the "*religieuse*."

Jeanne Duport, scarcely recovered from the violent attack caused by the treatment of Doctor Griffon, had not perceived the entrance of the marquise into the hospital.

What was her surprise, then, when the marquise, lifting up the curtains of her bed, said to her, with a look full of kindness and commiseration, "My good mother, you must not be any longer uneasy about your children; I will take care of them; only think of being soon cured, so that you can join them."

Jeanne Duport thought that she was in a dream. In the same place where Doctor Griffon and his students had made her submit to such a cruel ordeal, she saw a young woman of surpassing beauty come to her with words of pity, consolation, and hope.

The emotion of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre was so great that she could not utter a word; she clasped her hands as if in prayer, looking at her unknown benefactress with adoration.

"Jeanne, Jeanne," whispered La Lorraine, "speak to this good lady." Then addressing the marquise, she said, "Ah! madame, you save her; she would have died with despair in thinking of her poor destitute children."

"Once more reassure yourself, my good mother — have no uneasiness," repeated the marquise, pressing in her small white hand the burning one of Jeanne Duport. "Reassure yourself; be no longer uneasy concerning your children; and, if you prefer it, you shall leave the hospital to-day; you shall be nursed at home—nothing shall be wanting. In this way you shall not leave your dear children; from this time I will see that you do not want for work, and I will attend to the future welfare of your children."

"Ah! mon Dieu! what do I hear? The cherubims descend, then, from heaven, as is written in the church books," said Jeanne Duport, trembling, and scarcely daring to look at her benefactress. "Why so much goodness for me? How have I deserved this? It cannot be possible! I leave the hospital, where I have wept so much, suffered so much! no leave my children any more! have a nurse! why, it is a miracle of the good God!"

And the poor woman spoke the truth.

If one only knew how sweet and easy it is to perform often, and at a small expense, *these miracles!* Alas! for those poor unfortunates abandoned and repulsed on all sides—an instantaneous, unhoped-for assistance, accompanied by benevolent words of consideration tenderly commiserative, ought it not to have has it not, the supernatural appearance of *miracle?*

"It is not a miracle, my good mother," answered Clémence, much affected; "that which I do for you," added she, slightly blushing at the recollection of Rodolphe, "that which I do for you is inspired by a generous being, who has taught me to relieve the unfortunate: it is he whom you must bless and thank."

"Ah! madame! I shall bless you and yours," said Jeanne Duport, weeping. "I ask you

* The marquise heard of La Louve when she visited St. Lazare.

pardon for expressing myself so badly. I am not accustomed to such great joy; it is the first time it has happened to me."

"Well! do you see, Jeanne," said La Lorraine, weeping, "there are also among the sick some Rigolettes and Goualeuses—on a large scale, it is true; but as to the good heart, it is the same thing!"

Madame d'Harville turned towards La Lorraine, much surprised at hearing her pronounce these two names.

"You know La Goualeuse and a young workwoman named Rigolette?" demanded Clémence of La Lorraine.

"Yes, madame. La Goualeuse—dear little angel—did last year for me—but, dame! according to her poor means—that which you do for poor Jeanne. Yes, madame—oh! it does me good to say and repeat to every one, that La Goualeuse took me from a cellar where I was confined on some straw; and the dear little angel removed me and my child to a room where there was a good bed and a cradle. La Goualeuse did this out of pure charity; for she scarcely knew me, and was very poor herself. That was very kind, was it not, madame?" said La Lorraine, excited. "Oh! yes; the charity of the poor towards the poor is holy," said Clémence, her eyes bathed in tears.

"It was just the same with Rigolette, who, according to her means," replied La Lorraine, "offered her services, a few days since, to Jeanne."

"What a singular coincidence!" said Clémence to herself, more and more affected; for each of these two names, La Goualeuse and Rigolette, recalled a noble action of Rodolphe. "And you, my child—what can I do for you?" said she to La Lorraine. "I wish the names that you have just pronounced with so much gratitude shall bring you good fortune."

"Thank you, madame," said La Lorraine, with a smile of bitter resignation. "I had a child—it is dead. I have the consumption, and am in a hopeless state. I have no longer need of anything."

"What gloomy thoughts! At your age—so young—there is always some remedy."

"Oh! no, madame, I know my fate: I do not complain. I saw a person die last night—here—with the same disease; it is an easy death. I thank you for your goodness."

"You magnify your danger."

"I am not mistaken, madame; I know it well. But since you are so kind—a great lady like you is all-powerful—"

"Speak—say, what do you wish?"

"I have asked a service of Jeanne; but since, thanks to the good God and you, she is going away—"

"Eh bien! this service—can I not render it?"

"Certainly, madame; one word from you to the sisters, or to the physician, would arrange all."

"This word? I will speak it, be assured."

"Since I have seen the actress, who is dead, so tormented by the fear of being cut up after her death, I have had the same fear. Jeanne promised to come and claim my body, and have me buried."

"Ah! it is horrible!" said Clémence, shuddering with affright. "One must come here to know that there are, for the poor, misery and alarms even beyond the tomb."

"Pardon, madame," said La Lorraine, timidly; "for a great lady, rich and happy as you deserve to be, this request is a very sad one: I ought not to have made it!"

"I thank you, on the contrary, my child; it teaches me a misery of which I was ignorant, and this knowledge shall not be fruitless. Be comforted; although this fatal moment may be far off, when it does arrive, you shall be sure to repose in holy ground."

"Oh! thank you, madame!" cried La Lorraine. "If I might dare to ask permission to kiss your hand."

Clémence presented her hand to the parched lips of La Lorraine.

"Oh! thank you, madame. I shall have some one to pray for and bless to the end, with La Goualeuse, and I shall be no longer sad, for after my death—"

This resignation, and these fears for beyond the tomb, had painfully affected Madame d'Harville; she whispered to the sister who came to inform her that Mademoiselle de Fermont was completely restored, "Is the condition of this young woman really desperate?"

"Alas! yes, madame: La Lorraine is given up; she has not, perhaps, eight days to live."

* * * * *

Half an hour afterward, Madame d'Harville, accompanied by M. de Saint Rémy, took with her, to her own house, the young orphan, from whom she had concealed the death of her mother.

The same day an agent of Madame d'Harville, after having visited, in the Rue de Barillerie, the miserable abode of Jeanne Duport, and having received the most favourable accounts of this worthy woman, immediately hired on the Quai de l'Ecole two large rooms and a cabinet: thanks to the resources of the Temple, they were furnished in two hours, and the same evening Jeanne Duport was removed to this dwelling, where she found her children and an excellent nurse.

The same agent was instructed to claim the body of La Lorraine, whenever she should sink under her malady, and have it decently interred.

* * * * *

After having installed Mademoiselle de Fermont in her apartment, Madame d'Harville set out at once for Asnières, accompanied by M. de Saint Rémy, in order to conduct Fleur de Marie to Rodolphe.

CHAPTER XII.

HOPE.

The first days of spring approached, the sun began to resume his power, the sky was pure, the air soft and mild. Fleur de Marie, leaning on the arm of La Louve, tried her strength by walking in the garden of Doctor Griffon.

The vivifying warmth of the sun and the action of walking coloured with a rosy tint the pale and thin cheeks of the Goualeuse; her peasant's costume having been torn in the agitation attending the first assistance that had

been rendered her, she wore a dress of dark-blue merino, made like a blouse, and only confined around her delicate and slender waist by a woollen girdle.

"How pleasant the sun is!" said she to La Louve, stopping at the foot of a hedge of green trees exposed to the south, and which surrounded a stone bench. "Will you sit down here a moment, La Louve?"

"Is there any need of asking me if I will?" answered the wife of Martial, shrugging her shoulders.

Then, taking from her neck a shawl of "*bourre de soie*," she folded it carefully, knelt down, laid it on the slightly damp gravel of the walk, and said to La Goualeuse,

"Place yourself there."

"But, La Louve," said Fleur de Marie, who had perceived the design of her companion too late to prevent its execution, "but, La Louve, you will ruin your shawl."

"None of your arguments! the ground is damp," said La Louve, and taking the small feet of Fleur de Marie in her hands, she placed them on the shawl.

"How you spoil me, La Louve!"

"Hum! you do not deserve it; always contending against that which I wish to do for your good. Are you not fatigued? Here is a good half hour that we have been walking. Noon has just struck at Asnières."

"I am slightly tired; but I feel that this walk has done me good."

"You see, you were tired—you could not ask me sooner to sit down?"

"Do not scold me—I did not know that I was so weak."

"It is so pleasant to walk after having been confined to the bed so long—to see the sun, the trees, the country, when one has thought never to see them again!"

"The fact is, that you have been in a very dangerous state for two days. Poor Goualeuse! Yes, now we can tell you that your life was despaired of."

"And then imagine, that on finding myself under the water, the recollection flashed across my mind that a wicked woman, who had badly treated me when I was very little, had always threatened to throw me to the fishes. Then I said to myself, 'I have no good fortune—it is fated that I shall not escape.'"

"Poor Goualeuse! was this your last thought when you supposed yourself lost?"

"Oh! no," said Fleur de Marie, warmly; "when I felt myself about to die, my last thought was of him whom I regard as my 'dieu;' so, also, when I was recalled back to life, my first thought was of him."

"It is a pleasure to confer benefits on you; you do not forget."

"Oh! no! it is so pleasant to fall asleep and dream of one's gratitude, and on awakening to remember it still!"

"Ah! one would go through fire to serve you."

"Good Louve! Hold; I assure you that one of the causes which render me desirous to live, is the hope of conferring happiness on you—of accomplishing my promise; you remember our castles in the air at Saint Lazare?"

"As to that, there is time enough; now you are on your feet again, I have made my expenses, as Martial says."

"I hope that M. le Comte de Saint Rémy will tell me, directly, that the physician will allow me to write to Madame Georges. She must be so uneasy! And perhaps M. Rodolphe, also!" added Fleur de Marie, casting down her eyes, and blushing anew at the thought of "son dieu." "Perhaps they think me dead!"

"As those believe, also, who ordered you to be drowned, poor dear! Oh! the brigands!"

"You always suppose, then, that it was not an accident, La Louve?"

"An accident? Yes, the Martials call them *accidents*. When I say the Martials, it is without counting my man, for he is not of that family, no more than François and Amandine shall be."

"But what interest could any one have in my death? I have never harmed any one—no one knows me."

"It's all one, if the Martials are scoundrels enough to drown some one, they are not fools enough to do it for nothing. Some words which the widow made use of in prison, to my Martial, proves this."

"He has been to see his mother, then? this terrible woman!"

"Yes, and there is no more hope for her, nor for Calebasse, nor for Nicolas. Many things have been discovered, but this '*gueux*' of a Nicolas, in the hope of saving his life, has denounced his mother and his sister for another assassination. On this account they will all be executed; the lawyers have no hope, the judges say that an example is necessary."

"Ah! it is frightful—almost a whole family!"

"Yes, unless Nicolas makes his escape; he is in the same prison with a monster of a bandit called Le Squelette, who has a plot on foot to escape. Nicolas told this to a prisoner who was discharged, and he informed Martial; for my Martial has been weak enough to go and see his '*gueux*' of a brother at La Force. Then, encouraged by this visit, this wretch has had the impudence to send word to his brother that from one moment to another he might escape, and that Martial should hold himself ready, at the Père Micou's, with money, and clothes for a disguise."

"Your Martial has so kind a heart!"

"Kind heart as much as you please, La Goualeuse, but may the devil—if I let my husband aid an assassin who has wished to kill me! Martial will not denounce the plot—that is already a great deal. Besides, now that you are nearly well, La Goualeuse, we are going to start with the children on our tour through France; we will never plant our feet in Paris again; it was painful enough for Martial to be called son of the guillotined! what will it be when mother, brother, and sister are also executed!"

"You will wait, at least, until I have spoken to M. Rodolphe concerning you, if I see him again. You have become changed; I told you that I would reward you, and I wish to keep my word; otherwise how can I pay the debt I owe you? You have saved my life; and during my illness you overwhelmed me with attentions."

"Exactly; now I should seem self-interested

if I allowed you to ask anything for me from your protectors. You are saved; I repeat to you that I have made my expenses."

"Good Louve, reassure yourself; it is not you who are self-interested, it is I who am grateful."

"Listen, then!" said La Louve, suddenly rising; "it sounds like the noise of a carriage. Yes, yes, it approaches; hold! there it is; did you see it pass before the gate? there is a lady within."

"Oh! mon Dieu!" cried Fleur de Marie, with emotion; "I thought I recognised—"

"Whom?"

"A young and handsome lady whom I saw at Saint Lazare, and who was very kind to me."

"Is she aware, then, that you are here?"

"I do not know; but she is acquainted with the person of whom I have spoken, and who (if he wish, and he will, I hope) can make a reality of our Saint Lazare castles in the air."

A noise of footsteps approaching rapidly was heard behind the hedge; François and Amandine, who, thanks to the kindness of the Comte de Saint Rémy, had not left La Louve, came rushing into the garden, crying,

"La Louve, here is a fine lady with M. de Saint Rémy; they want to see Fleur de Marie at once."

"I was not mistaken," said La Goualeuse.

Almost at the same moment, M. de Saint Rémy appeared, accompanied by Madame d'Harville.

Hardly had she perceived Fleur de Marie, than she cried, running towards her and pressing her in her arms,

"Poor dear child! I see you again. Ah! saved! saved miraculously from a horrible death! With what happiness I find you—I, who, as well as your friends, thought you were lost forever!"

"I am also very happy to see you again, madame; for I have never forgotten your kindness to me," said Fleur de Marie, returning the tender caresses of Madame d'Harville with charming modesty.

"Ah! you do not know what will be the surprise, the wild joy of your friends, who, at this moment, weep for you so bitterly."

Fleur de Marie, taking the hand of La Louve, who had withdrawn a short distance, said to Madame d'Harville, presenting her,

"Since my safety is so dear to my benefactors, madame, permit me to bespeak, through you, their kindness for my companion, who saved me at the risk of her life."

"Be assured, my child; your friends will prove to the brave Louve that they know it is to her they owe the happiness of seeing you again."

La Louve, blushing, confused, daring neither to answer nor raise her eyes towards Madame d'Harville, so much did the presence of a woman of her rank abash her, could not conceal her astonishment at hearing Clémence pronounce her name.

"But there is not a moment to lose," said the marquise. "I am dying with impatience to take you with me, Fleur de Marie; I have brought in my carriage a shawl and a warm cloak; come, come, my child." Then addressing the comte, she added, "Will you be good enough, monsieur, to give my address to this courageous woman, so that she can come to-morrow and say farewell to Fleur de Marie? So, you will be obliged to come and see us," she said to La Louve.

"Oh! madame, I will come, very sure," answered she, "since it is to say adieu to La Goualeuse; I should be very sad not to be able to see her once more."

* * * * * * *

A few moments afterward, Madame d'Harville and La Goualeuse were on the road to Paris.

* * * * * * *

Rodolphe, after having beheld the death of Jacques Ferrand, so terribly punished for his crimes, had returned home in a state of deep dejection.

After a long and sleepless night, he had sent for Sir Walter Murphy, to confide to this old and faithful friend the heart-rending discovery concerning Fleur de Marie, that he had made the previous evening.

The worthy knight was overwhelmed; better than any other person, he could comprehend and partake of the profound grief of the prince. The latter, pale, prostrated, his eyes red from weeping, had just made to Murphy this painful revelation.

"Take courage!" said the knight, wiping his eyes; for, notwithstanding his firmness, he had also wept. "Yes, take courage, monseigneur—much courage. I offer no vain consolations—this sorrow has no cure."

"You are right. What I felt yesterday is nothing compared to my present sufferings."

"Yesterday, monseigneur, you felt the shock: but the reaction will each day be more grievous. Therefore, call up all your energy. The future is sad—very sad."

"And then, yesterday, the contempt and horror with which this woman inspired me! But may God have pity on her, for at this moment she is before him. Yesterday, in fine, surprise, hatred, fright, so many violent passions smothered within me these elements of despairing tenderness, that at present I can restrain myself no longer—I can hardly weep. And yet now, with you, I can. Hold! you see, I have no strength — I am cowardly — pardon me. Tears again—always—oh! my child! my poor child!"

"Weep, weep, monseigneur. Alas! the loss is irreparable."

"And so many dreadful miseries to make her forget," cried Rodolphe, in a touching tone, "after all that she has suffered! Think of the fate which awaited her!"

"Perhaps this transition might have been too abrupt for the unfortunate, already so cruelly tried."

"Oh! no, no! not so. If you knew with what delicacy — with what reserve, I should have apprized her of her birth; how gently I should have prepared her for this revelation—it was so simple, so easy. Oh! if this were the only question, do you see," added the prince, with a bitter smile, "I should have been composed, and not embarrassed. Throwing myself on my knees before the idolized child, I would have said, 'You, who have been until now so

cruelly treated, be at length happy—and forever happy. You are my daughter.' But no," said Rodolphe, "no, that is not it—that would have been too hasty, too rash. Yes, I would have restrained myself, and said to her, in a calm manner, 'My child, I must tell you something that will astonish you much. Mon Dieu! yes; imagine that they have discovered traces of your parents; your father lives, and your father—I am your father.'" Here the prince again interrupted himself. "No, no; this is also too sudden, too abrupt; but it is not my fault that this revelation is always springing to my lips; one must have more self-command—you comprehend, my friend, you comprehend?" "To be there, before your daughter, and restrain your feelings!" Then, giving way again to despair, Rodolphe cried, "But to what purpose these vain words? I shall never speak to her again. Oh! that which is frightful—frightful to think of, is, that I have had my daughter near me during a whole day—yes, that day, forever accursed, on which I took her to the farm; that day, when all the treasures of her angelic mind were revealed to me in all their purity, and nothing in my heart whispered, 'She is your daughter!' nothing—nothing. Oh! how blind, stupid I was, not to imagine this. I was unworthy to be a father."

"But, monseigneur—"

"But, in truth," cried the prince, "did it not depend upon myself whether I should ever leave her? Why did I not adopt her? I, who lament so much for my child? Why, instead of sending this unfortunate child to Madame Georges, did I not keep her with me? To-day I should only have had to extend my arms to her. Why have I not done that? Why? Ah! because one only does good by halves; because one only values treasures when they have disappeared forever; because, instead of raising at once to her true level this admirable young girl, who, in spite of misery and abandonment, was, through her mind and heart, greater, nobler, perhaps, than she ever would have been by the advantages of birth and education. I thought I was doing much for her by placing her at a farm with some good people, as I would for the first interesting beggar that I met in the streets. It is my fault—it is my fault. If I had done that, she would not have been dead. Oh! yes, I am punished—I have deserved it—bad son, bad father!"

Murphy knew that such grief was inconsolable, and remained silent.

"I shall not remain here—Paris is hateful to me; to-morrow I go—"

"You are right, monseigneur."

"We will stop at the farm of Bouqueval. I will shut myself up for some hours in her chamber, where she passed the only happy days of her life. I will have collected with religious care all that belonged to her—the books she commenced to read; the paper she had written on; the clothes she has worn—all, even to the furniture—even to the tapestry of her rooms, of which I myself will take an exact delineation. And at Gerolstein, in the private park where I have raised a monument to the memory of my outraged father, I will have a small house built, in which shall be constructed this *room;* there I will go to weep for my daughter. Of these two funeral monuments, one will recall my crime to my father, the other the chastisement which reached me through my child. Thus, then, let everything be prepared to-morrow morning."

Murphy, willing to try if he could not turn the prince a moment from his gloomy thoughts, said, "All shall be ready, monseigneur; only you forget that to-morrow the marriage of the son of Madame Georges and Rigolette takes place. Not only have you made a provision for Germain and munificently endowed the bride, but you have also promised to be present at the wedding as a witness. Then are they to be informed of the name of their benefactor."

"It is true, I have promised. They are at the farm, and I cannot go there to-morrow without being present at this fête, and I confess I have not the courage."

"The sight of the happiness of these young people will, perhaps, calm your sorrow."

"No, no, grief is selfish, and seeks retirement. To-morrow you will go in my place; and you will beg Madame Georges to collect everything belonging to my daughter. Let a plan of her room be made, and sent to me in Germany."

"Will you depart, monseigneur, without seeing Madame la Marquise d'Harville?"

At the name of Clémence, Rodolphe shuddered; he still cherished for her a sincere attachment, but at this moment it was, thus to speak, drowned in the wave of bitterness which inundated his heart. By a strange contradiction, the prince felt that the tender affection of Madame d'Harville would alone have aided him to support the grief which overwhelmed him, and he reproached this thought as unworthy the fervency of his paternal grief.

"I shall go without seeing Madame d'Harville," answered Rodolphe. "A few days since I wrote her how much I sorrowed for the death of Fleur de Marie. When she knows that Fleur de Marie was my daughter, she will comprehend the grief that seeks to be alone—yes, alone, so that it may be expiatory; and it is terrible, that expiation which fate imposes on me—terrible! for it commences, for me, at the time when the decline of life also commences."

Some one knocked lightly and discreetly at the door; Rodolphe made a movement of impatience; Murphy rose and went to see who was there. Through the half-open door, an aid-de-camp of the prince said a few words to the knight in a low tone. He answered by a sign, and, turning towards Rodolphe, said,

"Will monseigneur permit me to be absent for a moment? Some one wishes to speak to me on business of importance."

"Go," answered the prince.

Hardly had Murphy departed, than Rodolphe, uttering a heavy sigh, concealed his face in his hands.

"Oh!" cried he, "that which I feel alarms me. My heart overflows with hatred; the presence of my best friend weighs me down; the memory of a pure and noble love importunes and troubles me, and then—it is cowardly and unworthy. But last night I learned, with savage joy, the death of Sarah—of this unnatural mother, who has caused the death of my child.

I amused myself in beholding the ravings and torments of the horrid monster who killed my daughter — oh madness! — I arrived too late. Yet, yesterday I did not suffer so; and yesterday, as to-day, I thought my child dead—oh! yes; but I did not say to myself these words, which henceforth will imbitter my life: I have seen my daughter; I have spoken to her; I have admired all that was adorable in her. Oh! how much time I might have passed at that farm! When I think that I only went there three times! yes, no more; and I could have gone there every day—to see my child every day! What do I say? to keep her ever with me. Oh! such shall be my punishment."

Suddenly the door of the cabinet opened, and Murphy entered; he was very pale—so pale that the prince half arose, and cried,

"Murphy, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, monseigneur."

"You are very pale."

"It is—the astonishment—"

"What astonishment?"

"Madame d'Harville!"

"Madame d'Harville? Grand Dieu! some new misfortune!"

"No, no, monseigneur; reassure yourself; she is there, in the saloon."

"She here! she in my house! it is impossible!"

"Thus, monseigneur, I tell you, the surprise—"

"Such a step on her part—but what is the matter, in the name of heaven?"

"I do not know—I cannot explain what I feel."

"You conceal something from me."

"On my honour, monseigneur, on my honour, no. I do not know what Madame la Marquise meant."

"But what did she say?"

"'Sir Walter,' and although her voice trembled, her face was beaming with joy, 'my presence here must surprise you very much; but there are certain circumstances so important, that they leave no time to think of appearances. Entreat his highness to grant me, immediately, an audience in your presence; for I know that the prince has no better friend. I should have begged him to come to my own house, but that would have delayed our interview for an hour, which the prince will confess should not have been retarded a moment,' added she, with an expression which made me tremble."

"But," said Rodolphe, in a broken voice, and becoming still paler than Murphy, "I cannot imagine the cause of your trouble—of your emotion—of your looks; there is something else—this interview—"

"On my honour, I do not know anything more. These words alone, of the marquise, have unsettled me. Why, I am ignorant. But you yourself—you are very pale, monseigneur."

"I?" said Rodolphe, supporting himself on a chair, for he felt his knees giving way under him.

"I tell you, monseigneur, that you are as much disturbed as I am. What is the matter?"

"Although I should die under the blow, beg Madame d'Harville to enter," cried the prince. By a strange sympathy, the visit, so unexpected, so extraordinary, of Madame d'Harville, had awakened in both Murphy and Rodolphe a certain vague and indefinite hope; but this hope seemed so extravagant, that neither one nor the other dared to avow it.

Madame d'Harville, followed by Murphy, entered the cabinet of the prince.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

Ignorant, as we have said, that Fleur de Marie was the daughter of the prince, Madame d'Harville, in her joy at bringing back his protégée, had thought she would be able to present her to him without any previous preparation; she had left her in the carriage at the door, as she did not know whether the prince was willing to make himself known to the young girl, and receive her in his own house.

But perceiving the great alteration in the looks of Rodolphe, and remarking in his eyes the traces of recent tears, Clémence thought he had met with some misfortune more severe than the death of La Goualeuse; thus, forgetting the object of her visit, she cried,

"Grand Dieu! monseigneur, what is the matter?"

"Are you ignorant, madame? Ah! all hope is lost. Your haste—the interview you have so earnestly demanded—I thought—"

"Oh! I entreat you, let us not speak of the object of my visit. In the name of my father, whose life you saved, I have almost the right to demand from you the cause of the affliction in which you are plunged. Your state of dejection, your paleness, alarms me. Oh! speak, monseigneur; be generous—speak—have pity on my distress."

"For what good, madame? my wound is incurable."

"These words redouble my alarm, monseigneur; explain yourself, Sir Walter. Mon Dieu! what is it?"

"Eh bien!" said Rodolphe, in a hollow voice, making a violent effort to restrain himself, "since I informed you of the death of Fleur de Marie, I have learned that she was my child."

"Fleur de Marie your child!" cried Clémence, in a tone impossible to be described.

"Yes; and just now, when you asked to see me immediately, to inform me of something that would overwhelm me with joy—have pity on my weakness—but a father, mad with grief at the loss of his child, is capable of indulging in many mad hopes. For a moment I thought—that—but no, no; I see it—I deceived myself. Pardon me; I am but a miserable, foolish man."

Rodolphe, exhausted by the violence of his feelings, fell back in his chair, covering his face with his hands.

Madame d'Harville remained stupified, immovable, dumb, breathing with difficulty—in turns a prey to joy, to fear for the effect which the revelation she was about to make might have upon the prince—in fine, exalted by a holy gratitude towards Providence, who intrusted her—*her*—to announce to Rodolphe that his daughter lived, and she had brought her back to him.

Clémence, agitated by these emotions, so

violent, so diverse, could not utter a word. Murphy, after having for a moment partaken of the mad hopes of the prince, seemed quite as much overcome as he was. Suddenly the marquise, yielding to an unexpected and involuntary emotion, forgetting the presence of Murphy and Rodolphe, sank on her knees, clasped her hands, and cried, with an expression of fervent piety and ineffable gratitude,

"Thanks! My God! be praised! I acknowledge thy sovereign will. Thanks once more, for thou hast chosen me to inform him that his child is saved!"

Although said in a low voice, these words, pronounced in a tone of sincere and holy fervour, reached the ears of Murphy and the prince.

The latter raised his head quickly at the moment Clémence arose from the ground. It is impossible to describe the look, the gesture, the expression of Rodolphe on contemplating Madame d'Harville, whose charming features, stamped with a celestial joy, shone at this moment with superhuman beauty.

Leaning with one hand on the marble "console," and compressing with the other the rapid pulsations of her heart, she gave an affirmative nod of the head in answer to a look from Rodolphe, which once more we are unable to describe.

"Below—in my carriage."

Save the presence of Murphy, who, quick as lightning, threw himself before Rodolphe, he would have rushed at once to the street.

"Monseigneur, you would kill her!" cried the squire, holding back the prince.

"Only since yesterday she is convalescent. For her life, no imprudence, monseigneur," added Clémence.

"You are right," said Rodolphe, restraining himself with difficulty; "you are right—I will be calm—I will not see her yet—I will wait—let my first emotions be controlled. Ah! it is too much—too much in one day!" added he, in a broken voice. Then addressing Madame d'Harville, and extending his hand towards her, he cried, with a burst of inexpressible gratitude,

"I am pardoned! You are the angel of mercy!"

"Monseigneur, you restored to me my father—God willed that I should bring back your child," answered Clémence. "But, in my turn, I ask your pardon for my weakness. This revelation—so sudden, so unexpected—has confused me. I confess that I have not the courage to go for Fleur de Marie—my agitation would alarm her."

"And how was she saved?" cried Rodolphe. "See my ingratitude. I have not yet asked you this question."

"At the moment she was drowning, she was rescued from a watery grave by a courageous woman."

"Do you know her?"

"To-morrow she will come to see me."

"The debt is immense," said the prince, "but I shall know how to pay it."

"What a happy circumstance, mon Dieu! that I did not bring Fleur de Marie with me," said the marquise; "this scene would have been fatal to her."

"It is true, madame," said Murphy; "it is a providential chance that she is not here."

"Now," said the prince, who had for a few moments been endeavouring to conquer his emotions, "now I have self-command, I assure you. Murphy, go and seek *my daughter*." These words, *my daughter*, were pronounced by the prince with an accent we will not attempt to express.

"Monseigneur, are you quite sure of yourself?" said Clémence. "No imprudence."

"Oh! be tranquil. I know the danger there would be for her—I will not expose her to it. My good Murphy, I entreat you—go—go!"

"Reassure yourself, madame," answered the squire, who had attentively observed the prince; "she can come. Monseigneur will restrain himself."

"Then go—go quickly, my old friend."

"Yes, monseigneur; I ask but for a moment—one is not made of iron," said the good man, wiping away the traces of his tears; "she must not see that I have been weeping."

"Excellent man!" replied Rodolphe, cordially pressing his hand.

"Come, 'allons,' monseigneur; I am ready. I did not wish to pass through the '*salon de service*' all in tears, like a Magdalen. But, monseigneur, what shall I say?"

"Yes, what shall he say?" demanded the prince from Clémence.

"That M. Rodolphe wishes to see her—nothing more, it seems to me."

"Undoubtedly. Say that Monsieur Rodolphe wishes to see her—nothing more. Come, go—go."

"It is certainly the very best thing that can be said to her," answered the squire. "I will merely say that M. Rodolphe wishes to see her; that will not cause her to conjecture anything—to foresee anything: it is the most reasonable way, truly."

But Sir Walter did not stir.

"Sir Walter," said Clémence, smiling, "you are afraid."

"It is true, Madame la Marquise; in spite of my six feet and my rough exterior, I am still under the influence of violent emotions."

"My friend, take care," said Rodolphe; "wait a moment longer, if you are not sure of your self-possession."

"*Allons! allons!* this time, monseigneur, I am victorious," said the squire, after having passed over his eyes his Herculean hand. "Really, at my age, this weakness is perfectly ridiculous. Fear nothing, monseigneur."

And Murphy left the apartment with a firm step and tranquillized air.

A moment of silence ensued; then Clémence, blushing, remembered that she was in Rodolphe's house, and alone with him.

The prince approached her, and said, almost timidly, "If I choose this day—this moment—to make you a sincere avowal, it is because the solemnity of this day—this moment—will add still more to the gravity of the confession Ever since I have known you I have loved you. So long as concealment of this love was necessary, I concealed it; now that you are free, and have restored me my daughter, will you be to her a mother?"

"I, monseigneur!" cried Madame d'Harville. "What say you?"

"I entreat you, do not refuse me; let this

day decide my future happiness," said Rodolphe, tenderly.

Clémence also had loved the prince for a long time; she thought she was in a dream. The avowal of Rodolphe—this avowal, at once so simple, so serious, so touching—made under such circumstances, transported her with an unhoped-for happiness; she answered, hesitatingly, "Monseigneur, it is for you to recall to mind the difference of rank—the interest of your sovereignty."

"First let me think of the interest of my heart—of that of my cherished daughter; make us both happy—oh! very happy. Permit me, who, but now was without family, to say, 'My wife—my daughter;' allow this poor child—she who was also without family—allow her to say, 'My father—my mother—my sister;' for you have a daughter who will become mine."

"Ah! monseigneur, to such noble words one can only answer by grateful tears," cried Clémence. Then, composing herself, she added, "Monseigneur, some one comes; it is your child."

"Ah! do not refuse me," cried Rodolphe, in a supplicating voice; "in the name of my love, say *our* child."

"Eh bien! *our* child," murmured Clémence; at the same moment Murphy opened the door, leading in Fleur de Marie.

The young girl, descending from the carriage of the marquise, had crossed a first antechamber, filled with footmen in grand livery; a waiting-room, where *valets de chambre* attended; then the saloon of the *huissiers;* and, finally, the "*salon de service,*" occupied by a chamberlain and the aids of the prince in full uniform. Let the reader imagine the astonishment of the poor Goualeuse, who knew no other splendours than those of the farm at Bouqueval, on traversing these princely apartments, resplendent with gold, mirrors, and paintings.

As soon as she appeared, Madame d'Harville ran towards her, took her by the hand, and placing her arm around her for support, she conducted her towards the prince, who, standing near the chimney, had not been able to move.

Murphy, after having confided Fleur de Marie to the care of Madame d'Harville, hastily disappeared behind the folds of one of the immense window-curtains, finding that he was not altogether sure of his self-possession.

At the sight of her benefactor, her saviour, *her dieu*, who regarded her with silent ecstasy, Fleur de Marie, already so agitated, began to tremble.

"Compose yourself, my child," said Madame d'Harville; "there is your friend, Monsieur Rodolphe, who awaits you impatiently; he has been very uneasy about you."

"Oh! yes, very—very uneasy," said Rodolphe, still immovable, and whose heart was almost breaking at the sight of the sweet and pale face of his child.

Thus, in spite of his resolution, the prince was for a moment obliged to turn his head to conceal his emotion.

"Hold! my child, you are still very weak; sit down there," said Clémence, to turn her attention from the prince; and she led her to a large arm-chair of bronze and gilt, in which the Goualeuse seated herself. Her agitation increased every moment: she was oppressed, speech failed her; she had not a word of gratitude for Rodolphe.

At length, on a sign from Madame d'Harville, who was leaning on the back of the chair, and holding one of Fleur de Marie's hands in her own, the prince approached softly to the other side of the seat. With more self-command, he then said to Fleur de Marie, who turned towards him her enchanting face,

"At length, my child, you are once more reunited to your friends, and forever! You never shall leave them more. Now you must forget what you have suffered."

"Yes, my child, the best way to prove that you love us," added Clémence, "is to forget the past."

"Believe me, Monsieur Rodolphe—believe me, madame, that if I do recall it sometimes, it will only be to say to myself, that, without you, I should still be very unhappy."

"Yes; but we will take care that you have no more such gloomy thoughts. Our tenderness will not leave you the time, my dear Marie," answered Rodolphe; "for you know that I gave you this name at the farm."

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe. And Madame Georges, who allowed me to call her mother, is she well?"

"Very well, my child. But I have important news to tell you."

"Me, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"Since I have seen you, great discoveries have been made con—con—concerning your birth."

"My birth?"

"It is known who were your parents—who was your father."

Rodolphe was so much choked by his tears on his pronouncing these words, that Fleur de Marie, very much affected, turned quickly towards him: he had turned away his head.

An incident, half burlesque, diverted the attention of La Goualeuse, and prevented her from remarking more closely the emotion of her father: the worthy squire, who still remained behind the curtain, and, apparently, was very attentively looking into the garden of the hotel, could not refrain from blowing his nose with a most formidable noise, for he wept like a child.

"Yes, my dear Marie," Clémence hastened to say, "your father is known—he still lives."

"My father!" cried the Goualeuse, with an expression which put the composure of Rodolphe to a new trial.

"And some day," resumed Clémence, "very soon, perhaps, you will see him. What will doubtless surprise you very much is, that he is of high standing—noble birth."

"And my mother, madame—shall I see her?"

"Your father will answer this question, my child; but shall you not be very happy to see him?"

"Oh! yes, madame," answered Fleur de Marie, casting down her eyes.

"How much you will love him when you know him," said the marquise.

"From that day forward, a new life will commence for you—is it not so, Marie?" added the prince.

"Oh! no, Monsieur Rodolphe," answered the Goualeuse, naïvely. "My new life com-

menced on the day when you took pity on me—when you sent me to the farm."

"But your father will cherish you," said the prince.

"I do not know him, and to you I owe all, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"Then you love me as much—more, perhaps, than you would love your father?"

"I bless you, and I respect you as I do God, Monsieur Rodolphe, because you have done for me that which God alone could have done," answered the Goualeuse, with enthusiasm, forgetting her habitual timidity. "When madame had the goodness to speak to me in prison, I said to her what I said to everybody—yes, Monsieur Rodolphe, to those who were very unfortunate I said, 'Hope! M. Rodolphe succours the unfortunate.' To those who hesitated between good and evil, I said, 'Courage, be virtuous; M. Rodolphe rewards those who are virtuous.' To those who were wicked, I said, 'Take care! M. Rodolphe punishes the wicked.' In fine, when I thought I was about to die, I said to myself, 'God will have mercy upon me, for M. Rodolphe has judged me worthy of his interest.'"

Fleur de Marie, carried away by her gratitude towards her benefactor, had overcome her fears; a slight carnation tinged her cheeks, and her beautiful blue eyes, which she raised towards heaven as if in prayer, shone with the softest lustre.

A silence of some seconds succeeded the enthusiastic words of Fleur de Marie; the emotions which affected the actors in this scene were profound.

"I see, my child," resumed Rodolphe, hardly containing his joy, "that in your heart I have almost taken the place of your father."

"It is not my fault, Monsieur Rodolphe. It is, perhaps, wrong in me; but, as I have told you, I know you, and I do not know my father, and," added she, holding down her head in confusion, "and then you know the past, Monsieur Rodolphe; and yet you have overwhelmed me with favours; but my father does not know it. Perhaps he will regret having found me," added the unfortunate child, shuddering; "and since he is, as madame said, of high birth, doubtless he will be ashamed—he will blush for me."

"Blush for you!" cried Rodolphe, drawing himself up proudly. "Reassure yourself, poor child; your father will place you in a position so brilliant, so lofty, that the greatest among the great of this world will regard you henceforth with the utmost respect. Blush for you! no, no; you will rank with the noblest princesses of Europe."

"Monsieur!" cried Murphy and Clémence at the same time, alarmed at the vehemence of Rodolphe and the increasing pallor of Fleur de Marie, who looked at her father with surprise.

"Blush for you!" continued he; "oh! if I ever rejoiced and felt pride in my sovereign rank, it is that, thanks to this rank, I can elevate you as much as you have heretofore been abased. Do you hear, my darling child—my beloved daughter? for it is I—it is I who am your father!"

And the prince, no longer able to conquer his emotion, threw himself at the feet of Fleur de Marie, whom he covered with tears and caresses.

"God be praised!" cried Fleur de Marie, clasping her hands. "I am permitted to love my benefactor as much as I would have loved him. He is my father. I can cherish him without remorse. Be praised, my—"

She could not finish—the blow was too violent; Fleur de Marie fainted in the arms of her father.

Murphy ran to the door, opened it, and said,

"Doctor David instantly for his royal highness: some one is sick."

"Curses on my head! I have killed her," cried Rodolphe, in tears, kneeling before his daughter. "Marie, my child, listen to me; it is your father. Pardon—oh! pardon for not having retained this secret longer. I have killed her!"

"Calm yourself, monseigneur," said Clémence; "there is, doubtless, no danger. See, her cheeks are tinged with colour; it is the shock—only the shock."

"But hardly convalescent, she will die. Wo is me!"

At this moment, David, the black physician, entered precipitately, holding in his hands a small box filled with vials, and a paper, which he handed to Murphy.

"David, my child is dying. I have saved your life—you must save that of my child," cried Rodolphe.

Although amazed at these words of the prince, who spoke of his child, the doctor ran to Fleur de Marie, whom Madame d'Harville held in her arms, took hold of the young girl's pulse, placed his hand on her forehead, and turning towards Rodolphe, who, pale and alarmed, awaited his doom, he said,

"There is no danger, let your highness be assured."

"You speak the truth—no danger—none?"

"Not any, monseigneur. A few drops of ether, and this attack will pass over."

"Oh! thank you, David—my good David!" cried the prince, warmly. Then turning towards Clémence, Rodolphe added, "She lives—our daughter will live."

Murphy had just cast his eyes over the note which David had placed in his hand; he shuddered, and looked at the prince with affright.

"Yes, my old friend," said Rodolphe, "in a short time my daughter will say to Madame la Marquise d'Harville, 'My mother!'"

"Monseigneur," said Murphy, trembling, "the news yesterday was false."

"What do you say?"

"A violent attack, followed by a fainting fit, had caused them to think that the Comtesse Sarah was dead."

"The Comtesse!"

"This morning there are hopes of saving her."

"Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried the prince, while Clémence looked at him with surprise, not comprehending his altered appearance.

"Monseigneur," said David, still occupied with Fleur de Marie, "there is no cause for the slightest uneasiness. But fresh air is necessary; the chair can be rolled on the terrace by opening the door of the garden; she will then soon recover."

Murphy ran immediately to open the glass door, and, aided by David, he gently rolled the chair into the garden, leaving Rodolphe and Clémence alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEVOTION.

"Ah! Madame," cried Rodolphe, as soon as Murphy and David had departed, "you do not know that the Comtesse Sarah is the mother of Fleur de Marie!"

"Grand Dieu!"

"I thought her dead; and what you are still ignorant of," added Rodolphe, with bitterness, "is, that this woman, as selfish as ambitious, loving me only as a prince, had, in my younger days, contrived to lead me into a marriage, which was afterward dissolved. Wishing then to marry again, the comtesse has caused all the misfortunes of her child by abandoning her to mercenary hands."

"Ah! now, monseigneur, I understand the aversion that you had for her."

"You comprehend also why she wished to win you by infamous anonymous communications! Always impelled by her implacable ambition, she thought to force me to return to her by isolating me from all endearments."

"Oh! what a wicked intention!"

"And she is not dead!"

"Monseigneur, this regret is not worthy of you."

"It is because you are not aware of all the injury she has caused! At this time, when, on finding my daughter again, I was about to give her a mother worthy of her—oh! no, no—this woman is a demon of vengeance in my path!"

"Come, monseigneur, take courage!" said Clémence, wiping away the tears which fell in spite of her; "you have a great and holy duty to fulfil. You said yourself, that henceforth the fate of your daughter should be as happy as it had been miserable; that she should be as elevated as she had been abased. For that, you must legitimate her birth; for that, monseigneur, you must espouse the Comtesse M'Gregor."

"Never—never! It would be to reward perjury, selfishness, and the mad ambition of this unnatural mother. I will acknowledge my daughter; you will adopt her, and thus, as I hoped, she will find in you maternal affection."

"No, monseigneur, you will not do that; no, you will not leave the birth of your child in the shade. The Comtesse Sarah is of a noble and ancient house; for you, doubtless, this alliance is disproportionate, but it is honourable. By this marriage, your daughter will not be legitimated, but legitimate; and thus, whatever may happen to her, she can be proud of her father, and openly acknowledge her mother."

"But to renounce you—mon Dieu! it is impossible. Ah! you do not think what happiness it would have been for me, divided between you and my child—my only love in this world."

"Your child remains to you, monseigneur: God has miraculously restored her to you. Not to be perfectly happy will be ingratitude!"

"Ah! you do not love me as I love you."

"Believe it, monseigneur, believe it; the sacrifice that you make to duty will seem to you less painful."

"But if you love me—if your regrets are as bitter as mine, you will be very unhappy. What will remain for you?"

"Charity, monseigneur! that admirable sentiment which you have awakened in my heart; that sentiment which has caused me to forget so many sorrows, and to which I am indebted for so many sweet and tender consolations."

"Pray, listen to me. Be it so: I will marry this woman; but once the sacrifice accomplished, will it be possible for me to live with her? with her who only inspires me with aversion and contempt? No, no; we shall remain forever separated; never shall she see my child. Thus Fleur de Marie will lose in you the most tender of mothers."

"But there will remain for her the most tender of fathers. By the marriage, she will be the legitimate daughter of a sovereign prince of Europe; and thus, as you have said, monseigneur, her position will be as splendid as it was obscure."

"You are without pity. I am very unhappy!"

"Dare you speak thus—you, so great, so just—you, who so nobly comprehend duty, devotion, and self-denial? A short time since, before this providential revelation, when you wept for your child with such bitter tears, if any one had said to you, 'Make one wish—one alone, and it shall be realized,' you would have cried, 'My daughter—oh! my daughter—let her live!' This is accomplished; your daughter is restored to you, and you call yourself unhappy. Ah, monseigneur, may Fleur de Marie not hear you!"

"You are right," said Rodolphe, after a long silence; "so much happiness would have been heaven upon earth; but I do not deserve that. I will do my duty. I do not regret my hesitation. I owe to it a new proof of the beauty and noble sentiments of your mind."

"This mind—it is you who have exalted and elevated it. If that which I do is well, it is you whom I praise for it. Courage, monseigneur; as soon as Fleur de Marie can stand the fatigue of travelling, take her with you. Once in Germany, in that country, so calm and grave, her transformation will be complete, and the past will only be to her a sad and distant dream."

"But you? but you?"

"I—I can well tell you that now, because I shall always say it with joy and pride: my love for you shall be my guardian angel, my saviour, my virtue, my future. Every day I will write you: pardon me this demand—it is the only one I shall make. You, monseigneur, you will reply to me sometimes, to give me news of her who, for a moment at least, I called my daughter?" said Clémence, without being able to restrain her tears; "and who shall always be so, at least in my thoughts; in fine, when time shall have given us the right openly to avow the unalterable affection which binds us—eh bien! I swear it in the name of your daughter, if you desire it, I will go to live in Germany—in the same city with you—never more to part; and thus terminate a life which might have

been more happy, but which will have been, at least, worthy and honourable."

"Monseigneur!" cried Murphy, entering precipitately, "she whom God has restored to you has recovered her senses. Her first words were, 'My father!' She asks to see you."

* * * * * * *

A few moments after, Madame d'Harville left the hotel of the prince. He, accompanied by Murphy, the Baron de Graün, and an aid-de-camp, went in great haste to the residence of the Comtesse M'Gregor.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MARRIAGE.

Since Rodolphe had informed her of the murder of Fleur de Marie, the Comtesse Sarah M'Gregor, overwhelmed by this revelation, which ruined all her hopes, tortured by deep remorse, had been attacked by violent nervous spasms and a frightful delirium; her wound, hardly healed, reopened, and a fainting fit of long duration had caused her attendants to suppose her dead. However, from the strength of her constitution, she did not sink under this severe attack; a new glimmering of life once more reanimated her.

Seated in an arm-chair, in order to relieve the oppression which suffocated her, Sarah, almost regretting the death from which she had just escaped, was occupied with bitter thoughts.

Suddenly Thomas Seyton entered the chamber of the comtesse; he with difficulty restrained some internal agitation; at a sign from him, her two women withdrew.

"How are you now?" said he to his sister.

"In the same state—I am very weak, and from time to time almost suffocated. Why did not God take me away from this world during my last attack?"

"Sarah," said Thomas Seyton, after a pause, "you are between life and death—a violent emotion might kill you, as it might save you."

"I have now no more emotions to experience, my brother."

"Perhaps—"

"The death of Rodolphe would find me indifferent; the ghost of my drowned daughter—drowned by my fault—is there—always there, before me. It is not an emotion—it is incessant remorse. I am really a mother now, since I no longer have a child."

"I would prefer to find in you that cold ambition which made you regard your daughter as a means to realize the dream of your life."

"The frightful reproaches of the prince have killed this ambition; the maternal sentiment is awakened in me at the picture of the extreme misery of my daughter."

"And," said Seyton, hesitating, and weighing each word, "if by chance—supposing an impossible thing—a miracle—you were informed that your daughter still lived—how would you support such a discovery?"

"I should die with shame and despair at the sight of her."

"Do not believe that—you would be too much elated with the triumph of your ambition! for, if your daughter had lived, the prince would have married you—he told you so."

"In admitting this mad supposition, it seems to me that I should not have a right to live. After having received the hand of the prince, my duty would be to deliver him of an unworthy wife—my daughter of an unnatural mother."

The embarrassment of Thomas Seyton increased every moment. Charged by Rodolphe, who was in an adjoining room, to inform Sarah that Fleur de Marie was alive, he did not know how to accomplish it. The state of the comtesse was so critical that she might expire from one moment to another; there was, then, no time to be lost in celebrating the marriage *in extremis*, which was to legitimate the birth of Fleur de Marie. For this sad ceremony, the prince had brought with him a clergyman, with Murphy and the Baron de Graün as witnesses; the Duke de Lucenay and Lord Douglass, notified in haste by Seyton, were to serve as witnesses for the comtesse, and had just arrived.

Time was pressing; but remorse, feelings of maternal tenderness, which replaced, in Sarah's heart, her merciless ambition, rendered the task of Seyton still more difficult. All his hope was that his sister deceived him or deceived herself, and that her pride would be awakened, as soon as she had gained this crown, so long and ambitiously coveted.

"My sister," said Thomas Seyton, "I am in a terrible perplexity; one word from me, perhaps, will restore you to life—perhaps will send you to your tomb."

"I have already told you that I have no more emotions to dread." "One alone, however—"

"Which?" "If it concerned your child?"

"My child is dead." "If she were not?"

"We have exhausted this supposition already. Enough, my brother—my remorse suffices."

"But if it were not a supposition? if by chance—an incredible chance—your daughter had been rescued from death; if she lived?"

"You alarm me; do not talk thus."

"Well! then, may God pardon me and judge you! she lives still."

"My daughter?"

"She lives, I tell you. The prince is here with a clergyman. I have sent for two of your friends for witnesses; the wish of your life is at length realized—the prediction is fulfilled—you are a sovereign."

Thomas Seyton had pronounced these words, fixing on his sister a look of anguish, watching for each sign of emotion.

To his great astonishment, the features of Sarah remained almost impassible: she placed her hand upon her heart, and falling back in her chair, suppressed a slight cry, which appeared to have been caused by some sudden and excruciating pain; after which her face became composed and calm.

"What is the matter, my sister?"

"Nothing—surprise—unhoped-for joy. At length my wishes are crowned."

"I was not deceived," thought Thomas Seyton. "Ambition rules—she is saved." Then addressing his sister, he said, "Eh, bien! what did I tell you?"

"You were right," replied she, with a bitter smile, divining her brother's thoughts; "ambition has once more stifled maternity within me."

"You will live! and you will love your daughter."

"I do not doubt it—I shall live—see how calm I am. Where is the prince?"

"He is here." "I wish to see him before the ceremony. My daughter — she is there, also, without doubt?"

"No; you will see her afterward."

"Now that I have the time, ask, I pray you, the prince to come."

"My sister, I do not know—but your manner is strange."

"Would you have me to laugh? Do you think satisfied ambition has a soft and tender expression? Let the prince come!"

In spite of himself, Seyton was uneasy at Sarah's calmness. For a moment he thought he saw in her eyes restrained tears; after a little longer hesitation, he opened a door, which he left open, and went out.

"Now," said Sarah, "let me but see and embrace my child, I shall be satisfied. It will be very difficult to be obtained; Rodolphe, to punish me, will refuse; but I will succeed."

Rodolphe entered, and closed the door.

"Your brother has told you all?" demanded the prince, coldly.

"All." "Your ambition is satisfied?"

"It is satisfied."

"The clergyman and the witnesses are here."

"I know it. One word, monseigneur."

"Speak, madame."

"I wish to see my daughter."

"It is impossible."

"I tell you, monseigneur, that I wish to see my child."

"She is hardly convalescent—she has been quite ill this morning; this interview might be fatal to her."

"But, at least, she will embrace her mother."

"For what purpose? You are now a sovereign."

"I am not yet, and I will not be until I have embraced my child."

Rodolphe looked at the comtesse with profound astonishment. "How!" cried he, "you subject the satisfaction of your pride—"

"To the satisfaction of my maternal tenderness: that surprises you, monseigneur?"

"Alas! yes."

"Shall I see my child?"

"But—" "Take care, monseigneur; my moments are perhaps counted. As my brother said, this crisis may save—may kill me. At this moment, I collect all my strength—all my energy, and I need them much to struggle against the shock of such a discovery. I wish to see my child, or I refuse your hand; and if I die, her birth is not legitimate."

"Fleur de Marie is not here; I should have to send for her at my house."

"Send for her at once, and I consent to all. As my moments, perhaps, are counted, I have said it. The marriage can take place while some one goes for Fleur de Marie."

"Although this feeling astonishes me, it is too praiseworthy to be disregarded. You shall see Fleur de Marie; I will write to her."

"There, on the desk where I was wounded." While Rodolphe hastily wrote a few lines, the comtesse wiped away the icy sweat which stood upon her brow; her features now betrayed violent and concealed suffering.

His note being written, Rodolphe arose and said to the comtesse, "I will send this to my daughter by one of my aides-de-camp. She will be here in half an hour. Shall I bring with me, on my return, the clergyman and witnesses?"

"You can, or, rather, I beg you will do so. Ring—do not leave me alone."

Rodolphe rang the bell, and requested the femme de chambre who answered the summons to desire Sir Walter Murphy to come to him.

"This union is sad, Rodolphe," said the comtesse, bitterly—"sad for me. For you it will be happy, for I shall not survive it."

At this moment Murphy entered.

"My friend," said Rodolphe, "send this letter immediately by the colonel; he will bring my daughter back with him in the carriage. Beg the clergyman and witnesses to walk into the next room."

"O God!" cried Sarah, in a supplicating tone, when the squire had departed, "grant me strength enough to see her—let me not die before she arrives!"

"Ah! why have you not always been as good a mother!"

"Thanks to you, at least, I know repentance—devotion—self-denial. Yes, just now, when my brother said our child lived—let me say *our* child—I felt that I was stricken unto death. I did not tell him, but I was happy. The birth of our child would be legitimated, and I should die afterward."

"Do not speak thus."

"Ah! this time I do not deceive you—you will see."

"And no vestige remains of that implacable ambition which has ruined you! Why has fate willed that your repentance should be so late?"

"It is late, but profound—sincere; I swear it to you. At this solemn moment, if I thank God to take me from the world, it is because my life has been to you a horrible burden."

"Sarah, in mercy—"

"Rodolphe, a last prayer—your hand."

The prince, turning away his eyes, gave his hand to the comtesse, who placed it between her own.

"Ah! your hands are icy cold," cried Rodolphe with affright.

"Yes, I am dying. Perhaps, for a last punishment, God does not will that I should embrace my child."

"Oh! yes, yes, he will be touched with your remorse."

"And you, my friend—are you touched? do you pardon me? Oh! in mercy, say it. Directly, when our child shall be here—if she comes in time—you cannot pardon me before her; that would be to teach her how guilty I have been, and that you would not like. When I am once dead, what matters it to you if she love me?"

"Be comforted: she shall know nothing."

"Rodolphe, pardon! oh! pardon! Will you be without pity? Am I not sufficiently unhappy?"

"Well, may God pardon the evil you have done to your child, as I pardon what you have done to me, unhappy woman."

"You pardon me—from the bottom of your heart?"

"From the bottom of my heart," replied the prince.

The comtesse pressed the hand of Rodolphe to her dying lips in an ecstasy of joy and gratitude, and said,

"Let the clergyman come in, my friend, and tell him that afterward he must stay. I feel myself very weak."

This scene was heart-rending; Rodolphe opened the folding-doors, and the clergyman entered, followed by the witnesses.

All the actors in this sad scene were grave and sad; M. de Lucenay himself had forgotten his habitual frivolity.

The contract of marriage between the most illustrious and very puissant prince, His Royal Highness, Gustavus Rodolphus V., reigning Grand-duke of Gerolstein, and Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, Comtesse M'Gregor, had been prepared by the care of the Baron de Graün; it was read by him, and signed by the bride and groom and their witnesses.

Notwithstanding the repentance of the comtesse, when the clergyman said, with a solemn voice, to Rodolphe, "Does your royal highness consent to take for wife Madame Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, Comtesse M'Gregor?" and the prince had answered "YES!" with a loud and firm voice, the death-like countenance of the comtesse brightened: a rapid and transitory expression of triumphant pride passed over her livid features; it was the last flash of the ambition which died with her.

During this sad and imposing ceremony, not a word was uttered by the witnesses. When it was finished, they all came forward, profoundly saluted the prince, and retired.

"My brother," said Sarah, in a low tone, "beg the clergyman to have the goodness to wait a moment in the adjoining room."

"How do you feel now, my sister? you are very pale."

"I am sure to live now—am I not the Grand-duchess of Gerolstein?" added she, with a bitter smile.

Remaining alone with Rodolphe, Sarah murmured, in an exhausted voice, while her features changed in an alarming manner,

"My strength is gone. I feel that I am dying—I shall never see her."

"Yes, yes, calm yourself, Sarah—you will see her."

"I have no more hope—this delay—oh! it needs a strength superhuman. My sight fails already."

"Sarah!" said the prince, approaching the comtesse, and taking her hands within his own, "she will come—now she cannot delay."

"God has not willed this last consolation."

"Sarah, listen—listen. I hear a carriage—yes—it is she; here is your child!"

"Rodolphe, you will not tell her that I was a bad mother," articulated the comtesse, slowly. The noise of a carriage resounded on the pavement of the court. The comtesse could not hear it. Her words were more and more incoherent. Rodolphe leaned over her with anxiety; he saw her eyes covered with a film.

"Pardon—my child—see my child—pardon—at least—after my death—the honours—of—my—rank—" These were her last intelligible words. The fixed, predominating thought of her whole life returned again, notwithstanding her sincere repentance.

At this moment Murphy entered the room.

"Monseigneur, the *Princesse Marie*—"

"No," cried Rodolphe, quickly, "let her no enter. Tell Seyton to bring the clergyman." Then, pointing at Sarah, who was gradually expiring, Rodolphe added, "God refuses her the supreme consolation of embracing her child."

Half an hour afterward, the Comtesse Sarah M'Gregor had ceased to exist.

CHAPTER XVI.

BICETRE.

FIFTEEN days had passed since Rodolphe, by marrying the Comtesse Sarah M'Gregor *in extremis*, had legitimated the birth of Fleur de Marie.

It was the day of the "*mi-carême*."* This date being established, we will conduct the reader to Bicêtre. This immense establishment, founded, as every one knows, for the treatment of the insane, serves also as a place of refuge for seven or eight hundred poor old men, who are admitted when they have reached the age of seventy, or are afflicted with any very serious infirmity.

On arriving at Bicêtre, the visiter enters at first a vast court planted with large trees, and divided into grass-plots, ornamented in summer with flower borders. Nothing could be more cheerful, more peaceful, or more salubrious than this promenade, which was specially designed for the indigent old men of whom we have spoken. It surrounds the buildings, in which, on the first floor, are found the spacious "*dortoirs*," or sleeping apartments; and on the ground floor, the dining halls, kept in admirable order where the pensioners of Bicêtre eat, in common most excellent food, prepared with great care thanks to the paternal solicitude of the directors of this establishment.

To enumerate completely the different purposes for which this institution is designed, we mention that, at the time of which we speak, the condemned prisoners were brought here after their sentence. It was, then, in one of the cells of this house that the widow Martial and her daughter Calebasse awaited the moment of their execution, which was fixed for the next day. Nicolas, Le Squelette, and several other scoundrels, had succeeded in making their escape from La Force.

We have already said that nothing could be more cheerful than the approach to this edifice, when, on coming from Paris, one entered it by the court of the poor.

Thanks to a forward spring, the elms and the lindens were already beginning to shoot forth their leaves; the large plots of grass were of a luxuriant growth; here and there the flower beds were enamelled with crocuses, primroses, and the lively-coloured auriculas. The sun was shining brightly, and the old pensioners, dressed in gray coats, were walking up and down, or seated on the benches: their placid countenances expressed calmness, or a kind of tranquil indifference.

Eleven o'clock had just struck, when two

* Mid-Lent.

arriages stopped before the outer gate: from he first descended Madame Georges, Germain, nd Rigolette; from the second, Louise Morel nd her mother.

Germain and Rigolette had been married fifeen days. We will leave the reader to imaine the saucy gayety, the lively happiness, which shone in the blooming visage of the grisette, whose rosy lips were only opened to smile r embrace Madame Georges, whom she called er mother.

The features of Germain expressed a felicity more calm, more reflecting, more grave; here was mingled with it a feeling of profound ratitude, almost of respect, towards this noble nd excellent girl, who had offered him in prisn consolations so sustaining and delightful, which Rigolette did not seem to recollect the east in the world; thus, as soon as her *petit Germain* turned the conversation on this subject, he spoke of something else, saying these recolections made her sad. Although she had become Madame Germain, and Rodolphe had settled on er forty thousand francs, Rigolette had not been willing (and her husband was of the same opinon) to change her grisette cap for a hat. Certainly, never had humility served better an inocent coquetry; for nothing could be more beoming, more elegant, than her little cap with at "*barbes*," a little "*à la paysanne*," ornamented on each side with rosettes or orange colour, which contrasted well with her shining lack hair, now worn in long ringlets, since she ad the *time* to put them in paper; around her harming neck she wore a richly-embroidered ollar and a scarf of French cashmere of the ame shade as the ribands of her cap, which half oncealed her fine person; and although she ore no corset, according to her usual custom, er robe of "*taffetas maure*" showed not the lightest wrinkle on her slender figure. Maame Georges contemplated her son and Rigoette with quiet happiness.

Louise Morel, after a rigid examination and utopsy of her child, had been set at liberty; he beautiful features of the daughter of the lapdary expressed a kind of sad and melancholy esignation. Thanks to the generosity of Rololphe, and the care and attention which he ad caused to be shown her, the mother of Louse Morel, who accompanied her, had recovered er health. The porter at the gate had asked Madame Georges whom she desired to see; she eplied that one of the physicians of the asylum or the insane had made an appointment with er and her friends at eleven o'clock. Madame Georges had the option either to wait for the loctor in an office which was pointed out to er, or in the court of which we have spoken. She chose the latter; leaning on the arm of her on, and continuing to converse with the wife f the lapidary, she walked in the garden, Louise nd Rigolette following at a short distance.

"How happy I am to see you, dear Louise!" aid the grisette. "Just now, when we went o seek you in the Rue du Temple on our arriral from Bouqueval, I wished to go up and see ou; but my husband did not wish it, saying it was high up; I waited in the hack. Your veicle followed ours, so that I now see you for he first time since—"

"Since you came to see me in prison. Ah! Mademoiselle Rigolette," cried Louise, 'what a kind heart! what—"

"In the first place, my good Louise," said the grisette, interrupting gayly the daughter of the lapidary, in order to escape her thanks, "I am no more Mademoiselle Rigolette, but Madame Germain. I do not know if you are aware of it, and I hold to my title."

"Yes, I knew you were married. But let me thank you again—"

"That of which you are most completely ignorant, my good Louise," replied Madame Germain, again interrupting the daughter of Morel, in order to change the course of her ideas; "that of which you are ignorant is, that I am married, thanks to the generosity of him who has been our providence—mine as well as yours!"

"M. Rodolphe! Oh! we bless him every day! When I came out of prison, the lawyer whom he sent to see me told me that (owing to M. Rodolphe, who had already done so much for us) M. Ferrand," and the poor creature shuddered, "M. Ferrand, to make amends for his cruelties, had settled some money on my father and me—my poor father, who is still here, but who, thanks to God, gets better and better."

"And who will return with us to-day to Paris, if the hopes of the worthy doctor are realized."

"May God grant it!"

"He will grant it. Your father is so good and honest! I am sure that we will take him back with us. The doctor thinks that now a great effort must be made, and that the unexpected presence of several persons whom your father was accustomed to see almost daily before he lost his reason, may effect a cure. As for me, in my poor judgment, it appears certain."

"I dare hardly believe it, mademoiselle."

"Madame Germain—Madame Germain, if it is all the same to you, my good Louise. But to return to what I was speaking about: you do not know who M. Rodolphe is?"

"He is the providence of the unfortunate!"

"It is true; and what then? you do not know. Eh bien! I am going to tell you." Then addressing her husband, who was walking near her, Rigolette cried, "Do not go so fast, '*mon ami*'—you fatigue our good mother; and, besides, I prefer to have you nearer to me."

Germain turned around, lessening his pace a little, and smiled on Rigolette, who playfully threw him a kiss.

"How genteel he is, my little Germain! is he not, Louise? With that air so '*distingué!*' such a fine figure! was I not right when I found him more to my liking than M. Girandeau, the travelling clerk, or M. Cabrion? Ah! mon Dieu! speaking of Cabrion—M. Pipelet and his wife, where are they, then? The doctor said they ought to come also, because your father often pronounces their names."

"They will not long delay. When I left the house, they had been gone for a long time."

"Oh! then they will not fail to be here; for M. Pipelet is as punctual as a clock. But et us return to my marriage and to M. Rodolphe. Only think, Louise, it was he who sent me with the order for Germain's release. You can imagine our joy on leaving that dreadful prison!

We reached my room, and there, aided by Germain, I arranged a slight repast, but a repast for real gourmands. It is true, it was of no great use to us, for when we had finished, we had neither of us eaten anything—we were too happy. At eleven o'clock Germain went away; we agreed to meet the next morning. At five o'clock I was up and at work, for I was two days behindhand. At eight o'clock some one knocked; I opened; who should come in but M. Rodolphe. At once I began to thank him from the bottom of my heart for what he had done for Germain; he would not let me finish. 'My neighbour,' said he to me, 'Germain will soon be here; give him this letter. You and he will take a hack, and go at once to a litte village called Bouqueval, near Ecouen, on the St. Denis road. Once there, you will ask for Madame Georges; and I wish you much pleasure.' 'Monsieur Rodolphe, I am going to tell you it will be another day lost, and, without any reproach, this will make three.' 'Reassure yourself, my neighbour; there is some work for you at Madame Georges', whom you will find an excellent customer.' 'If this is so, very good, Monsieur Rodolphe.' 'Adieu, my neighbour.' 'Adieu, and thank you, my neighbour.' He went, and Germain arrived. I told him what had occurred; M. Rodolphe could not deceive us; we got into a carriage, as frolicksome as children—we, who were so sad the day previous. Well! we arrive. Ah! my good Louise—hold! in spite of myself the tears will come to my eyes. This Madame Georges, whom you see before us, is the mother of Germain."

"His mother?"

"Mon Dieu! yes, his mother, from whom her child had been carried off when quite young, and whom she had no hope of ever seeing again. You can imagine their happiness. After Madame Georges had wept much, and embraced her son, it was my turn. M. Rodolphe had written many fine things about me, for she told me, as she held me in her arms, that she knew of my conduct towards her son. 'And if you wish, my mother,' said Germain, 'Rigolette shall be your daughter also.' 'If I wish it, my children? with all my heart. I know you will never find a better or a nicer little wife.' Behold me, then, installed in a fine farm with Germain, his mother, and my birds, which I sent for, poor little things, so that they should be of the party. Although I do not like the country, the days passed so quickly, that it was like a dream; I only worked for my pleasure; I assisted Madame Georges, I walked with Germain, I sang, I jumped; it was enough to make one crazy. At length our marriage was fixed for two weeks ago yesterday. Two days previous, who should arrive in a fine carriage but a large, fat, bald gentleman, with a very good-natured look, who brought me from M. Rodolphe a '*corbeille de mariage*.' Just imagine, Louise, a large box of rose-wood, with these words written in gold on a plate of blue enamel: '*Industry and Virtue, Love and Happiness.*' I opened the box; what did I find? some small lace caps like the one I have on, dress patterns, jewels, gloves, this scarf, a beautiful shawl; in fine, it was like a real fairy tale."

"It is true, it is like a real fairy tale; but, do you see, to have been so good, so industrious, has brought you happiness."

"As to being good and industrious, my dear Louise, I have not been so purposely; it has so happened: so much the better for me. But this is not all: at the bottom of the box I discovered a handsome portfolio, with these words, '*Le voisin à sa voisine.*'* I opened it: there were two packages, one for Germain, the other for me; in Germain's I found a paper, which named him director of a Bank for the Poor, with a salary of 4000 francs; in the envelope directed to me, there was a draught for 40,000 francs on the—on the Treasury; yes, that is it: this was my marriage portion. I wished to refuse it, but Madame Georges, who had talked with the tall, bald gentleman and with Germain, said to me, 'My child, you can, you ought to accept it; it is the recompense of your virtue, your industry, and of your devotion to those who suffer; for it is only by depriving yourself of your usual hours for repose, at the risk of making yourself sick, and thus losing your sole means of subsistence, that you have been able to go and console your unfortunate friends.'"

"Oh! that is very true," cried Louise; "there is no one else like you, at least, Mademoi—Madame Germain."

"Very good! I told the bald gentleman that what I had done was my pleasure; he answered, 'No matter; M. Rodolphe is immensely rich; your marriage portion on his part is a testimony of esteem and friendship; your refusal would cause him great sorrow; he will be present at your marriage, and will force you to accept.' What happiness that so much wealth should be in the possession of a person as charitable as M. Rodolphe!"

"Doubtless he is very rich, but if that were all—"

"Ah! my good Louise, if you only knew who Monsieur Rodolphe is! and I made him carry my bundles! But patience! you shall see. The evening before the marriage, very late, the bald gentleman arrived, having travelled post. M. Rodolphe could not come; he was indisposed; but the tall gentleman came in his place. It is only then, my good Louise, that we were informed that your benefactor, that ours, was —guess what? a prince!"

"A prince?"

"What do I say, a prince? a royal hignness, a reigning grand-duke, a king on a small scale. Germain explained this to me."

"M. Rodolphe!"

"Hein! my poor Louise! And I had asked him to help me wax my floor!"

"A prince—almost a king! That is the reason he has so much power to do good."

"You comprehend my embarrassment, my good Louise. Thus, seeing that he was almost a king, I did not dare refuse my marriage portion. We were married. Eight days afterward, M. Rodolphe sent word to us and Madame Georges, that he would be very happy if we would make him a bridal visit; we went. Dame! you comprehend, my heart beat fast as we arrived at the Rue Plumet; we entered a palace; we passed through saloons filled with

* The neighbour to his neighbour.

servants in livery, gentlemen in black, wearing silver chains around their necks and swords at their sides, and officers in uniform; and then gildings everywhere, almost enough to blind you. At length we found the bald gentleman in a saloon with some other messieurs, all laced over with embroidery; he introduced us into a large room, where we found M. Rodolphe—that is to say, the prince, dressed very plainly, and looking so kind, so frank, so little proud—in fine, *he looked so much like the M. Rodolphe of old times*, that I felt myself at once at my ease, recalling to my mind that I had made him fasten my shawl, mend my pens, and give me his arm in the streets."

"You were no longer afraid? Oh! as for me, how I should have trembled!"

"Eh bien! I, no. After having received Madame Georges with great kindness, and offered his hand to Germain, the prince said to me, smiling, 'Well, my neighbour, how are *Papa Crétu* and *Ramonette?*' (these are the names of my birds; how kind in him to remember them). 'I am sure,' he added, 'that now you and Germain rival with your joyous songs those of your little birds?' 'Yes, monseigneur' (Madame Georges had taught us to say that while we were on the road)—'yes, monseigneur, our happiness is great, and it seems to us more sweet because we owe it to you.' 'It is not to me you owe it, my child, but to your excellent qualities and to those of Germain,' and so forth, and so forth: I pass over the rest of his compliments. Finally, we left this good nobleman with our hearts rather full, for we shall see him no more. He told us that he would return to Germany in a few days; perhaps he has already gone; but gone or not, we shall always remember him."

"Since he has subjects, they must be very happy!"

"Judge! he has done so much good to us, who are nothing to him. I forgot to tell you that it was at this farm where we live that one of my old prison companions resided, a very good little girl, who, to her happiness, had also met M. Rodolphe; but Madame Georges had recommended me not to speak about it to the prince; I do not know wherefore; doubtless because he does not like that any one should speak to him of the good he does. What is certain is, that it appears this dear Goualeuse has found her parents, who have taken her with them, very far away: all I regret is, not to have embraced her before her departure."

"*Allons!* so much the better," said Louise, bitterly; "she is happy also—she—"

"My good Louise, pardon me—I am selfish; I only speak to you of happiness, and you have yet so many reasons for sorrow."

"If my child had lived," said Louise, sadly, "that would have consoled me; for now where is the virtuous man who would have me, although I have money?"

"On the contrary, Louise, I say that none but a virtuous man can comprehend your position; yes, when he knows all, when he shall know you, he can but pity you, esteem you; and he will be sure to have in you a good and worthy wife."

"You say that to console me."

"No, I say that because it is true."

"Well, true or not, it does me good, and I thank you. But who comes here? Hold! it is M. Pipelet and his wife! Mon Dieu, how pleased he is! he who formerly was always so miserable on account of the jokes of M. Cabrion."

M. and Madame Pipelet came forward joyfully; Alfred, always wearing his unremovable "*chapeau tromblon*," had on a magnificent coat of grass-green in all its pristine lustre; his cravat, with embroidered corners, just allowed room for a formidable shirt collar, which concealed the half of his cheeks; a large waistcoat, of a deep-yellow ground, with brown stripes; black pantaloons, rather short; stockings of dazzling whiteness, and well-brushed shoes, completed his attire.

Anastasia strutted in a robe of amaranth-coloured merino, over which showed to great advantage a shawl of deep blue. She proudly displayed to all eyes her periwig, freshly curled, and had her cap suspended from her arm by strings of green riband, like a "reticule."*

The physiognomy of Alfred, ordinarily so grave, so collected, and latterly so much cast down, was beaming, rejoicing, sparkling; as soon as he saw Louise and Rigolette at a distance, he ran towards them, crying in his bass voice,

"Delivered—gone!"

"Ah! mon Dieu! Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette, "how very gay you look! what is the matter?"

"Gone, mademoiselle, or, rather, madame, do I, can I, ought I to say, for now you are exactly like Anastasia, thanks to the '*conjungo*,' just as your husband, M. Germain, is exactly like me."

"You are very kind, Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette, smiling; "but who has gone, then?"

"Cabrion!!!" cried M. Pipelet, respiring and inhaling the air with inexpressible satisfaction, as if he had been relieved from an enormous weight.

"He leaves France forever—forever—for perpetuity—in fine, he is gone."

"You are very sure of it?"

"I have seen him, with my own eyes, get into a diligence for Strasbourg—he and his trunks, and all his effects—that is to say, a hat-box, a maulstick, and a box of colours."

"What is he singing about there, the old darling?" said Anastasia, arriving out of breath, for she had with difficulty followed the quick movements of Alfred. "I bet he is talking to you of Cabrion! he has done nothing but repeat it over and over again all along the way."

"That is to say, Anastasia, that I could hardly keep on the ground. Before, it seemed to me that my hat was lined with lead; now, one would say that the air raised me towards the firmament! gone—at last—gone!!! and he will never return more!"

"Most happily, the '*gredin!*'"

"Anastasia, spare the absent; happiness renders me merciful; I will simply say that he was an unworthy blackguard."

"And how did you know that he had gone to Germany?" asked Rigolette.

"By a friend of my prince of lodgers. Apropos of this dear man, you do not know, thanks

* A small bag.

to his good recommendations, that Alfred is appointed '*concierge-gardien*' of a '*Mont de Piété*' and of a Bank for the Poor, established in our house by a good soul that I cannot help thinking must be the person for whom M. Rodolphe was the *travelling clerk* in good actions !"

"That happens very well," said Rigolette: "it is my husband who is the director of this bank, for which he is also indebted to the recommendation of M. Rodolphe."

"And '*a-l-l-l-l-ez donc*,'" cried Madame Pipelet, gayly; "so much the better! so much the better! old faces are preferable to new ones. But to return to Cabrion: just imagine that a tall, fat, bald gentleman, on coming to inform us of Alfred's appointment as guardian, asked us if a painter of much talent, named Cabrion, had not lived with us. At the name of Cabrion, there was my old darling lifting his boot in the air, and already half dead. Happily, the great fat, bald man added, 'This young painter is about to start for Germany; a wealthy person sends him there for some work which will employ him several years; perhaps he may always remain there.' As a proof of what he said, the individual gave to my old darling the date of the intended departure of Cabrion and the address of the '*Messageries*;'* and I had the unhoped-for happiness to read on the register, '*M. Cabrion, artist painter, leaves for Strasbourg and outward in conformity.*' The departure was fixed for this morning."

"I went to the office with my wife."

"We saw the '*gredin*' mount on the imperial, alongside of the conductor."

"And just at the moment the diligence started Cabrion perceived me, recognised me, turned round, and cried, '*I go forever — yours for life!*' Happily, the trumpet of the conductor almost drowned these last words and the indecent familiarity of his address, which I despise; for, at last, God be praised, he is gone."

"And gone forever, believe it, Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette, restraining a violent desire to laugh. "But what you do not know, and what will astonish you very much, is, that M. Rodolphe was—"

"Well?"

"A prince in disguise—a royal highness."

"Come, get along—what a farce!" said Anastasia.

"I swear it to you by my husband," said Rigolette, very seriously.

"My prince of lodgers, a royal highness!" cried Anastasia. "'*Allez donc!*' And I asked him to take care of my lodge! Pardon—pardon—pardon." And she mechanically put on her cap, as if this head-dress were more suitable when she was speaking of a prince.

By a manifestation diametrically opposed as to form, but quite similar as to the reality, Alfred, contrary to his habit, uncovered his head entirely, and saluted the air profoundly, crying, "A prince! a highness in our lodge! And he has seen me between the sheets when I was in bed, in consequence of the indignities of Cabrion!" At this moment Madame Georges turned round, and said to her son and to Rigolette,

"My children, here is the doctor."

* Offices of the diligence.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MAÎTRE D'ECOLE.

Doctor Herbin, a man of ripe age, had a physiognomy very intellectual and "*distingué*," a look of remarkable sagacity and depth of thought, and a smile of extreme goodness. His naturally harmonious voice became full of kindness when he spoke to the lunatics; thus the suavity of his tone and the benevolence of his words seemed often to calm the natural irritability of these unfortunate people. He was among the first to substitute, in his treatment for madness, commiseration and benevolence, for the terrible coercive means employed formerly; no more chains, no more blows, no more shower-baths; above all (save in some few cases), no more solitary confinement.

His lofty understanding had comprehended that monomania, insanity, and madness were increased by confinement and abusive treatment; that, on the contrary, by allowing the patients to live together, a thousand distractions, a thousand incidents occurring at each moment, prevented them from being absorbed in a fixed idea, so much the more fatal as it is more concentrated by solitude and intimidation.

Thus experience proves that solitary confinement is as fatal to lunatics as it is salutary to criminals; the mental perturbation of the former increases in solitude, while the perturbation, or, rather, moral corruption of the latter, is augmented and becomes incurable by the society of their brothers in crime.

Doubtless, some years hence, the penitentiary system, with its prisons in common (true schools of infamy), with its galleys, its chains, its pillories, and its scaffolds, will appear as corrupt, as savage, as atrocious as the old method of treatment for the insane appears to us of the present day.

* * * * * * * * *

"Monsieur," said Madame Georges to M. Herbin, "I thought I might be allowed to accompany my son and daughter-in-law, although I do not know M. Morel. The situation of this excellent man appeared to me so interesting that I have not been able to conquer my desire to assist with my children in attempting his complete restoration to reason, which, you hope (so we have been told), will be accomplished by the means you are about using."

"I count much, madame, on the favourable impression which the presence of his daughter and persons whom he has been accustomed to see will produce upon him."

"When they came to arrest my husband," said the wife of Morel, with emotion, showing Rigolette to the doctor, "our good little neighbour was occupied in assisting me and my children."

"My father also well knew M. Germain, who has always been very kind to us," added Louise. Then noticing Alfred and Anastasia, she added, "Monsieur and madame are the porters of our house; they have also assisted us as much as they could in our misfortunes."

"I thank you, monsieur," said the doctor to Alfred, "for having inconvenienced yourself by coming here; but, from what I have been told, I see this visit has not cost you a great deal."

"Monsieur," said M. Pipelet, with a grave in-

clination of the head, "man should assist man here below; he is a brother, without counting that the Père Morel was the cream of honest men, before he lost his reason, in consequence of his arrest and that of his dear Louise."

"And over and above all," said Anastasia, "I regret always that the porringer full of scalding soup which I threw on the backs of the two bailiffs had not been melted lead."

"It is true; and I ought to render this just homage to the affection which my wife has avowed to the Morels."

"If you do not fear, madame," said Doctor Herbin, to the mother of Germain, "the sight of the lunatics, we will pass through several courts in order to reach the exterior building, where I have had Morel conducted; for I have given orders this morning that he should not be led to the farm as usual."

"To the farm, monsieur?" said Madame Georges; "is there a farm here?"

"Does that surprise you, madame? I can conceive it. Yes, we have here a farm cultivated by the lunatics, and its produce is very valuable to the house."

"Do they work there without restraint, monsieur?"

"Yes; and the labour, the quiet of the fields, the sight of nature, are among the best of our remedies. A single keeper conducts them thither, and there is hardly an instance of escape; they go with evident satisfaction, and their slight earnings serve to meliorate their condition. But here we are at the door of one of the courts." Then, seeing a slight shade of apprehension on the face of Madame Georges, the doctor added, "Fear nothing, madame; in a few moments you will feel as secure as I do."

"I follow you, monsieur. Come, my children."

"Anastasia," whispered M. Pipelet, who was behind with his wife, "when I think that if the infernal conduct of M. Cabrion had lasted, your Alfred would have become mad, and, as such, would have been confined among these unfortunates whom we are going to see, clothed in costumes the most singular, chained by the middle of their bodies, or shut up in cages like the wild beasts of the garden of plants!"

"Do not speak of it, old darling! It is said that those who are mad for love are like real apes when they see a woman: they throw themselves against the bars of their cages, uttering the most frightful cooings. Their keepers are obliged to soothe them with great blows from a whip, and by letting fall on their heads immense quantities of water, which drops from a hundred feet high, and that is not a bit too much to refresh them."

"Anastasia, do not approach too near to the cages of these madmen," said Alfred, gravely: "an accident happens so quickly!"

"Yes, not to say a word of how ungenerous it would be on my part to have the appearance of defying them; for, after all," added Anastasia, with a melancholy sigh, "it is our attractions which make them distracted. Hold! I shudder, my Alfred, when I think that, if I had refused you your happiness, you would be, at this moment, crazy from love, like some of these madmen; that you would cling to the bars of your cage the moment you saw a woman, and roar afterward, poor old darling! you who, on the contrary, run away as soon as they attempt to allure you."

"My modesty is suspicious, it is true; but, Anastasia, the door opens—I shudder. We are going to see abominable figures, hear the noise of chains and grinding of teeth."

Monsieur and Madame Pipelet, not having heard the conversation of Doctor Herbin, partook of the popular prejudice which still exists on the subject of insane hospitals; prejudices which, forty years ago, were not without foundation.

The door of the court was opened.

This court, forming a long parallelogram, was planted with trees and furnished with benches; a gallery of elegant construction extended on each side: cells, well ventilated, opened on this gallery; some fifty men, uniformly clothed in gray, were walking, talking, or sitting silent and contemplative in the sun.

On the arrival of Doctor Herbin, a large number of lunatics pressed around him, extending their hands to him with a touching expression of confidence and gratitude, to which he cordially replied, saying to them,

"Good-day, good-day, my children."

Some of these unfortunate beings, at too great a distance from the doctor for him to take their hand, came and offered it with a kind of hesitation to the persons who accompanied him.

"Good-day, my friends," said Germain, kindly, shaking hands in a manner which seemed to delight them.

"Monsieur," said Madame Georges to the doctor, "are these the lunatics?"

"These are about the most dangerous in the house," said the doctor, smiling. "We leave them together in the daytime, but at night they are locked up in the cells, of which you see the doors open."

"How? these people are completely mad? But are they ever furious?"

"At first—at the commencement of their malady, when they are brought here; then, by degrees, the treatment begins to produce its effect, and the sight of their companions calms them and distracts their attention; gentle usage appeases them, and their violent attacks, at first frequent, become more and more rare. Hold! here is one of the most violent."

This was a robust and powerful man of about forty years of age, with long, black hair, high forehead, sallow complexion, intellectual expression, and most intelligent countenance. He approached the doctor, and said to him, in a tone of exquisite politeness, although slightly constrained,

"Monsieur le Docteur, I ought, in my turn, to have the right of conversing and walking with the blind man; I have the honour of observing to you that there is flagrant injustice in depriving this unfortunate man of my conversation, to deliver him" (and the madman smiled with bitter disdain) "to the stupid incoherencies of an idiot, who is completely a stranger (I hazard nothing in saying it)—completely a stranger to the least notions of any science whatever, while my conversation might divert the attention of the blind man. Thus," added he, with extreme volubility, "I would have told him my opinion on the isothermal and orthogo-

nal superficies, causing him to observe that the equations of partial differences, of which the geometrical explanation is summed up in two orthogonal superficies, cannot generally be integral on account of their complication. I should have proved to him that the united superficies are all necessarily isothermal, and together we would have sought what superficies are capable of composing a trebly isothermal system. If I do not deceive myself, monsieur, compare this recreation with the stupid nonsense with which they entertain this blind man," added the lunatic, taking breath, "and tell me, is it not a pity to deprive him of my conversation?"

"Do not take what he has just said, madame, for the wanderings of a madman," whispered the doctor; "he handles in this way sometimes the most difficult questions of geometry or astronomy, with an acuteness which would do honour to the most illustrious '*savans*.' His knowledge is great. He speaks all the living languages, but he is, alas! a martyr to his thirst for erudition and pride of learning. He imagines that he has absorbed all human knowledge, and that, by retaining him here, humanity is thrown back into the darkness of the most profound ignorance."

The doctor replied aloud to the lunatic, who seemed to await his reply with a respectful anxiety,

"My dear Monsieur Charles, your complaint appears to me very just, and this poor blind man, who, I believe, is dumb, but, happily, is not deaf, will have great delight in the conversation of a man as learned as you are. I will see that you have justice done you."

"Besides, by retaining me here, you deprive the universe of all human knowledge, which I have appropriated to myself by assimilation," said the madman, becoming animated by degrees, and commencing to gesticulate with great violence.

"Come, come, calm yourself, my good Monsieur Charles; happily, the world has not yet discovered its deficiencies: as soon as it shall have become enlightened in this respect, we shall endeavour to supply its wants; and in that case, a man of your capacity, of your learning, can always render great services."

"But I am for science what Noah's ark was for physical nature," cried he, grinding his teeth, his eye looking very wild.

"I know it, my dear friend."

"You wish to put the light under the bushel!" cried he, clinching his fists. "But then I will break you like glass," added he, with a threatening air, his face purple with anger, and the veins swelling like cords.

"Ah! Monsieur Charles," answered the doctor, fixing on the madman a calm, piercing, steady look, and assuming a caressing and flattering manner, "I thought that you were the greatest '*savant*' of modern times."

"And past," cried the madman, forgetting all at once his anger in his pride.

"You did not let me finish: that you were the greatest '*savant*' of time past, present—"

"And future," added the madman, proudly.

"Oh! the great babbler, who always interrupts me," said the doctor, smiling, and striking him amicably on the shoulder. "Can it be said that I am ignorant of all the admiration that you inspire and deserve! Come, let us go and see the blind man."

"Conduct me to him. Doctor, you are a good man; come, come, you will see what he is obliged to listen to when I can tell him such fine things," answered the lunatic, completely calmed, walking before the doctor with a satisfied air.

"I confess to you, monsieur," said Germain, who had drawn near to his wife, remarking her fear when the madman spoke and gesticulated so violently, "I confess to you, for a moment I feared a crisis."

"Ah! mon Dieu! monsieur, formerly, at the first word of excitement, at the very first sign of a threat, the keepers would have seized, tied, beat, and inundated him with a shower-bath, one of the most atrocious tortures that ever were invented. Judge of the effect of such a treatment on an energetic and irritable temperament, whose force of expansion becomes more violent as it is more compressed. Then he would have fallen into one of those frightful fits of madness which defy the most powerful restraint; exasperated by their frequency, they become almost incurable; while, as you see, by not restraining at first this momentary ebullition, or in turning it aside by the aid of the excessive mobility of mind which is to be remarked among many lunatics, these experimental bubblings are assuaged as soon as they are raised."

"And who is this blind man of whom he speaks? is it an illusion of his mind?" asked Madame Georges.

"No, madame, it is a very strange history," answered the doctor. "This blind man was taken in a den in the Champs Elysées, where they arrested a band of robbers and assassins; he was found chained in the middle of a subterranean cavern, alongside of the corpse of a woman, so horribly mutilated, that she could not be recognised."

"Ah! it is frightful," said Madame Georges, shuddering.*

"This man is frightfully ugly; his face has been burned with vitriol. Since his arrival here, he has not spoken a single word. I do not know whether he is really dumb, or only affects to be so. By a singular chance, the only attacks he has had have occurred during my absence, and always at night. Unfortunately, all the questions that have been addressed to him have been unanswered, and it is impossible to obtain any information as to his situation; his attacks seem to be caused by a madness of which the cause is impenetrable, for he does not pronounce a word. The other lunatics pay him great attention; they guide his footsteps, and they like to entertain him, alas! according to their degree of intelligence. Hold! here he is!"

All the persons who accompanied the doctor recoiled with horror at the sight of the Maître d'Ecole, for it was he. He was not mad, but he pretended to be both mad and dumb.

He had massacred La Chouette, not in a fit of madness, but in an excess of burning fever,

* Rodolphe had always left Madame Georges in ignorance of the fate of the Maitre d'Ecole

such as he had been attacked with at Bouqueval on the night of his horrible vision.

After his arrest at the tavern of the Champs Elysées, recovering from his transient delirium, the Maître d'Ecole had awoke in a cell of the dépôt of the Conciergerie, where the insane are temporarily confined. Hearing every one say around him, "He is a furious madman," he resolved to continue to play this part, and pretended dumbness in order not to compromise himself by his answers, in case they should doubt his feigning insanity.

This stratagem succeeded. Conducted to Bicêtre, he pretended to have other attacks of madness, always taking care to choose the night for these manifestations, in order to escape the penetrating observation of the chief physician; the attending surgeon, awakened in haste, never arriving until the crisis was over or nearly at an end. The very small number of the accomplices of the Maître d'Ecole, who knew his real name and his escape from the galleys at Rochefort, were ignorant of what had become of him, and, besides, had no interest in denouncing him; thus his identity could not be proved. He hoped, then, to remain always at Bicêtre, by continuing his part of a madman and mute.

Yes, always. Such was then the only wish, the sole desire of this man, thanks to the inability to do harm which paralyzed his savage instincts. Thanks to the state of profound seclusion in which he had lived in the cellar of Bras-Rouge, remorse, as is known, had taken almost entire possession of his iron heart.

By force of concentrating his mind upon one unceasing meditation (the recollection of his past crimes), deprived of all communication with the exterior world, his ideas often assumed a sort of reality, as he had told La Chouette; then passed before him sometimes the features of his victim; but this was not madness—it was the power of memory carried to its greatest extent.

Thus this man, still in the prime of life, of a vigorous constitution—this man, who, without doubt, would live many long years—this man, who enjoyed all the plenitude of his reason, was to pass these long years among madmen, without ever exchanging a word with a human being. Otherwise, if he were discovered, he would be led to the scaffold for his new murders, or he would be condemned to a perpetual imprisonment among scoundrels, for whom he felt a horror which was augmented by his repentance.

The Maître d'Ecole was seated on a bench; a forest of grayish hair covered his hideous and enormous head; with his elbows on his knees, he supported his chin on his hand.

Although this frightful man was deprived of sight, two holes replaced his nose, and his mouth was deformed, yet a withering, incurable despair was still manifest on his horrid visage.

A lunatic of a sad, benevolent, and juvenile appearance, knelt before the Maître d'Ecole, held his large hands in his own, looked at him with kindness, and, with a sweet voice, constantly repeated, "Strawberries! strawberries! strawberries!"

"See, now," said the learned madman, gravely, "the sole conversation which this idiot can hold with the blind man. Yes, with him the eyes of the body are closed, those of the mind are without doubt opened, and he will be pleased if I enter into communication with him."

"I do not doubt it," said the doctor; while the poor lunatic with the melancholy face regarded the abominable face of the Maître d'Ecole with compassion, and repeated, in his soft voice, "Strawberries! strawberries! strawberries!"

"Since his entrance here, this poor idiot has uttered no other words than these," said the doctor to Madame Georges, who looked at the Maître d'Ecole with horror; "what mysterious events are connected with these words, I cannot penetrate."

"Mon Dieu! my mother," said Germain to Madame Georges, "how much this poor blind man seems depressed!"

"It is true, my child," answered Madame Georges; "in spite of myself my heart is oppressed; the sight of him sickens me. Oh! how sad it is to see humanity under this dreadful aspect!"

Hardly had Madame Georges pronounced these words, than the Maître d'Ecole shuddered; his scarred face became pale under its cicatrices; he arose, and turned his head so quickly towards the mother of Germain, that she could not refrain from a cry of horror, although she did not know who he was.

The Maître d'Ecole had recognised the voice of his wife, and the words of Madame Georges told him that she had spoken to his son.

"What is the matter, my mother?" cried Germain.

"Nothing, my child; but the movement of this man, the expression of his face—all this has frightened me. Hold! monsieur, pardon my weakness," added she, addressing the doctor, "I almost regret having yielded to my curiosity in accompanying my son."

"Oh! for once, my mother—there is nothing to regret."

"Very sure am I that our good mother will never return here, nor we either, my little Germain," said Rigolette: "it is too affecting."

"*Allons!* you are a little coward: is it not so, Monsieur le Docteur?" said Germain, smiling; "is not my wife a little coward?"

"I confess," answered the doctor, "that the sight of this unhappy blind and dumb man has made a strong impression upon me—I, who have seen so much distress."

"'*Quelle frimousse*,' *heiu!* old darling?" whispered Anastasia. "Well! in comparison with you, all men appear to me as ugly as this frightful madman. It is on this account that no one can boast of—you comprehend, my Alfred?"

"Anastasia, I shall dream of that figure, it is certain—I shall have the night-mare."

"My friend," said the doctor to the Maître d'Ecole, "how do you find yourself?"

The Maître d'Ecole remained mute.

"Do you not hear me, then?" continued the doctor, striking him lightly on the shoulder.

The Maître d'Ecole made no reply, but bowed his head. At the end of some moments, from his sightless eyes there fell a tear.

"He weeps," said the doctor.

"Poor man!" added Germain, with compassion.

The Maître d'Ecole shuddered; he heard anew the voice of his son, who evinced for him a sentiment of compassion.

"What is the matter? What afflicts you?" demanded the doctor.

The Maître d'Ecole buried his face in his hands.

"We shall obtain nothing," said the doctor.

"Let me try; I am going to console him," replied the learned madman. "I am going to demonstrate that all kinds of orthogonal surfaces in which the three systems are isothermal, are, 1st. Those of the superficies of the second order; 2d. Those of the ellipsoides of revolution around the small axis and the grand axis; 3d. Those—but, no," said the madman, reflecting, "I will commence with him on the planetary system." Then addressing the young lunatic, who was still kneeling before the Maître d'Ecole, "Take yourself off from there, with your strawberries."

"My boy," said the doctor to the young madman, "each one must have his turn with the old man. Let your comrade take your place."

The young boy obeyed at once, arose, looked at the doctor timidly with his large blue eyes, showed his deference by a salute, made a sign of adieu to the Maitre d'Ecole, and departed, repeating, in a plaintive voice, "Strawberries! strawberries!"

The doctor, perceiving the painful effect this scene had produced upon Madame Georges, said to her, "Happily, madame, we are going to find Morel, and, if my hopes are realized, your heart will expand with joy on seeing this excellent man restored to the tenderness of his wife and daughter."

And the physician withdrew, followed by the friends of the artisan Morel.

The Maître d'Ecole remained alone with the learned madman, who commenced to explain to him, very learnedly and very eloquently, the imposing movement of the stars, which describe their immense revolutions silently in the heavens, of which the normal state is night.

But the Maître d'Ecole did not listen. He thought, with profound despair, that he should never hear again the voices of his son and wife. Confident of the just horror with which he had inspired them, of the misfortune, the shame, the affright into which he would have plunged them by the revelation of his name, he would have endured rather a thousand deaths than have disclosed himself to them. One single last consolation remained to him; for a moment he had inspired his son with pity. And in spite of himself, he recalled to mind the words which Rodolphe had spoken to him before he had inflicted this terrible chastisement.

"Each of your words is an oath, each of your words shall be a prayer. You are audacious and cruel because you are strong; you shall be meek and humble, because you shall be weak. Your heart is closed to repentance; some day you will weep for your victims. From a man you have made yourself a savage beast; some day your understanding shall be restored by repentance. You have not even spared what the wild beasts spare, the female and her young. After a long life consecrated to the expiation of your crimes, your last prayer shall be to supplicate God to grant you the unhoped-for happiness of dying between your wife and your son."

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"We are going to pass the court of the idiots, and then we shall reach the building where we shall find Morel," said the doctor, on leaving the court where the Maître d'Ecole was.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOREL, THE LAPIDARY.

Notwithstanding the sadness with which the sight of the lunatics had inspired her, Madame Georges could not but stop for a moment before a railed court, where the incurable idiots were confined.

Poor beings! who often have not even the instinct of the beast, and whose origin is almost always unknown—unknown to all as well as to themselves. Thus they pass through life, absolute strangers to the affections, to thought, experiencing only the most limited animal wants. If madness does not reveal itself at once to the superficial observer, by a single inspection of the physiognomy of the lunatic, it is but too easy to recognise the physical character of idiotism.

Doctor Herbin had no occasion to direct the attention of Madame Georges to the expression of savage brutishness, stupid insensibility, or imbecile amazement, which gave to the features of the unfortunate wretches an expression at once hideous and painful to behold. Almost all were clothed in long dirty frocks, ragged and torn; for, in spite of all possible "*surveillance*," these beings, absolutely deprived of instinct and reason, cannot be prevented from tearing and soiling their vestments, in crawling and rolling like beasts in the mire of the courts, where they remain during the day.

Some of them, crouched in the most obscure corners of a shed which sheltered them, gathered in a heap, like animals in their dens, uttered a kind of hollow and continual rattling noise. Others, leaning against the wall, immovable, looked fixedly at the sun.

An old man, of monstrous obesity, seated on a wooden chair, devoured his pittance with animal voracity, casting on either side oblique and angry glances.

These walked rapidly, describing a circle, limiting themselves to a very small space. This strange exercise would last for entire hours.

Those, seated on the ground, swayed their bodies continually backward and forward, only interrupting this movement of vertiginous monotony by shouts of laughter—the guttural, harsh laugh of idiocy.

Others, in fine, were almost in a state of annihilation, only opening their eyes at the moment of repast, remaining inert, inactive, deaf, dumb, blind—not a cry, not a gesture announcing their vitality. * * *

The complete absence of verbal or intellectual communication is one of the most gloomy characteristics of a company of idiots. Lunatics, notwithstanding the incoherency of their words and thoughts, at least speak, know each other, and seek each other; but among idiots there reigns a stupid indifference, an isolated savageness. Never do they pronounce an articulate word. Sometimes is heard among them savage laugh-

ter, or groans and cries which resemble nothing human. Scarcely can a few among them recognise their keepers; and yet, let us repeat it with admiration, with reverence to the Creator, these unfortunate creatures, who seem no longer to belong to our species, and not even to the animal species, by the complete annihilation of their intellectual faculties; these incurable beings, who partake more of the mollusca than animated life, and who often thus pass through all the stages of a long existence, are surrounded by tender cares, of which we have no idea.

Doubtless it is well to respect the principle of human dignity, even in these unhappy beings, who have only the exterior of men; but let us always repeat, one should also think of the dignity of those who, endowed with all their faculties, filled with zeal and activity, are the living strength of the nation; to give them consciousness of this dignity by encouraging them, and reward them when it is manifested by the love of industry, by resignation, by probity; not to say, in fine, with a *semi*-orthodox selfishness, "Let us punish here below, God will recompense above."

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"Poor people!" said Madame Georges, following the doctor, after having cast a last look into the court of the idiots; "how sad it is to think there is no remedy for their woes!"

"Alas! none, madame!" answered the doctor; "above all, when they have reached this age; for now, thanks to the progress of the science, idiot children receive a kind of education which develops, at least, the atom of imperfect intelligence with which they are sometimes endowed. We have a school here, directed with as much perseverance as enlightened patience, which already offers the most satisfactory results; by a very ingenious method, the mental and physical capacities are exercised at the same time; and many have been taught the alphabet, figures, and to distinguish colours; they have also succeeded in teaching them to sing in chorus; and I assure you, madame, that there is a kind of strange charm, at once sad and touching, in hearing these plaintive, wondering voices raised towards heaven in a chant, of which almost all the words, although in French, are to them unknown. But here we are at the building, where we shall find Morel. I have recommended that he should be left alone this morning, that the effect which I hope to produce upon him may have greater power."

"And what is his madness, monsieur?" whispered Madame Georges to the doctor, so as not to be heard by Louise.

"He imagines that if he does not earn thirteen hundred francs in his day's work, to pay a debt contracted with a notary named Jacques Ferrand, Louise will die on the scaffold for the crime of infanticide."

"Ah! monsieur, this notary was a monster!" replied Madame Georges, informed of the hatred of this man against Germain. "Louise Morel and her father are not his only victims; he has persecuted my son with undying animosity."

"Louise Morel has told me all, madame," answered the doctor. "Dieu merci! this wretch has ceased to live! but, be pleased to wait for me a moment, with these good people; I am going to see how poor Morel is. Then," addressing the daughter of the lapidary, "I beg you, Louise, pay great attention! at the moment I say, *Come!* appear at once, but alone; when I say a second time, *Come!* the others will also enter."

"Ah! monsieur, my courage fails me," said Louise, drying her tears. "Poor father! if this trial should be useless!"

"I hope it will save him; for a long time I have been preparing for it. Come, compose yourself, and remember my instructions!"

And the doctor, leaving the persons who accompanied him, entered into a room, of which the grated windows opened on a garden.

Thanks to repose, to the salutary "régime," the comforts with which he was surrounded, the features of Morel the artisan were no longer pale, ghastly, and wrinkled by an unhealthy meagerness; his full face, slightly coloured, announced the return of health; but a melancholy smile, a certain fixed expression, indicated that his reason was not yet completely re-established.

When the doctor entered, Morel, seated and bent over a table, imitated the exercise of his trade as a lapidary, saying,

"Thirteen hundred francs—thirteen hundred francs, or Louise to the scaffold—thirteen hundred francs—let us work—work—work."

This aberration, of which the attacks were becoming less and less frequent, had always been the primordial symptom of his madness. The physician, at first vexed to find Morel at this moment under the influence of his monomania, soon hoped to make it serve his project; he took from his pocket a purse containing sixty-five golden louis, which he had placed there for the purpose, poured the gold into his hand, and said suddenly to Morel who, profoundly absorbed by his ideal occupation, had not perceived the arrival of the doctor,

"My good Morel! you have worked enough; you have earned the thirteen hundred francs which you need to save Louise—here they are." And the doctor threw on the table his handful of gold.

"Louise saved!" cried the lapidary, clutching the gold eagerly. "I will run to the notary;" and, rising precipitately, he rushed to the door.

"Come," cried the doctor, with lively anxiety, for the instantaneous cure of the lapidary might depend upon this first impression.

Hardly had he said, Come, than Louise appeared at the door, at the moment that her father reached it.

Morel, stupified, recoiled two steps, and the gold dropped which he held.

For some moments he looked at Louise with profound amazement, not yet recognising her. He seemed, however, to be endeavouring to collect his thoughts; then, approaching her by degrees, he looked at her with an uneasy and timid curiosity.

Louise, trembling with emotion, with difficulty restrained her tears, while the doctor, recommending her, by a sign, to remain silent, watched attentively the smallest movements of the lapidary's countenance.

He, leaning towards his daughter, began to turn pale; he passed both of his hands over his forehead, covered with sweat; then, taking a step towards her, he wished to speak, but his voice died upon his lips, his paleness increased, and he looked around him with surprise, as if he were just awaking from a dream.

"Well, well," whispered the doctor to Louise, "it is a good sign; when I say, *Come*, throw yourself into his arms, calling him father."

The lapidary placed his hands on his chest, looking at himself (if we may so express it) from

head to foot, as if to convince himself of his identity. His features expressed a sad uncertainty: instead of fixing his eyes on his daughter, he seemed as if he wished to hide himself from her sight. Then he said, in a low and broken voice,

"No! no! a dream—where am I? impossible—a dream—it is not she." Then, seeing the gold scattered on the floor, "And this gold—I do not remember—am I awake? My head turns—I dare not look—I am ashamed: it is not Louise."

"Come," said the doctor, in a loud voice.

"Father, recognise me, then: I am Louise, your daughter!" cried she, bursting into tears, and throwing herself into his arms; at the same moment, Madame Morel, Rigolette, Madame Georges, Germain, and the Pipelets entered the apartment.

"Oh! mon Dieu!" said Morel, whom Louise loaded with caresses, "where am I? what do they want with me? what has taken place? I cannot believe." Then, after a pause, he took suddenly the head of Louise between his two hands, looked at her fixedly, and cried, after some moments of increasing emotion,

"Louise!"

"He is saved," said the doctor.

"My husband! my poor Morel!" cried the wife of the lapidary, running to join Louise.

"My wife!" said Morel; "my wife and child!"

"And I also, Monsieur Morel," said Rigolette; "all your friends are collected around you."

"All your friends! do you see, Monsieur Morel?" added Germain.

"Mademoiselle Rigolette! M. Germain!" said the lapidary, recognising each personage with new astonishment.

"And your old friends of the lodge, too!" said Anastasia, approaching in her turn with Alfred; "here are the Pipelets—the old Pipelets—friends till death; and '*al-l-l-l-ez donc*,' Père Morel, here is a great day."

"M. Pipelet and his wife! so many people around me! it seems to me so long since! And but, in fine, it is Louise, is it not?" cried he, with emotion, pressing his daughter to his heart. "It is you, Louise? very sure?"

"My poor father, yes; it is I; it is my mother: there are all your friends—you shall leave us no more—we shall be happy now—very happy."

"Very happy. But wait until I recollect—all happy; it seems to me, however, that they came to conduct you to prison, Louise."

"Yes, my father; but I have been acquitted—you see it—I am here—near to you."

"Wait still—wait—my memory returns." Then he said, with affright, "And the notary?"

"Dead!"

"Dead—he! then I believe you; we can be happy; but where am I? how am I here? for how long a time, and why? I do not exactly recollect."

"You have been so sick, monsieur," said the doctor, "that you have been brought here, into the country; you have had a fever—very violent—delirium."

"Yes, yes; I recollect: the last thing—before my illness—I was talking to my daughter, and who—who then? Ah! a very generous man, M. Rodolphe—he prevented my arrest. Since then I recollect nothing."

"Your disease was attended by a loss of memory," said the doctor. "The sight of your daughter, of your wife, of your friends, has restored it to you."

"And at whose house am I, then?"

"A a friend of M. Rodolphe's," Germain hastened to say: "the change of air, it was thought, would be useful to you."

"Very well," whispered the doctor; and, addressing the superintendent, he added, "Order the hack around to the garden door, so that he shall not be obliged to pass through the courts to go out at the main entrance."

Thus, as often happens in cases of madness, Morel had no recollection nor consciousness of the alienation of mind with which he had been attacked.

What remains to be told? Some moments afterward, leaning on his wife and daughter, and accompanied by a medical student, who, as a matter of precaution, was to accompany them to Paris, Morel got into the carriage and left Bicêtre, without suspecting that he had been confined there as a lunatic.

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"You think this man is completely cured?" said Madame Georges to the doctor, who was conducting her to the principal entrance of Bicêtre.

"I think so, madame, and I have expressly left him under the happy influence of this family meeting; I should have feared to separate them. I shall go and see him every day until his cure is perfectly established; for, not only does he interest me very much, but he was particularly recommended to me, on his first entrance here, by the chargé d'affaires of the Grand-duchy of Gerolstein."

Germain and his mother exchanged glances.

"I thank you, monsieur," said Madame Georges, "for the kindness with which you have allowed me to visit this fine establishment; and I congratulate myself at having witnessed a touching scene, which your knowledge and skill had foreseen and predicted."

"And I, madame, doubly congratulate myself upon the success which has restored so excellent a man to the arms of his family."

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Some moments afterward, Madame Georges, Rigolette, and Germain had left Bicêtre, as well as M. and Madame Pipelet.

Just as Doctor Herbin returned to the court he met one of the superior officers of the house who said to him, "Ah! my dear Monsieur Herbin, you cannot imagine what a scene I have just witnessed. For an observer like you it would have been an inexhaustible source of—"

"How then? What scene?"

"You know that we have here two women who are condemned to death—the mother and daughter—who are to be executed to-morrow."

"Doubtless."

"Eh bien! never in my life have I seen hardihood and unconcern like this mother's; she is an infernal woman."

"Is it not the widow Martial, who showed so much unblushing assurance at her trial?"

"The same."

"And what has she done more?"

"She demanded to be confined in the same cell with her daughter until the moment of her execution. They have granted her request. Her daughter, much less hardened than she is, appears to be softened as the fatal moment approaches, while the diabolical assurance of the widow augments still more, if such a thing were possible. Just now the venerable almoner of the prison entered their cell to offer them the con-

solations of religion. The daughter was about to accept them, when her mother, without losing for a moment her usual coolness attacked both her and the almoner with such frightful remarks that the venerable priest was obliged to leave the dungeon, after having, in vain, endeavoured to address some holy words to this unmanageable woman."

"Upon the eve of mounting the scaffold! Such hardihood is truly infernal," said the doctor.

"Would not one say that this was one of those families pursued by a fatality? The father died upon the scaffold; one son is in the galleys; another, also condemned to death, has lately escaped. The eldest son, and two younger children only, have escaped this frightful contagion. However, this woman has sent for the eldest son, the sole honest man of this detestable race, to come to-morrow morning to receive her last wishes! What an interview!"

"Are you not curious to be present?"

"Frankly, no. You know my opinion concerning punishment by death, and I have no need of such a spectacle to confirm this opinion. If this horrible woman carries her unwavering firmness and assurance to the scaffold, what a sight for the people! what a deplorable example!"

"There is something singular in this double execution—the day has been fixed." "How?" "To day is the '*mi-carême!*'"

"Eh bien?" "To-morrow, the excution takes place at seven o'clock. Now the crowd of maskers, who will pass the night at the balls of the '*barrières,*' will necessarily meet the mournful procession on their return to Paris; without speaking of the place of execution, the Barrière Saint Jacques, where will be heard, in the distance, the music at the surrounding taverns; for to celebrate the last day of the carnival, they dance in these '*guinguettes*' until ten or eleven in the morning."

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The next morning the sun rose clear and glorious. At four o'clock, several piquets of infantry and cavalry surrounded and guarded the approaches to Bicêtre.

We will conduct the reader to the cell where we will find the widow and her daughter Calebasse.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TOILETTE.

At Bicêtre, a gloomy corridor, lighted at intervals by grated windows, or kind of airholes just above the level of the courtyard, leads to the condemned cell.

This dungeon received its light only from a large wicket in the upper part of the door, which opened into the dark passage spoken of above.

In this cell, with its damp and mouldy walls, its floor paved with stones as cold as those of the sepulchre, were confined the widow Martial and her daughter, Calebasse. The sharp face of the convict's widow, stern and immovable, stood out in bold relief like a marble mask, from the midst of the obscurity which existed in the dungeon.

Deprived of the use of her hands, for under her black dress she wore the "*camisole de force*" (a kind of long cassock of coarse gray stuff, laced behind the back, the sleeves of which were made and closed like bags), she asked that her cap might be taken off, complaining of great heat in the head. Her gray hair fell dishevelled upon her shoulders. Seated on the edge of the bed, her feet on the ground, she looked fixedly on her daughter, Calebasse, who was separated from her by the width of the dungeon.

She, half reclining, and also dressed in the "*camisole de force,*" had her back against the wall. Her head was hanging on her breast, her eyes fixed, her respiration broken. Save a slight convulsive movement, which from time to time agitated her under jaw, her features appeared calm, but of livid paleness.

At the farther end of the dungeon, near the door, under the open wicket, a veteran with the riband of the Legion of Honour, with a rough and swarthy face, a bald head, and long gray mustaches, is seated on a chair. He is never to lose sight of the condemned.

"It is very cold here! and yet my eyes burn; and then I am thirsty—always thirsty," said Calebasse, at the end of a few moments. "Some water, if you please, monsieur?"

The old soldier arose and took from a bench a tin pail of water, filled a tumbler, and gave her a drink.

After having drunk greedily, she said, "Thank you, monsieur."

"Will you drink?" asked the soldier of the widow. She shook her head in the negative.

"What o'clock is it, monsieur?" said Calebasse.

"It will soon be half past four."

"In three hours!" resumed Calebasse, with a sardonic and sinister smile, alluding to the time of her execution, "in three hours—" She dared not finish.

The widow shrugged her shoulders. Her daughter comprehended her thoughts, and replied, "You have more courage than I, mother; you never falter—you—"

"Never."

"I know it well—I see it well. Your face is as tranquil as if you were seated by the fire of our kitchen, sewing. Ah! these good days are so far off—so far—"

"'Babbler!'"

"It is true: instead of resting there and think, without saying anything, I would rather talk—I would rather—"

"Shake off your thoughts, coward!"

"Even if it should be so, mother, every one has not your courage. I have done all I could to imitate you. I have not listened to the priest, because you did not wish it. And yet I may have been wrong—for, in fine," added the condemned girl, shuddering, "*after*—who knows? and *after*—will be very soon—it is—"

"In three hours."

"How coldly you say that, mother! Mon Dieu, mon Dieu! and yet it is true, to say that we are here, both of us, that we are not sick, that we do not wish to die, and yet in three hours—"

"In three hours you will have died like a true Martial. *You will have seen black,* that's all; be bold, my daughter."

"It is not right for you to talk to your daughter in that way," said the old soldier, in a slow and grave tone; "you would have done much better to have allowed her to speak with the priest."

The widow shrugged her shoulders with savage contempt, and, without turning her head, she continued: "Courage, my daughter; we will show them that women have more firmness

than these men, with their priests—the cowards!"

"The Commandant Leblond was the bravest of the third regiment of Chasseurs; I saw him with wounds at the breach of Saragossa, and die making the sign of the cross," said the veteran.

"You were his chaplain, then?" demanded the widow, with a savage burst of laughter.

"I was his soldier," answered the veteran, mildly. "It was only to let you know that one can pray when about to die, without being a coward."

Calebasse looked attentively at this man with the bronzed visage, a perfect type of the soldier of the Empire; a deep scar furrowed his left cheek, and was lost in his large "*moustache.*" The simple words of this veteran, whose features, wounds, and red riband all announced calm and tried bravery, profoundly struck the widow's daughter.

She had refused the consolation of the priest, more from shame and fear of her mother, than from callousness. In her restless and dying thoughts, she compared the impious jesting of her mother with the piety of the soldier. Strong in this testimony, she thought she could listen, without cowardice, to those religious instincts which even intrepid men had obeyed.

"In truth," said she, with anguish, "why did I not wish to hear the priest? there is no weakness in that. Besides, it would keep off my thoughts; and then, at length, *after*, who knows?"

"Again!" said the widow, in a tone of withering scorn. "Time is wanting—it is a pity—you would be religious. The arrival of your brother Martial will finish your conversion. But he will not come; the honest man, the good son."

Just as the widow pronounced these last words, the door of the prison opened.

"Already!" cried Calebasse, with a convulsive start. "Oh! mon Dieu, they have advanced the hour! They have deceived us!"

"So much the better—if the watch of the executioner is too fast—your follies will not dishonour me."

"Madame," said the "*employé*" of the prison with that kind of commiseration which *savours of death*, "your son is here; will you see him?"

"Yes," answered the widow, without turning her head. "Enter, monsieur," said the "*employé.*"

Martial entered.

The veteran remained in the dungeon, the door of which was left open as a matter of precaution. Through the gloom of the corridor, half lighted by the increasing day and by a lamp, several soldiers were seen sitting and standing.

Martial was as pale as his mother; his countenance expressed deep and profound anguish, his knees trembled under him. In spite of the crimes of this woman, in spite of the aversion that she had always shown for him, he had thought it a duty to obey her last wishes.

As soon as he entered the dungeon, the widow cast on him a searching look, and said to him in a hollow and angry voice, as if to awaken in her son a feeling of revenge,

"You see what they are going to do with your mother—with your sister!"

"Ah! my mother, it is frightful; but I told you of it, alas!—I told you."

The widow bit her pale lips with rage; her son did not comprehend her; she resumed:

"They are going to kill us, as they killed your father."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! and I can do nothing—it is finished. Now, what would you have me do? Why did you not listen to me—you and my sister? You would not have been here."

"Ah! it is so," answered the widow, with her habitual and savage irony; "you find that well?"

"My mother!"

"Now you are satisfied; you can say, without a lie, that your mother is dead: you shall no longer blush for her."

"If I were a bad son," answered Martial, quickly, shocked at the unjust harshness of his mother, "I should not be here."

"You come from curiosity."

"I come to obey you."

"Ah! if I had listened to you, Martial, instead of listening to my mother, I should not be here," cried Calebasse, in a heart-rending voice, and yielding at length to her anguish and terror, which, until now (through the influence of her mother), she had restrained. "It is your fault: I curse you, my mother!"

"She repents—she curses me; you must be delighted, hein?" said the widow to her son, with a burst of diabolical laughter.

Without replying to her, Martial approached Calebasse, whose agony continued, and said to her, with compassion, "Poor sister! it is too late now."

"Never too late to be a coward!" cried the mother, with fury. "Oh! what a race! what a race! Happily, Nicolas has escaped; happily, François and Amandine will escape you. They have already the seeds of vice: misery will cause them to grow!"

"Ah! Martial, watch well over them, or they will end like my mother and myself. They will also lose their heads," cried Calebasse, uttering a hollow groan.

"He will do well to watch over them," cried the widow, vehemently; "vice and misery will be stronger than he, and some day they will avenge father, mother, and sister."

"Your horrible hope will not be realized, my mother," answered Martial, indignantly. "Neither they nor I shall ever more have misery to fear. La Louve saved the young girl whom Nicolas wished to drown; the relations of this young girl have proposed to give us plenty of money, or less money and lands in Algiers. We have preferred the lands. There is some danger, but that suits us. To-morrow we shall leave with the children, and we shall never return."

"Is what you say true?" asked the widow, in a tone of irritated surprise.

"I never told a falsehood."

"You do now, to make me mad."

"Why? because the welfare of your children is secured?"

"Yes; from the wolf's cubs you would make lambs. The blood of your father, your sister, mine, will not be avenged."

"At this moment, do not talk thus."

"I have killed—they kill me. We are even"

"My mother, repentance."

The widow shouted with laughter.

"For thirty years I have lived in crime, and to repent for thirty years they give me three days, and death at the end of them. Do you think I shall have time? No, no; when my

ead falls, it will gnash its teeth with rage and natred."

"My brother, help—take me from hence; they are coming," murmured Calebasse, in a suffocating voice, for the poor creature began to be delirious.

"Will you hush?" said the widow, exasperated by the weakness of Calebasse; "will you hush? Oh! the wretch! and she is my daughter!"

"Mother! mother!" cried Martial, tortured by this horrible scene, "why did you send for me?"

"Because I thought to give you a heart and revenge; but who has not the one has not the other, '*lache!*' '*lache!*' coward!"

"My mother!"

"*Lache! lache! lache!*"

At this moment a noise of footsteps was heard in the corridor. The veteran looked at his watch, and stood up.

The rising sun, dazzling and radiant, shed suddenly a golden beam of light through the grated window of the corridor opposite the door of the dungeon.

This door was thrown open, and two keepers appeared, bringing two chairs; then the jailer came, and said to the widow, in an agitated voice,

"Madame, it is time."

The widow stood up, impassible; Calebasse uttered piercing cries.

Four men entered. Three of them, roughly clad, held in their hands small parcels of very fine but strong cord. The largest of these four men, neatly dressed in black, wearing a round hat and a white cravat, handed a paper to the jailer.

This man was the executioner.

The paper was a receipt for two women fit to be guillotined. The executioner took possession of these two of God's creatures; from that time he was answerable.

To the frightful despair of Calebasse had succeeded a helpless torpor. Two of the assistants were obliged to seat her on her bed, and to sustain her. Her jaws, clinched by convulsions, hardly allowed her to utter some unmeaning words; she rolled around in vacancy her dull and almost sightless eyes; her chin fell upon her breast, and, without the assistance of the two deputies, her body would have sunk to the ground like an inert mass.

Martial (after having for a long time embraced this unfortunate being), alarmed, not daring nor able to move a step, and as if fascinated by the scene, remained immovable.

The brazen hardihood of the widow did not forsake her; with her head erect and thrown back, she assisted to take off the "*camisole de force*," which impeded her movements. It fell to the ground, and she remained in her old dress of black woollen.

"Where must I place myself?" she asked, in a firm voice.

"Have the kindness to seat yourself in one of these two chairs," said the executioner, pointing to them.

The door being left open, several of the keepers, the director of the prison, and some privileged persons, were seen standing in the corridor.

The widow walked with a firm and bold step to the place indicated, passing near her daughter, when she stopped, and said, in a voice slightly broken,

"My daughter, embrace me!"

At the voice of her mother, Calebasse was aroused from her apathy, drew up on her seat, and, with a gesture of malediction, she cried,

"If there is a h—ll, descend there, accursed!"

"My child, embrace me!" said the widow again, making a step towards her daughter.

"Do not approach me! you have ruined me!" murmured the unfortunate, throwing out her hands as if to repulse her mother.

"Forgive me!"

"No, no!" said Calebasse, in a convulsed voice; and this effort having exhausted her strength, she fell back, almost without consciousness, into the arms of the assistants.

A shade passed over the impassible face of the widow; for a moment her dry and burning eyes became moistened. At this instant she met the eyes of her son.

After a moment's hesitation, and as if she yielded to the effect of an inward struggle, she said to him, "And you?"

Martial threw himself sobbing into the arms of his mother.

"Enough!" said the widow, overcoming her emotion, and disengaging herself from the embraces of her son. "Monsieur is waiting," she added, pointing to the executioner.

Then she walked rapidly towards the chair, where she resolutely seated herself.

The spark of maternal sensibility, which had for a moment lighted up the dark recesses of this corrupted heart, was extinguished forever.

"Monsieur," said the veteran to Martial, approaching him with interest, "do not remain here. Come, come."

Martial, stupified with horror and alarm, mechanically followed the soldier.

Two of the assistants had carried the wretched Calebasse to the other chair; the one of them sustained the almost lifeless body, while the other, by means of whip cord exceedingly fine, but very long, tied her hands behind her back, and also fastened her feet together by the ankles, allowing cord enough to enable her to walk slowly.

The executioner and his other assistant performed the same operation on the widow, whose features underwent no alteration; only from time to time she coughed slightly.

When the condemned were thus prevented from offering any resistance, the executioner, drawing from his pocket a long pair of scissors, said to her with politeness,

"Have the goodness, madame, to bend your head."

The widow obeyed, saying,

"We are good customers; you have had my husband: now here are his wife and daughter."

Without replying, the executioner gathered in his left hand the long gray hair of the condemned, and commenced cutting it short—very short, particularly about the neck.

"This makes the third time that I have had my hair dressed in my lifetime," said the widow, with a horrible laugh: "the day of my first communion, when they put on my veil; the day of my marriage, when they put on my orange blossoms; and now to-day—is it not so?—the headdress of death?"

The executioner remained silent.

The hair of the condemned being thick and coarse, the operation was so long in being performed, that that of Calebasse lay strewed upon the ground before the mother's was half finished.

"You do not know of what I am thinking?"

said the widow, after having looked at her daughter again.

The executioner continued to keep silence.

Nothing could be heard but the sonorous clipping of the scissors and the kind of hiccough and rattling which from time to time escaped from the throat of Calebasse.

At this moment was seen in the corridor a priest of venerable appearance, who approached the director, and spoke a few words to him in a low tone. This holy minister came to make a last effort to soften the heart of the widow.

"I think," resumed the widow at the end of some moments, and seeing that the executioner did not reply, "I think that at five years old, my daughter, whose head is to be cut off, was the handsomest child that I ever saw. She had flaxen hair and rosy cheeks. Then, who would have told me that—" After a pause, she cried, with a burst of laughter, and an expression impossible to be described, "What a comedy is fate!"

At this moment the last locks of the condemned fell upon her shoulders.

"It is finished, madame," said the executioner, politely.

"Thank you. I recommend to you my son Nicolas," said the widow; "you will dress his hair some of these days!"

A keeper came and whispered a few words to her.

"No; I have already said no," answered she, roughly. The priest heard these words, raised his eyes towards heaven, clasped his hands, and disappeared.

"Madame, we are going to set out: will you take something?" said the executioner, obsequiously. "Thank you; to-night I will take a swallow of earth."

And the widow, after this new sarcasm, stood up erect. Although her step was firm and resolute, the executioner obligingly wished to assist her; she made a gesture of impatience, and said, in a harsh and imperious tone,

"Do not touch me; I have a firm step and a good eye. On the scaffold you will see if I have a good voice, and if I speak words of repentance."

And the widow, leaving the dungeon, escorted by the executioner and an assistant, entered the corridor. The two other assistants were obliged to carry Calebasse on a chair: she was dying. After having traversed the whole length of the corridor, the funeral *cortège* ascended the stone staircase, which conducted to a court on the outside.

The sun, with its warm and golden light, gilded the tops of the high white walls which surrounded the court, and strangely contrasted with the pure blue of the sky.

The air was soft and balmy; never was a spring morning more smiling, more magnificent. In this court were seen a detachment of *gens d'armes*, a hack, and a long, narrow vehicle, painted yellow, drawn by three post-horses, which neighed gayly, shaking the little bells on their harness.

This vehicle was entered from behind, like an omnibus. This was the cause of a last joke from the widow.

"The conductor will not say *full*," said she, as she mounted the step as lightly as the cord which confined her ancles would allow.

Calebasse, expiring, and sustained by an assistant, was placed in the carriage opposite her mother, and the door was closed.

The hackney-coachman had fallen asleep; the executioner shook him.

"Excuse me, citizen," said he, descending hastily from his seat; "but a night of the '*mi carême*' is tough. I had just taken to Vendanges de Bourgogne a load of '*débardeurs*' and '*débardeuses*,' who were singing '*La mère Godichon*,' when you engaged me by the hour. I—"

"*Allons*, it is good. Follow this vehicle to the Boulevard Saint Jacques."

"Excuse me, citizen. An hour ago I was going to the 'Vendanges;' now to the guillotine! That proves that '*les courses se suivent et ne se ressemblent pas*,' as the saying is."

The two vehicles, preceded and followed by the *gens d'armes*, left Bicêtre and took the road to Paris.

* * * * *

We have presented the picture of the *toilette* of the condemned in all its frightful reality, because it seems to us that we can derive from it powerful arguments.

Against punishment by death.

Against the manner in which it is applied.

Against the effects which must be expected from such an example given to the populace.

The *toilette*, although divested of that solemnity, at once imposing and religious, which ought, at least, to surround all the acts of the highest punishment known to the laws, is the most impressive of all the ceremonies attending the execution of a criminal, and yet it is concealed from the multitude.

In Spain, on the contrary, the condemned remains exposed during three days in a "*chapelle ardente*;" his coffin is continually before his eyes; the priests say the prayers for the dying; the bells of the church night and day ring a funeral knell.

It will be conceived that this kind of initiation to death may alarm the most hardened criminals, and inspire with salutary terror the crowd which surrounds the "*chapelle mortuaire*."

Then the day of the execution is a day of public mourning; the bells of all the churches toll the "*trépassés*;"* the condemned is slowly conducted to the scaffold, with mournful and imposing pomp; his coffin is carried before him; the priests, walking at his side, chant the prayers for the dead; then comes the religious brotherhood; and, finally, the mendicant friars, asking, from the crowd, money for prayers for the repose of the culprit's soul. The crowd never remains deaf to this appeal.

Without doubt, all this is frightful, but it is logical and imposing. It shows that they do not cut off from this world a creature of God, full of life and strength, as they would slaughter an ox. It causes the multitude to reflect (who always judge of the crime by the magnitude of the punishment) that homicide is a fearful offence, since its punishment disturbs, afflicts, and sets in commotion a whole city.

Again, this dreadful spectacle may cause serious reflections, inspire salutary alarm; and that which is barbarous in this human sacrifice, is at least hidden by the awful majesty of its execution.

But, we ask, the events taking place exactly as we have described them (and sometimes even *less seriously*), what kind of an example can it afford?

Early in the morning, the condemned is bound

* A knell for the dead.

and thrown into a closed carriage; the postillion whips up his horses, reaches the scaffold; the axe descends, and a head falls into a basket, in the midst of the most atrocious jeerings of the vilest of a vile populace!

Finally, in a hasty and secret execution, where is the example? where is the terror? And then, as the execution takes place, as we may say, privately, in a by-place, with great precipitation, the whole town is ignorant of this bloody and solemn act; nothing announces that, on this day, they are *killing a man;* they laugh and sing at the theatres; the multitude pass on, careless and indifferent. As it regards society, religion, and humanity, this judicial homicide, committed in the name of the *interests of all*, is, however, something which ought to be of importance *to all.* In fine, let us say it again, say it always, here is the sword, but where is the crown?

Beside the punishment show the recompense; then only will the lesson be complete and fruitful. If, on the day following this morn of sorrow and of death, the people, who have seen the blood of a great criminal redden the scaffold, should see the truly virtuous man honoured and rewarded, they would dread as much the punishment of the first, as they would ambitiously covet the triumphs of the last: terror hardly prevents crime, never does it inspire virtue.

Does any one consider the effect of capital punishment on the criminals themselves? Either they brave it with reckless impudence; or, inanimate, they suffer it, half dead with terror; or they offer their heads with profound and sincere repentance.

Now, the punishment is insufficient for those who defy it;

Useless for those who are already morally dead;

Excessive for those who repent with sincerity.

Let us repeat it: society does not kill the murderer to cause him suffering, or to inflict the *lex talionis;* it kills him to prevent him from doing harm; it kills him that the example of his punishment may serve as a warning to murderers *to come.*

We think that the punishment is barbarous, and that it does not sufficiently terrify.

If this assertion is doubted, we will recall many proved facts of the deep horror expressed by hardened criminals for solitary confinement.

Is it not known that some have committed murders in order to be condemned to death, preferring this punishment to a cell? What, then, would be their horror, when *blindness*, joined to solitary confinement, would deprive them of the hope of escape—a hope which he preserves, and which he sometimes realizes, even in a dungeon and loaded with irons.

And touching this matter, we also think that the abolishment of capital punishment will be one of the forced consequences of solitary confinement; the alarm with which this punishment inspires the generation who at this moment people the prisons and the galleys being such, that many among these incorrigibles prefer to incur the highest penalty known to the law, than imprisonment in a cell; then, doubtless, the punishment of death ought to be suppressed, in order to sweep away this last and frightful alternative.

CHAPTER XX.

MARTIAL AND THE CHOURINEUR.

Before we pursue our narrative, let us say a few words touching the recently-established connexion between the Chourineur and Martial.

As soon as Germain had left the prison, the Chourineur, who easily proved that he had robbed himself, confessed to the judge the reason of this singular deceit, and was set at liberty after receiving a severe and just reproof from the magistrate.

Not having then recovered Fleur de Marie, and wishing to recompense the Chourineur (to whom he already owed his life) for this new act of devotion, Rodolphe, to crown the happiness of his rude protégée, had lodged him in the Hotel of the Rue Plumet, promising him to take him in his suite when he returned to Germany. We have already said that the Chourineur felt for Rodolphe the instinctive and faithful attachment of a dog for his master. To live under the same roof with the prince; to see him sometimes; to await with impatience a new opportunity of sacrificing himself for his interests, were the limits of the ambition and happiness of the Chourineur, who preferred a thousand times this situation, to money and the possession of the farm at Algiers, which Rodolphe had placed at his disposal.

But when the prince had discovered his daughter, all was changed: notwithstanding his lively gratitude towards the man to whom he owed his life, he could not resolve to take with him to Germany this witness of Fleur de Marie's first shame. Determined in any other manner to satisfy the wishes of the Chourineur, he sent for him for the last time, and told him that he expected a new service from his attachment. At these words, the face of the Chourineur brightened, but it soon became clouded when he learned that not only must he not follow the prince to Germany, but that it was necessary for him to leave the hotel that very day.

It is useless to speak of the brilliant compensations that Rodolphe offered to the Chourineur: the money that was designed for him—the deed for the farm in Algiers—anything more that he wished: all was at his disposal. The Chourineur, cut to the heart, refused all; and, for the first time in his life perhaps, this man shed tears. It needed all the persuasion of Rodolphe to induce him to accept his first gifts.

The next day the prince sent for La Louve and Martial; and, without informing them that Fleur de Marie was his daughter, he asked them what he could do for them; all their wishes should be accomplished. Perceiving their hesitation, and remembering what Fleur de Marie had told him about the slightly uncivilized tastes of La Louve and her husband, he offered them either a considerable amount of money, or the half of this amount, and lands in the vicinity of the farm which he had bought for the Chourineur. Both of them rugged, energetic; both endowed with good natural impulses, sympathized the better with each other, since they each had reasons to seek solitude—the one for her past life, the other for the crimes of his family.

He was not deceived: Martial and La Louve accepted his offer with transport; then having, through the intervention of Murphy, made the acquaintance of the Chourineur, they mutually congratulated each other on the agreeable prospects before them in Algiers.

Notwithstanding the deep sadness into which he was plunged; or, rather, in consequence of this sadness, the Chourineur, affected by the cordial advances of Martial and his wife, responded to them with warmth. In a short time a sincere friendship united the future colonists: persons of their temperament form very sudden attachments. La Louve and Martial, being unable, in spite of their kind attentions, to divert the melancholy of their new friend, discontinued their efforts, trusting that the voyage, and the active employment of their future life, would change his thoughts; for, once in Algiers, they would be obliged to turn their attention to the cultivation of the lands which had been bestowed upon them.

These facts established, it will be understood that, informed of the painful interview that Martial was obliged to undergo in obedience to the last wishes of his mother, the Chourineur had wished to accompany his new friend to the gate of Bicêtre, where he awaited him in the coach which had brought them, and which took them back to Paris, after Martial, deeply agitated, had left the dungeon, where the terrible preparations for the execution of his mother and sister were being made.

The physiognomy of the Chourineur was completely altered; the expression of boldness and of happiness which ordinarily characterized his manly face, was replaced with sorrowful dejection: his voice, also, had lost somewhat of its roughness. Grief, until now a stranger to him, had broken, prostrated his energetic nature.

He looked at Martial with compassion.

"Cheer up," said the Chourineur to him; "you have done all that a brave fellow could do—it is all over; think of your wife, of those children whom you prevented from following the bad example of their parents; and then, besides, this evening we shall have quitted Paris, never to return; and you will never again hear of that which afflicts you."

"It is all the same, do you see, Chourineur. After all, it is my mother—it is my sister."

"But, what would you—this has happened; and when things are unavoidable, we must submit," said the Chourineur, suppressing a sigh.

After a moment's silence, Martial said to him, cordially,

"I, also, ought to console you, my poor fellow—always this melancholy." "Always Martial." "Well, my wife and I confidently hope that, once away from Paris, it will be dissipated." "Yes," said the Chourineur, at the expiration of a few seconds, and hardly restraining a shudder, "if I leave Paris—" "But we set out this evening." That is to say, *you*—you go this evening." "And you, then, have you changed your intention recently?" "No." "Well, what then?"

The Chourineur again remained silent; then he replied, struggling to preserve his calmness,

"Hold, Martial: I know that you will laugh at me; but I wish to tell you all, so that, if anything should happen to me, this, at least, will prove that I was not deceived."

"What is it, then?"

"When M. Rodolphe asked if it would be agreeable for us to go together to Algiers, and to be neighbours there, I did not wish to deceive either you or your wife. I told you what I had been." "Let us speak no more about that. You have undergone your punishment—you are as good as the best of us. But I can conceive that, like me, you would prefer to live abroad, thanks to our generous protector, than to remain here, where, no matter how honest, and how easy in our circumstances we may be, we will always be reproached, you for the crime which you have expiated, and which you still regret, and I for the crimes of my parents, for which I am not responsible. But between us, the past is gone, and gone forever. Be tranquillized; we rely upon you, as you may rely upon us." "Between us, perhaps, the past will be forgotten; but, as I said to Monsieur Rodolphe, do you see, Martial, there is a Providence above, and I have killed a man."

"It is a great misfortune; but, at that time, you did not know what you were doing—you were not yourself; and, besides, you have saved the lives of others, and that ought to count in your favour."

"Listen, Martial: I have now spoken to you of my unhappiness, because, formerly, I often had a dream, in which I saw the sergeant whom I killed; for a long time I have not had this dream, and last night I dreamed it." "It was chance." "No, this forebodes that some misfortune will happen to me this day."

"You are unreasonable, my good comrade."

"I have a presentiment that I shall never quit Paris."

"Once more, you have not common sense. Your sorrow at the thought of quitting our benefactor, the knowledge that you were to accompany me to-day to Bicêtre, where so painful an interview awaited me; all this agitated you last night; hence, naturally, your dream returned to you."

The Chourineur sadly shook his head.

"It has returned to me on the night before the departure of M. Rodolphe, for it is to-day that he goes." "To-day?"

"Yes; yesterday I sent a messenger to his hotel, not daring to go there myself; he has forbidden it. They told him that the prince would set out this morning, at eleven o'clock, by the Barrière Charenton. Thus, when we shall have arrived in Paris, I will prostrate myself there, to endeavour to see him for this last time!—the last!"

"He appears so good that I comprehend well how you must love him." "Love him!" said the Chourineur, with deep and passionate emotion; "oh yes! 'allez.' Do you understand, Martial? to sleep on the ground—to eat black bread—to be his dog; but to be where he is, I asked nothing more—it was too much—he did not wish it."

"He has been so generous to you!" "It is not that which makes me love him so much—it is because he said to me that I had *heart and honour;* yes, and at a time when I was as ferocious as a wild beast, when I despised myself as the vilest of the vile, he made me comprehend that there was still some good in me, since, my punishment inflicted, I had repented, and after having suffered the utmost extremity of want without being guilty of theft, I had industriously laboured to gain an honest livelihood; wishing to injure no one, although every one looked upon me as a finished scoundrel, which was not very encouraging. It is true, in most instances, all that is necessary to keep one in the right path are words of encouragement and kindness. Is it not so, Martial? Thus, when M. Rodolphe said these words to me, dame! my heart beat high and proudly. Since then I would go through fire to do a good action. Oh that the

opportunity might offer! you would see—and to whom the thanks?—the thanks to M. Rodolphe."

"Truly, since you are a thousand times better than you used to be, you should not have such evil presentiments. Your dream signifies nothing."

"Well, we shall see. I do not purposely search for a misfortune; there can be, for me, no greater one than that which has already happened; never to see him more. M. Rodolphe! I who thought never more to quit him. In my sphere, I would have been at his service, body and soul, always ready. Well, perhaps he is wrong. You know, Martial, that I am but an earth-worm in comparison with him; well, sometimes it happens that the most insignificant can be useful to the most powerful. If that should be the case, I would never pardon him for depriving himself of my services." "Who knows? one day, perhaps, he will recall you."

"Oh! no! he said to me, 'My good fellow, you must promise me that you will never endeavour to see me again; by so doing, you will render me a service.' You understand, Martial, I have promised; on the honour of a man, I will keep my word; but it is hard."

"Once at our destination, you will forget, by degrees, your sorrow. We will work, we will live retired and tranquil, like good farmers, except occasionally trying our skill, as marksmen, on the Arabs, ah! there, La Louve will help us." "If it should come to blows, I am at home there, Martial," said the Chourineur, slightly animated. "I am unmarried, and I have been a trooper." "And I a poacher!" "But you—you have a wife, and these two children whom you have adopted. As for me, I have nothing but my hide, and since it can no longer serve as a screen for M. Rodolphe, I have no regard for it. So, if we should be obliged to give them their change, it's my affair."

"Ah! we'll both have something to do with it."

"No; I alone—thunder! leave the Bedouins to me."

"Good; I would rather hear you speak thus than as you did a short time since. Allez, Chourineur, we will be true brothers, and you can converse with me of your sorrow, if it endures, for I have my own. The recollection of this day will last all my life. One cannot see his mother, his sister, as I have seen mine, without forever bearing it in remembrance. Our situations are so similar that it is good for us to be together. We will not fear to look danger in the face; well, we will be half farmers, half soldiers. If we can start any game, we will hunt. If you wish to live alone, you can do so, and we will be near neighbours; if otherwise, we will all live together. We will bring up the children like honest people, and you shall be, almost, their uncle, while we will be brothers. How does it suit you?" said Martial, offering his hand to the Chourineur.

"It suits me well, my good Martial; and then, sorrow shall kill me, or I will kill it, as the saying is." "It will not kill you—we shall grow old in our wilderness, and every night we will say, brother, *thanks* to M. Rodolphe; that shall be our prayer for him."

"Hold, Martial, you put balsam on my wound."

"Good; this foolish dream, you will think no more of it, I hope?" "I will endeavour; ah! well, you will call for us at four o'clock? the diligence starts at five." "It is agreed upon. But here we are in Paris; I will stop the coach, and go on foot to the Barrière Charenton; I will await M. Rodolphe, to see him pass."

The carriage stopped, and the Chourineur got out.

"Don't forget, at four o'clock, my good comrade," said Martial: "at four o'clock!"

The Chourineur had forgotten that it was the morning after the "*mi carême;*" thus he was much surprised at the spectacle, at the same time fantastic and hideous, which was presented to his view when he walked through a part of the exterior boulevard, which he crossed on his way to the Barrière Charenton.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE.

The Chourineur in a few moments was carried along, in spite of himself, by a dense crowd, a popular torrent, which, descending from the taverns of the Faubourg de la Glacière, collected around the approaches to the Barrière, to pour out afterward on the Boulevard Saint Jacques, where the execution was to take place.

Although it was broad daylight, yet still could be heard at a distance the resounding music of the orchestras of the "*guinguettes,*"* where, above all, could be distinguished the sonorous vibrations of the "*cornets à pistons.*"

It needs the pencil of Callot, of Rembrandt, or of Goya, to portray the bizarre, hideous, almost fantastical appearance of this multitude. Almost all, men, women, children, were dressed in old masquerading costumes; those who had not been able to obtain this *luxury* had fastened on their clothes old rags, of flaunting colours; some young men were attired in women's apparel, torn and soiled with mud; all these faces, haggard from debauch and vice, bloated by intoxication, sparkled with savage joy, in thinking that, after a night of drunken orgies, they were going to see the two women put to death, for whom the scaffold was raised.

The scum of the population of Paris, this immense mob was composed of bandits and abandoned women, who demand each day from crime their daily bread, and who each night return well filled to their dens.

The exterior boulevard being very contracted at this place, the closely-packed crowd entirely blocked up the passage-way. In spite of his athletic strength, the Chourineur was obliged to remain almost immovable in the midst of this compact mass; he submitted. The prince, leaving the Rue Plumet at ten o'clock, as they had told him, would not pass the Barrière Charenton until about eleven, and it was not yet seven.

Although formerly he had associated with the degraded classes to which this mob belonged, the Chourineur, on again finding himself among them, felt invincible disgust. Crowded by the reflux of the mob, against the wall of one of the "*guinguettes,*" which swarm on these boulevards, through the open window from whence escaped the deafening sounds of a brass band, the Chourineur saw, against his will, a strange spectacle.

* Public houses outside the barriers.

In a large, low room (one end of which was occupied by the musicians), surrounded by benches and tables covered with the remains of a repast, broken plates, and overturned bottles, a dozen of men and women disguised, half drunk, were dancing *La Chahut*, a dance which was never performed except at the end of the *ball*, when the municipal guards had retired. Among the depraved couples who figured in this revel, the Chourineur remarked two who caused themselves to be applauded above all by the disgusting immodesty of their postures, their gestures, and their words.

The first couple were composed of a man nearly disguised as a bear, by means of a waistcoat and trousers of black sheepskin. The head of the animal, doubtless too heavy to carry, had been replaced by a kind of hood of long hair, which entirely covered the face; two holes near the eyes, and a large slit over the mouth, allowed him to see, to speak, and to breathe. This masked man, one of the prisoners who had escaped from La Force (among whom were also Barbillon and the two murderers arrested at the *tapis-franc*, at the commencement of this story)—this man was Nicolas Martial, the son, the brother of the two women for whom the scaffold was erected, close at hand. Dragged into this act of inhuman insensibility by one of his companions, a formidable bandit, this wretch dared, with the aid of his disguise, to yield himself to the last joys of the carnival.

The woman with whom he danced was dressed as a sutler, with a leather cap rather the worse for wear, the ribands torn, a kind of jacket of faded red cloth, ornamented with three rows of copper buttons, hussar fashion; a green petticoat and pantaloons of white calico; her black hair fell in disorder on her face; her ghastly and livid features expressed impudence and effrontery.

The *vis-a-vis* of these dancers were not less vile.

The man of very tall stature, disguised as *Robert Macaire*, had daubed his bony face with soot in such a manner that he was not recognisable; besides, a large band covered his left eye, and the dead white of the right one, standing out in relief with the black face, made it still more hideous. The lower part of the visage of Le Squelette (doubtless he has been recognised) disappeared entirely in a high cravat made of an old red shawl. He wore, according to the tradition, a gray hat, rasped, flattened, dirty, and without a crown; a green coat in tatters; madder-coloured pantaloons, patched in a thousand places, and tied around the ankles with twine; this assassin, overdoing the most grotesque and most impudent positions of the *Chahut*, now to the right, now to the left, backward and forward, with his long limbs hard as iron, folded and unfolded them with so much vigour and elasticity, that one would have said they were hung on springs.

Worthy corypheus of this "*saturnale*," his partner, a tall, brazen creature dressed as a "*debardeur*," wearing a police cap stuck on a powdered wig with a long "*queue*," had on a vest and trousers of green cut velvet, fastened around her waist by an orange scarf, whose long ends floated behind.

A fat, masculine-looking woman, the Ogresse of the *tapis-franc*, seated on one of the benches, held on her lap the Tartan mantles of this creature and of the sutler, while they danced with their worthy companions.

Among the other dancers was remarked a little cripple dressed as a devil with the aid of a "*tricol noir*" much too large for him, red drawers, and a horrible and grinning green mask. Notwithstanding his infirmity, this little monster was of surprising agility; his precocious depravity reached, if it did not surpass, that of his frightful companions, and he gambolled away, with equal effrontery, opposite to his partner, a fat woman disguised as a shepherdess, who excited still more the impudence of her partner by her shouts of laughter.

No charge being brought against Tortillard, and Bras-Rouge having been provisionally left in prison, the child, on the demand of his father, had been reclaimed by Micou the receiver.

As secondary figures of the picture which we have endeavoured to paint, let the reader imagine all that is of the lowest, the most shameless, the most monstrous in this idle, reckless, rapacious, sanguinary debauch, which shows itself more and more hostile to the social order, and to which we have wished to call the attention of reflecting persons on terminating this recital.

May this last and horrible scene symbolize the imminent peril which continually menaces society!

Yes, let one reflect that the cohesion, the dreaded increase of this race of robbers and murderers is a kind of living protest against the defects of restraining laws, and, above all, against the absence of *preventive measures*, *of provident legislation*, *of preservative institutions*, destined to overlook and guard from infancy this crowd of unfortunates, abandoned or perverted by frightful examples. Once more, these disinherited beings, whom God has made neither better nor worse than his other creatures, do not become thus incurably corrupted but in the filth of misery, ignorance, and brutality, where they crawl into existence.

* * * * * * * *

Still more excited by the laughter, by the bravos of the crowd collected at the windows, the actors of the abominable orgies which we now relate shouted to the orchestra to play a last "*galop*."

The musicians, delighted at the prospect of a termination to their labours, yielded to the general wish, and played with energy a lively "*galop*."

At the vibrating sounds of the brazen instruments, the excitement increased, the dancers appeared to be seized with a sort of phrensy, and, following Le Squelette and his partner, commenced "*une ronde infernale*," uttering savage shouts.

A thick dust, raised by these furious shufflings, arose from the floor, and cast a kind of red cloud around this whirlwind of men and women, who turned with giddy rapidity.

Soon, for these heads excited by wine, by the rapid motion, by their own cries, it was no longer inebriety—it was delirium; it was phrensy; room was wanting. Le Squelette cried with a breathless voice,

"Clear the door! We are going out—up on the boulevard."

"Yes, yes!" cried the dense crowd at the windows, "a '*galop*' to the Barrière Saint Jacques!"

"It will soon be time for them to shorten the two '*largues*'" (the two women.)

"The executioner throws doublets; it is droll!"

"Accompanied by the '*cornet à piston*."

"We will dance the cotillon of *the guillotine!*"

"Go ahead of the woman without any head!" cried Tortillard.

"This will enliven the condemned."

"I invite the widow."

"I invite the daughter."

"That will make old Charlot* gay."

"He will dance '*La Chahut*' in his *shop* with his *customers*."

"Death to the *pantes* (honest people). Long live the *grinches* and *escarpes!*" (robbers and assassins), cried Le Squelette, in a roaring voice.

These jests, these cannibal threats, accompanied by vulgar songs, cries, whistlings, shouts, were augmented still more when the band of Le Squelette had made, by its impetuous violence, a large opening through the middle of this compact crowd.

Then it was a frightful *mêlée;* then were heard howlings, imprecations, and bursts of mad laughter, which no longer appeared human.

The tumult was suddenly carried to its height by two new incidents.

The vehicle containing the condemned, accompanied by its escort of cavalry, appeared in the distance at the corner of the boulevard; then all the mob rushed in this direction, uttering a howl of ferocious satisfaction.

At this moment, also, the crowd was met by a courier coming from the Boulevard des Invalides, and galloping towards the Barrière de Charenton. He was dressed in a light blue jacket, with a yellow collar, laced with silver on all the seams; but as a sign of deep mourning, he wore black breeches, with heavy boots; his cap, also, bordered with silver, was surrounded with a crape. In fine, on his blinds were, in relief, the sovereign arms of Gerolstein.

The courier walked his horse; but his progress becoming more and more embarrassed, he was almost obliged to stop when he found himself in the midst of the crowd of which we have spoken. Although he cried "Take care!" and guided his horse with the greatest precaution, cries, threats, abuses, soon arose against him.

"Does he want to get on our backs with his camel, this fellow?"

"What a silver plate on his body—thank you!" cried Tortillard, under his green mask with a red tongue.

"If he gives us impudence, let us put him on his feet."

"And we'll cut off the '*galuches*' of his jacket to melt them," said Nicolas.

"And we'll rip you open if you are not satisfied, dirty footman," added Le Squelette, addressing the courier, and seizing the bridle of his horse, for the crowd had become so dense that the bandit had relinquished his project of dancing to the barrière.

The courier, a vigorous and resolute man, said to Le Squelette, raising the handle of his whip, "If you do not let go the bridle of my horse, I will cut you across the face."

"You, you pitiful scoundrel?"

"Yes; I am walking my horse; I cry, Take care! you have no right to stop me. The carriage of my lord follows me. I already hear the cracking of the whips. Let me pass."

"Your lord?" said Le Squelette. "What is he to me—your lord? I will knock him down if it pleases me. I never have stabbed a lord: this gives me the desire to do it."

"There are no more lords—'*Vive la Charte!*'" cried Tortillard, and humming these lines of the *Parisienne*, "*En avant, marchons contre leurs canons*," he caught hold of one of the courier's boots, and bearing with all his weight, made him tremble in his seat. A blow with the handle of his whip on the head of Tortillard paid him for his audacity. But immediately the enraged populace threw themselves upon the courier; he dashed the spurs into the sides of his horse, and endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not succeed; neither was he able to draw his hunting-knife. Dismounted, thrown backward, amid their cries and enraged shouts, he would have been killed had it not been for the arrival of Rodolphe's carriage, which diverted the attention of these wretches.

For some time the "*coupé*" of the prince, drawn by four post-horses, went only on a walk, and one of the two footmen in mourning (on account of Sarah's death) seated behind had prudently descended, and stood near one of the doors, the carriage being a very low one. The postillions cried, "Take care!" and advanced with caution.

Rodolphe, as well as his daughter, was dressed in deep mourning; holding one of her hands, he looked at her with unspeakable happiness; the sweet and charming face of Fleur de Marie appeared to advantage in her little black crape bonnet, which set off her fair complexion and the brilliant tints of her beautiful flaxen hair; one would have said that the azure of this fine day was reflected in her large eyes, which never had been of a softer and more transparent blue. Although her sweetly-smiling face expressed calmness and happiness, yet, when she looked at her father, a shade of melancholy, sometimes even of indefinable sadness, cast its shadow on the features of Fleur de Marie, when the eyes of her father were turned away.

"You are displeased at my calling you so early this morning, and for having advanced the moment of departure?" said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Oh! no, my father—the morning is so beautiful!"

"That was my thought; and our day's journey will be better divided by leaving early, and you will be less fatigued. Murphy, my aides-de-camp, and the carriage with your women, will join us at our first stopping-place, where you will repose."

"Dear father, it is I only of whom you are always thinking."

"Yes, mademoiselle, it is impossible for me to have any other thought," said the prince, smiling; then he added, with a burst of tenderness, "Oh! I love you so much—I love you so much—your forehead—quick."

Fleur de Marie leaned towards her father, and Rodolphe kissed her beautiful forehead.

It was at this moment that the carriage, approaching the crowd, had lessened its speed.

Rodolphe, much astonished, let down the window, and said in German to the footman who stood near the door, "Well! Frantz, what is the matter? what is this tumult?"

"Monseigneur, there is such a crowd that the horses cannot move."

"And what is the reason of the crowd?"

"Monseigneur, I have just heard that there is an execution about to take place."

"Ah! this is frightful!" cried Rodolphe, throwing himself back in the carriage.

"What is the matter, my father?" said Fleur de Marie, with anxiety.

* The executioner.

"Nothing—nothing, my child."

"But these threatening cries—do you hear? they approach. What is that, mon Dieu?"

"Frantz, order the postillions to turn and go to Charenton by another road, whatever it may be," said Rodolphe.

"Monseigneur, it is too late; we are in the crowd. They have stopped the horses. Some ill-looking people—" The footman could not say another word. The crowd, exasperated by the sanguinary shouts of Le Squelette and Nicolas, suddenly surrounded the carriage. In spite of the efforts and threats of the postillions, the horses were stopped, and Rodolphe saw himself surrounded on all sides by horrible, threatening, and furious faces; pre-eminent among all, from his great height, was Le Squelette, who advanced to the door of the carriage.

"My father, take care!" cried Fleur de Marie, throwing her arms around Rodolphe's neck.

"It is you, then, who are the lord?" said Le Squelette, thrusting his hideous head into the carriage.

At this insolence, Rodolphe would have given way to the natural violence of his character, had it not been for the presence of his daughter; but he restrained himself, and answered coolly, "What do you want? Why do you stop my carriage?"

"Because it pleases us," said Le Squelette, placing his bony hands on the door. "Every one in his turn: yesterday you trampled on the '*canaille*'; to-day the '*canaille*' will trample on you, if you stir."

"My father, we are lost!" murmured Fleur de Marie, in a low voice.

"Compose yourself—I comprehend," said the prince; "it is the last day of the Carnival. These people are drunk. I will soon get rid of them."

"We must make him get out, and his woman also," cried Nicolas. "Why should they trample on poor folks?"

"You appear to be drunk, and doubtless have a desire to drink more," said Rodolphe, taking a purse from his pocket. "Here, this is for you; do not detain my carriage any longer." And he threw him his purse. Tortillard caught it.

"Exactly; you are going a journey; your pockets must be well lined, so hand out some more money, or I will kill you. I have nothing to risk. I ask you for your money or your life in broad daylight. It is a farce," said Le Squelette, completely intoxicated with wine and rage; and he roughly opened the door.

The patience of Rodolphe was exhausted; uneasy for Fleur de Marie, whose alarm increased at each moment, and thinking that a decided stand would overawe this wretch, whom he thought intoxicated, he sprang from his carriage to seize Le Squelette by the throat. At first, the latter drew back quickly, taking from his pocket a long knife; then he threw himself upon Rodolphe.

Fleur de Marie, seeing the poniard of the bandit raised against her father, uttered a piercing cry, sprang out of the carriage, and clasped her arms around him.

Without the aid of the Chourineur, they would have perished. He, at the commencement of this affray, having recognised the livery of the prince, had succeeded, after superhuman efforts, in approaching Le Squelette. At the moment that he threatened the prince with his knife, the Chourineur, with one hand, arrested the arm of the brigand, and with the other he seized him by the throat, and threw him over backward.

Although taken by surprise, Le Squelette turned, recognised the Chourineur, and cried, "The man with the gray blouse of La Force! this time I kill you;" and throwing himself furiously on the Chourineur, he plunged the knife in his bosom.

The Chourineur staggered, but did not fall: the crowd supported him.

"The guard! here is the guard!" cried several voices.

At these words, at the sight of the assassination of the Chourineur, the dense crowd, fearing to be compromised in the murder, dispersed as by enchantment, and fled in all directions.

When the guard arrived, guided by the courier, who had succeeded in making his escape when the mob had abandoned him to surround the carriage of the prince, there only remained on the theatre of this mournful scene, Rodolphe, his daughter, and the Chourineur covered with blood. The two footmen of the prince had seated him on the ground, with his back against a tree.

All this had passed a thousand times more rapidly than it is possible to write it, at some steps from the "*guinguette*," whence had issued Le Squelette and his band.

The prince, pale and agitated, supported the fainting Fleur de Marie in his arms, while the postillions readjusted the traces, which had been injured.

"Quick!" said the prince to his people, who were occupied in assisting the Chourineur. "Carry this unfortunate man into this tavern. And you," added he, addressing his courier, "get on the box, and drive with all speed to the hotel for Doctor David. He was not to leave before eleven o'clock: you will find him there."

Some minutes afterward, the carriage was rapidly driven off, and the two domestics carried the Chourineur into the saloon where the orgies had taken place, and where still remained some of the women who had figured in it.

"My poor child," said Rodolphe to his daughter, "I will lead you to a chamber in this house, and you will await me there: for I cannot abandon solely to the care of my people this courageous man, who has once more saved my life."

"Oh! my father, I entreat you, do not leave me!" cried Fleur de Marie with alarm, clinging to the arm of Rodolphe. "Do not leave me alone. I would die with fear. I will go where you go—"

"But this is a frightful sight!"

"But, thanks to this man, you live for me, my father; at least, permit me to unite with you in thanking and consoling him."

The perplexity of the prince was great: his daughter seemed so much alarmed at remaining alone, that he was obliged to allow her to accompany him to the room where the Chourineur had been carried. The master of the *guinguette*, assisted by several of the women who had remained (among whom was the Ogresse of the tapis-franc), had in haste laid the wounded man upon a mattress, and then stanched his wound with napkins. The Chourineur had just opened his eyes, when Rodolphe entered. At the sight of the prince his countenance, of death-like paleness, brightened up a little; he smiled painfully, and said to him, in a feeble voice,

"Ah, Monsieur Rodolphe! how fortunate it was that I was there!"

"Brave and devoted—as always," said the prince to him in a mournful voice: "you save me again!"

"I was going to the Barrière de Charenton—to see you depart—happily—I was stopped here by the crowd—besides, this was to happen to me—I said so to Martial—I had a presentiment."

"A presentiment!"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe—the dream of the sergeant—last night I had it—"

"Forget these ideas. Hope: your wound will not be mortal."

"Oh! yes—Le Squelette has struck home. Never mind, I was right—to say to Martial—that an earthworm like me could sometimes be—useful—to a great lord like you—"

"But it is life—life!—that I owe you again."

"We are quits, Monsieur Redolphe. You told me that I had *heart and honour*. These words—'*voyez-vous*'—Oh! I suffocate, monseigneur—without you—command—do me the honour—of—your hand—I feel that I am going—"

"No, it is impossible!" cried the prince, bending over the Chourineur, and pressing in his hands the icy fingers of the dying man. "No; you will live—you will live!"

"Monsieur Rodolphe—do you see that there is something—up there—I have killed—with a blow of the knife?" said the Chourineur, in a voice more and more feeble and indistinct.

At this moment his eyes were fixed on Fleur de Marie, whom he had not yet perceived. Astonishment was painted on his dying face; he started, and said,

"Ah! mon Dieu! La Goualeuse."

"Yes, she is my daughter. She blesses you for having preserved her father."

"She—your daughter! here—that reminds me of our acquaintance—Monsieur Rodolphe—and the—blows with the fists—at the end—but—this—blow with the knife—will be also—the blow—of the end. I have *chouriné*—they—*chourine*—it is just."

Then he uttered a deep sigh, his head falling backward—he was dead!

The noise of horses resounded without; the carriage of Rodolphe had met that of Murphy and David, who, in their eagerness to rejoin the prince, had hastened their departure. David and the squire entered.

"David," said Rodolphe, wiping away his tears, and pointing to the Chourineur, "is there no hope?"

"None, monseigneur," said the doctor, after a minute's examination. During this minute, a mute but frightful scene passed between Fleur de Marie and the Ogresse, which Rodolphe had not noticed. When the Chourineur pronounced in a low tone the name of La Goualeuse, the Ogresse, raising her head, had quickly seen Fleur de Marie. Already the horrible woman had recognised Rodolphe in the person whom they called monseigneur. He called La Goualeuse his daughter. Such a transformation stupified the Ogresse, who kept her staring eyes obstinately fixed on her former victim.

Fleur de Marie, pale and alarmed, seemed fascinated by this look. The death of the Chourineur, the unexpected appearance of the Ogresse, who had just awakened more grievously than ever the remembrance of her former degradation, seemed to her of mournful presage. From this moment, Fleur de Marie was struck with one of those presentiments which often have, on characters like hers, an irresistible influence.

* * * * * * *

A short time after these sad events, Rodolphe and his daughter had left Paris forever.

THE END.

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE publishers of Alison's History of Europe having completed their re print, from the third London edition, would remind the purchasers of the pre ceding numbers, and also their friends who have been waiting to procure th work *entire*, that the author's narrative is now presented to them *unmutilated* Any change or omission, unsanctioned by the author, would so disparage th original work, that its chief recommendations and its intrinsic value would b sacrificed.

The seventy-sixth chapter, on the last war between the United States an Great Britain, contained some mistakes, which rendered it advisable, in con formity with Mr. Alison's own desire, to correct those errors of fact, as wel as his inadequate delineations of our Republican institutions. Chancello Kent having transmitted to Mr. Alison a packet of critical remarks, kindly gave us a copy of them, which, with Mr. Alison's corrections, have been in serted in the present edition. A series of explanatory notes has also been ap pended, which have been approved by competent judges, and tend materially to rectify Mr. Alison's principal errors, and to enhance the value of the narra tive.

Moreover, one great defect in the European edition has here been supplied The original work was issued without any Index, so that any particular docu ment or fact could with difficulty be discovered by the reader. The very co pious Index which is now supplied (without additional expense to the purcha ser), adds largely to the value of the work, and so facilitates the references which may be necessary, that every prominent occurrence and record amid all its multitudinous subjects can be traced throughout the history.

With these essential improvements, the publishers submit this important work to general patronage, in the confident assurance that, exclusive of Mr. Alison's monarchical and aristocratical predilections, American citizens will be gratified with the acquisition of this standard history of the modern French Revolution, WITHOUT ABRIDGMENT, at less than one tenth of the price which must be paid for the English copy.

The work, neatly and firmly bound in sheep, with marble edges, may now be obtained of the publishers and of the booksellers generally.

HARPER & BROTHERS.

November, 1843.

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GEROLSTEIN.

A SEQUEL TO

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

PART VIII. AND LAST.

CHAPTER I.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN — OLDENZAAL TO COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

Oldenzaal, August 23, 1840.*

I HAVE just returned from Gérolstein, where I have passed three months with the grand-duke and his family. I expected to have found a letter announcing your arrival at Oldenzaal, my dear Maximilian. Imagine my grief, my surprise, when I understood that you would be detained in Hungary several weeks longer.

I have not been able to write to you for four months, not knowing how to direct my letters to you, thanks to your original and adventurous manner of travelling, and yet you had, nevertheless, seriously promised me at Vienna, at the moment of our separation, that you would be at Oldenzaal the first of August. I must, then, renounce the pleasure of seeing you; and never had I more desire to pour out my heart into yours, my good Maximilian, my oldest friend; for though we are both still young, our friendship is old—it dates from our infancy.

What shall I say to you? Within three months a great revolution has taken place in me. I have reached one of those moments which decide a man's fate. Judge if I do not want your presence, your advice. But you will not fail me much longer; whatever concerns detain you in Hungary, you will come, Maximilian; you must come, I conjure you, for I shall, indeed, need the most earnest consolation, and I cannot go to you. My father, whose health becomes more and more feeble, has recalled me from Gérolstein. He grows weaker every day. It is impossible for me to leave him.

I have so much to tell you, that I shall be prolix, for I have to recount to you the most painful, the most romantic incident of my life.

Strange and sad chance! during this period we are fatally distant from each other; we, *inseparables*, we, *two brothers*, both of us the most fervent apostles of thrice holy friendship, we, who were so proud of proving that the Cazlas and the Posa of our Schiller are not idealties, and that, like these divine creations of the great poet, we know how to taste the sweet delights of a tender and mutual attachment!

Oh, my friend, why were you not there, why were you not there? For three months my heart has been overflowing with emotions, at the same time inexpressibly sweet and sad. And I was alone; I am alone now. Pity me; you, who know my sensibility, at times so fancifully expansive; you, who have often seen my eyes moistened with tears at the simple recital of a generous action, at the simple view of a beautiful sunset, or in a quiet and starry summer night. You remember the past year, during our excursion to the ruins of Oppenfeld—the borders of the great lake—our silent reveries during that magnificent evening, so calm, so poetical, so serene.

Strange contrast! it was three days before that bloody duel, in which I would not take you for my second, for I should have suffered too much for you if I had been wounded under your eyes—that duel, for a quarrel at play, in which my second unfortunately killed that young Frenchman, the Viscount St. Rémy. Apropos, do you know what has become of that dangerous siren St. Rémy brought to Oppenfeld, and whose name was, I think, Cecily David?

You will smile with pity, my friend, to see me wander thus among these vague remembrances of the past, instead of proceeding to the grave confessions which I have announced to you; it is because, in spite of myself, I recoil from these confessions; I know your severity; I am afraid of being scolded, yes, scolded, because, instead of having acted with reflection, with wisdom (alas for the wisdom of one-and-twenty!), I have acted foolishly, or, rather, I have not acted at all; I have suffered myself to be borne along blindly on the current which carried me forward. It is only since my return from Gérolstein that I have, so to speak, awakened from the enchanting vision in which I have been cradled for the last three months, and this waking is sad.

Come then, my friend, good Maximilian, I assume my best courage. Hear me with indulgence. I begin by casting down my eyes; I dare not look at you, for as you read these lines your features will become so grave, so severe. Stoical man!

Having obtained leave of absence for six months, I left Vienna, and remained here some time with my father; his health was then good, and he advised me to go and visit my excellent

* The reader is reminded that about fifteen months have passed since the day when Rodolphe quitted Paris by the Barrier St. Jacques, after the murder of the Chourineur.

aunt, Princess Julianna, the superior of the Abbey of Gérolstein. I have told you, I believe, my friend, that my grandmother was cousin-german of the grandfather of the present grand-duke; and that the latter, Gustavus Rodolphe, on account of this relationship, has always treated my father and myself very kindly, very affectionately, as cousins. You know, also, I believe, that during a very long journey which the prince recently made into France, he gave to my father the charge of the government of the grand duchy.

You will believe that it is not from any pride, my friend, that I mention these circumstances to you; it is only by way of explanation of the causes of the extreme intimacy in which I lived with the grand-duke and his family during my stay at Gérolstein.

You recollect that last year, during our journey on the banks of the Rhine, we were informed that the prince had found in France, and had married *in extremis*, the Countess M'Gregor, in order to legitimatize the birth of a daughter whom he had by her, in consequence of an early secret marriage, which was afterward broken, from some illegality in the ceremony, and because it had been contracted against the will of the reigning grand-duke.

This young daughter, so solemnly acknowledged, is that charming Princess Amelia,* of whom Lord Dudley, who saw her at Gérolstein about a year since, spoke to us so often at Vienna, last winter. You recollect, we accused him of exaggeration. Strange chance! If any one had then told me—

But though you have undoubtedly now almost divined my secret, let me follow the march of events without interruption.

The Convent of Saint Hermangilde, of which my aunt is the abbess, is hardly a quarter of a league distant from Gérolstein, for the abbey gardens border on the suburbs of the city. A charming house, completely isolated from the cloister, had been placed at my disposition by my aunt, who loves me, as you know, with a maternal tenderness.

The day of my arrival she informed me that there was the next day to be a solemn reception and court ceremony; the grand-duke on that day was to make the official announcement of his approaching marriage with the Marchioness d'Harville, who had recently arrived at Gérolstein, accompanied by her father, the Count Orbigny.†

Some blame the prince for not having sought a sovereign alliance in his marriage (the grand-duchess, the former wife of the prince, belonged to the house of Bavaria); others, on the contrary, and my aunt is of the number of these, congratulate him for having preferred a young and amiable woman whom he adores, and who belongs to the highest nobility of France, to considerations of ambition. You know, moreover, my friend, that my aunt having always entertained for the Grand-duke Rodolphe the most profound attachment, she can appreciate, better than any one else, the eminent qualities of the prince.

"My dear child," said she to me on occasion of this solemn reception, which I was to attend the day after my arrival, "my dear child, the most remarkable part of this fête will undoubtedly be *the Pearl of Gérolstein.*"

"Who do you mean, my dear aunt?"

"The Princess Amelia."

"The daughter of the grand-duke? Lord Dudley told us about her at Vienna. He spoke of her with an enthusiasm which we called poetical exaggeration."

"At my age, with my character, and in my position," replied my aunt, "one is not easily excited; and you will believe my judgment to be impartial, my dear child. Indeed, I assure you, that in my whole life I never knew anything so enchanting as the Princess Amelia. I might speak to you of her angelic beauty, if she were not endowed with an inexpressible charm which is superior even to her beauty. Figure to yourself candour with dignity, and grace in modesty. From the first day in which the grand-duke presented me to her, I felt for this young princess an involuntary sympathy. Nor am I alone in this opinion. The Archduchess Sophia has been at Gérolstein for some days; she is the proudest and most haughty princess whom I know."

"Very true, my aunt, her irony is terrible; few persons escape her biting pleasantries. At Vienna, she was dreaded like the fire. Can the Princess Amelia have found favour with her."

"The other day she came here after having visited the House of Refuge which is placed under the superintendence of the young princess. 'Do you know one thing,' said this dreaded archduchess to me, with her abrupt frankness; 'I have a mind singularly disposed to satire, have I not? Well, if I were to live long with the daughter of the grand-duke, I should become, I am sure, inoffensive; her goodness is so penetrating, so *contagious*.'"

"But is my cousin, then, an enchantress?" said I to my aunt, smiling.

"Her most powerful attraction, in my eyes, at least," replied my aunt, "is that mingling of gentleness, modesty, and dignity, of which I have spoken to you, and which gives the most touching expression to her angelic face."

"Modesty is certainly a rare quality in a princess so young, so beautiful, so happy."

"Remember, too, my dear child, how much better it is for the Princess Amelia to enjoy, without vain ostentation, the high position which is incontestably acquired for her: her elevation is recent."*

"In her conversations with you, dear aunt, has the princess ever made any allusions to her past fortunes?"

"No; but when, notwithstanding my advanced age, I have spoken to her with the respect which is due to her, since her royal highness is the daughter of our sovereign, her ingenuous distress, mingled with gratitude and veneration for me, have deeply moved me; for

* As the name of Marie recalled to Rodolphe and his daughter such sad recollections, he had given her the name of Amelia, after his mother.

† The reader is reminded, in order to maintain the probability of this narrative, that the last Princess of Courland, a lady as remarkable for the singular superiority of her mind as for the charm of her character, and the admirable goodness of her heart, was Mademoiselle de Medem

* On arriving in Germany, Rodolphe had said that Fleur de Marie, whom he had long supposed dead, had never quitted her mother, the Countess Sarah.

her reserve, at the same time noble and affable, proved to me that the present did not intoxicate her so much as to make her forget the past, and that she rendered to my age what I granted to her rank."

"You must have an exquisite tact, my dear aunt, to observe such delicate shades."

"Thus, my dear child, the more I have seen of the Princess Amelia, the more I have felt my first impression confirmed. Since she has been here, the good works she has accomplished are incredible, and she has done it all with a reflection, a maturity of judgment which amazes me in a person of her age. Judge of them: at her request, the grand-duke has founded at Gérolstein an establishment for little orphan girls of five or six years old, and for young girls, also orphans or abandoned by their parents, who have reached the age of sixteen, an age so fatal for the unfortunate who have no one to defend them from the seductions of vice or the pressure of want. The noble nuns of my abbey teach and direct the daughters of this house. In going to visit it, I have often occasion to observe the adoration which these poor disinherited creatures entertain towards the Princess Amelia. Every day she goes to pass several hours in this establishment, which is placed under her especial protection; and I repeat to you, my child, it is not only respect, gratitude, that these poor girls and the nuns feel for her highness, it is almost fanaticism."

"The Princess Amelia must be an angel," replied I to my aunt.

"An angel—yes, an angel," replied she "for, you cannot imagine with what melting goodness she treats her *protegés*, and with what pious solicitude she watches over them—I have never seen the susceptibility of misfortune more delicately treated, it seems as if an irresistible sympathy especially attracts the princess towards this class of the abandoned poor. Finally, would you believe it, she, the daughter of a sovereign, never calls these young girls any thing but *my sisters*."

At these last words of my aunt, I confess it to you, Maximilian, the tears came into my eyes. Do you not find something beautiful and holy in this conduct of the princess? You know my sincerity, I protest to you that I report to you as I will always report to you, the conversation of my aunt, almost word for word.

"Since the princess," said I to her, "is so marvellously endowed, I shall feel great embarrassment when I am presented to her to-morrow; you know my insurmountable timidity, you know that elevation of character overpowered me more even than that of rank, I am sure I shall appear to the princess as stupid as embarrassed; I know this well enough beforehand."

"Come, come," said my aunt smiling, "she will take pity on you, my dear child, and the more so as you will not be a new acquaintance to her."

"Dear aunt."

"Certainly."

"How so?"

"You recollect that when at the age of sixteen years, you quitted Oldenzaal to make a journey to Russia and England with your father, I had your portrait painted in the costume which you wore at the first fancy ball given by the late grand-duchess?"

"Yes, the costume of a German page of the sixteenth century."

"Our excellent painter Fritz Mokker, while he faithfully re-produced your features, not only retraced a personage of the sixteenth century, but, with the caprice of an artist, he amused himself with imitating even the manner and the appearance of an age of pictures painted soon after that period. A few days after her arrival in Germany, the Princess Amelia having come to visit me with her father, remarked your portrait, and asked me with great simplicity what this charming picture of the olden time was? Her father smiled, and making a signal to me, answered her, 'This portrait is that of one of our cousins, you see by his costume, my dear Amelia, of some three hundred years date. When he was very young he exhibited a rare courage and an excellent heart. Does he not, in fact, display bravery in his bearing, and goodness in his smile?'"

(I beg you, Maximilian, do not shrug your shoulder with impatient disdain, at my writing such things about myself. It is hard for me to do it, you may suppose, but the sequel of this narrative will prove to you that these puerile details, of which I feel the bitter ridicule, are unfortunately indispensable. I close the parenthesis, and go on:)

"The Princess Amelia," continued my aunt, "the dupe of this innocent pleasantry, agreed in opinion with her father, respecting the gentle and proud expression of your physiognomy, after having attentively examined the portrait. Afterwards when I went to see her at Gérolstein, she smilingly asked me the news of her cousin of the olden time. I then owned to her our deception, telling her that the fair page of the sixteenth century, was simply my nephew, Prince Henry d'Herkausen—Oldenzaal, now twenty-one years of age, Captain of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria's guards, and in everything excepting the costume, very like his portrait. At these words, the Princess Amelia, added my aunt, blushed and became again serious, as she almost always is. Since then, she has not spoken to me again about the picture. Nevertheless, you see, my dear child, that you will not be entirely a stranger and a new face to *your cousin*, as the grand-duke calls you. So take courage and sustain the honour of your portrait," added my aunt smiling.

This conversation took place, as I have told you, my dear Maximilian, on the eve of the day when I was to be presented to the princess, my cousin. I then left my aunt, and returned to my apartment.

I have never hidden from you my most secret thoughts, good or evil, I am therefore about to confess to you what absurd and foolish imaginations I allowed myself to indulge in after the conversation which I have just reported to you.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN—OLDENZAAL TO COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

You have often told me, my dear Maximilian,

that I have no vanity; I believe that is true, and must believe so, to be able to continue this account without exposing myself to the charge of presumptuousness in your eyes.

When I was alone at home, in recalling my aunt's conversation, I could not help dreaming over with a secret satisfaction the fact that the Princess Amelia having observed the portrait of me, made six or seven years ago, had asked a few days after, in jest, for news of her cousin of the olden time. I acknowledged that nothing was more foolish than to found the least hope upon such an insignificant circumstance; but, as I told you, I shall always use the most entire frankness with you; this insignificant circumstance ravished me. Undoubtedly the praises which I had heard lavished upon the Princess Amelia by a woman as grave and austere as my aunt, while they raised the princess still higher in my eyes, rendered me yet more sensible to the distinction which she had deigned to bestow upon me, or, rather, had granted to my portrait. However, as I tell you, this distinction awakened in me such foolish hopes, that now, in throwing back a calmer glance upon the past, I ask how I could have allowed myself to be drawn on to those thoughts which inevitably bordered upon a precipice.

Although a relation of the grand-duke, and always kindly welcomed by him, it was impossible for me to conceive of the least hope of marriage with the princess, even if she had accepted my love, which was still more improbable. Our family holds an honourable rank, but it is poor, if we compare our fortune with the immense domains of the grand-duke, the richest prince of the Germanic Confederation; and then, I was hardly twenty-one years old; I was a mere captain in the Guards, without renown, without personal reputation; never, in short, would the grand-duke dream of me for his daughter.

All these reflections should have preserved me from a passion which as yet I did not feel, but of which I had, so to speak, a singular presentiment. Alas! I gave myself up, on the contrary, to new childishness. I was wearing on my finger a ring which was formally given me by Theckla (the good countess, whom you know); although this token of careless and frivolous love could not trouble me much, I heroically made of it a sacrifice to my newborn love, and the poor ring disappeared in the water which flows rapidly under my window.

It is useless to tell you what a night I passed; you can imagine it. I knew that the Princess Amelia was fair, and of angelic beauty; I endeavoured to imagine her features, her stature, her demeanour, the sound of her voice, the expression of her countenance; then, remembering my portrait which she had remarked upon, I recollected with regret that the cursed artist had flattered me; besides, in despair, I compared the picturesque costume of a page of the fifteenth century with the severe uniform of His Imperial Majesty's captain of the Guards. Then to these foolish ideas succeeded now and then, I assure you my friend, some generous thoughts, some noble impulses of the soul; I felt myself moved—yes! deeply moved at the remembrances of what my aunt had told me of that adorable goodness of the Princess Amelia, who called the poor abandoned ones whom she protected—*her sisters*.

"In fine—odd and inexplicable contrast—I have, you know, the most humble opinion of myself—and I was, nevertheless, proud enough to suppose that the sight of my portrait had struck the princess; I had good sense enough to understand that an impassable distance separated me from her for ever, and yet I asked myself, with real anxiety, whether she would not find me unworthy of my portrait. In short, I had never seen her; I was convinced beforehand that she would hardly look upon me; and, nevertheless, I thought myself right in sacrificing to her the pledge of my former love.

"I passed in real suffering the night of which I speak, and a part of the next day. The hour of reception arrived. I tried on two or three uniforms, finding each worse than the other, and set out for the palace of the grand-duke, much displeased with myself.

"Although Gérolstein is hardly a quarter of a league from the Abbey of St. Hermangilda, during the short drive a thousand thoughts assailed me: all the nonsense with which I had busied myself disappeared before a grave, sad, almost threatening idea; an invincible presentiment forewarned me of one of those crises which govern the whole life; a sort of revelation told me that I was about to love, to love passionately, to love as one loves but once; and, to heighten the fatality, this love, so highly and worthily placed, was always to be unfortunate to me.

These ideas alarmed me so much, that I suddenly took the wise resolution of stopping my carriage, returning to the abbey, and going to rejoin my father, leaving to my aunt the duty of excusing me to the grand-duke for my abrupt departure.

Unfortunately, one of those vulgar causes, of which the effects are sometimes so immense, prevented me from executing this. My carriage having stopped at the entrance of the avenue leading to the palace, I leaned out at the window to give orders to my people to return, when the Baron and Baroness Koller, who, like me, were on their way to court, perceived me, and ordered their carriage also to stop. The baron, seeing me in uniform, said, "Can I assist you in anything, my dear prince? what has happened to you? Since you are on your way to the palace, will you not join us, if anything has happened to your horses?"

Nothing could have been more easy, you may say, my friend, than for me to have made some excuse for leaving the baron, and to have regained the abbey. I suppose it is so; but whether it was weakness, or a secret desire to escape from the salutary resolution I had just formed, I replied, with an embarrassed air, that I was giving orders to my coachman to inquire at the gate of the palace whether we entered by the new pavilion, or through the marble court. "The entrance is through the marble court, my dear prince," replied the baron; "it is a grand gala reception. Tell your coachman to follow mine, I will show you the way."

You know, Maximilian, how much of a fatalist I am; I would have returned to the abbey, to spare myself the vexations which I foresaw; fate opposed it; I abandoned myself to my star.

You do not know the grand ducal palace of Gérolstein, my friend. According to all those who have visited the capitals of Europe, there is not, with the exception of Versailles, a royal residence, of which the whole pile of buildings, and the avenues to it, have a more majestic aspect. If I enter into some details on this subject, it is that, in recalling at this hour these imposing splendours, I ask myself why they did not all at first call up my nothingness; for the Princess Amelia was the daughter of the sovereign of this palace, of these guards, of this great wealth.

The court of marble, a vast hemicycle, is so called, because, with the exception of a broad path around it, in which the carriages pass, it is paved with marble of every colour, having magnificent mosaics. In the centre of it is placed an immense basin of antique marble, fed by abundant springs of water, which falls continually into a large porphyry vase.

This court of honour is surrounded by a row of white marble statues, of the finest execution, bearing torches of gilded bronze, from whence floods of dazzling gas are poured out. Alternating with these statues, Medicean vases, raised on their richly-sculptured pedestals, contain enormous rose-laurels, real flourishing shrubs, whose lustrous foliage, seen in the resplendent light, shines with a metallic verdure.

The carriages stopped at the foot of a double row of balustrades, which led to the peristyle of the palace; at the foot of this staircase, two cavaliers of the guard of the grand-duke, mounted on black horses, stood as sentries. The soldiers of the guard were chosen from among the largest-sized under-officers of the army. You, my friend, who are so fond of military men, would have been struck with the severe and martial air of these two colossal figures, whose cuirasses and brazen casques of an antique form, without ornament or crest, sparkled in the light. These cavaliers wore blue coats with yellow collar, pantaloons of white buckskin, and stout boots, reaching above the knee. Finally, for you, my friend, who are fond of military details, I will add, that at the top of the steps, on each side of the door, two grenadiers of the regiment of infantry of the grand-ducal guard were on duty. They resembled, I was told, in appearance, with the single exception of the colour of the dress and its linings, the grenadiers of Napoleon.

After having crossed the vestibule, where, with their halberts in their hands, stood the Swiss liveried servants of the prince, I ascended an imposing staircase of white marble, which led to a portico, ornamented with columns of jasper, surmounted by a cupola, painted and gilded. There were ranged two long files of foot-servants. I afterward entered into the guard-room, at the door of which were standing a chamberlain and an aid-de-camp on service, whose duty it was to lead up to his royal highness such persons as were entitled to be presented to him. My relationship, though distant, gave me a right to this honour. An aid-de-camp preceded me into a long gallery filled with men in court-dresses or uniforms, and ladies in full costume.

While I was slowly passing through this brilliant crowd, I heard words which heightened still more my emotion. On all sides people were admiring the angelic beauty of the Princess Amelia, the charming face of the Marchioness d'Harville, and the truly imperial air of the Archduchess Sophia, who had recently arrived from Munich, with the Archduke Stanislaus, and was soon to go to Warsaw. But while all rendered homage to the lofty dignity of the archduchess and to the distinguished grace of the Marchioness d'Harville, it was acknowledged that nothing was more ideal than the enchanting form of the Princess Amelia.

As I approached the spot where the grand-duke and his daughter were standing, I felt my heart beating violently. At the moment when I reached the door of this saloon (I forgot to tell you that there was a ball and court concert), the illustrious Liszt had just seated himself at the piano, and the deepest silence succeeded to the slight murmur of conversation. While awaiting the end of the piece, which the artist played with his accustomed superiority, I remained standing at the door.

Then, my dear Maximilian, for the first time I saw the Princess Amelia. Allow me to paint to you this scene, for I feel an inexpressible pleasure in gathering up all these recollections.

Imagine, my friend, a vast saloon, furnished with royal splendour, dazzling with light, and hung with crimson draperies, about which ran a border of foliage embroidered in gold. In the first row, in large gilded chairs, were seated the Archduchess Sophia (to whom the prince was doing the honours of the palace), on her left the Marchioness d'Harville, and on her right the Princess Amelia. Standing behind them was the grand-duke, wearing the uniform of colonel of his guards. He seemed to have renewed his youth by his happiness, and did not look more than thirty years old. The military dress set off finely the elegance of his height, and the beauty of his face. Near him stood the Archduke Stanislaus, in the costume of a field-marshal. Then came the Princess Amelia's ladies of honour, the wives of the grand dignitaries of the court, and, finally, the latter themselves.

Need I tell you that the Princess Amelia, by her rank less than by her grace and beauty, reigned supreme in this dazzling assemblage? Do not condemn me, my friend, without reading this description. Though it fall a thousand times below the reality, you may comprehend my adoration; you will understand that as soon as I saw her, I loved her, and that the suddenness of this passion can be equalled only by its violence, and the intensity of its duration.

The Princess Amelia, dressed in a simple robe of white watered silk, wore, like the Archduchess Sophia, the grand cordon of the imperial order of Saint Nepomucene, which had been recently sent her by the empress. A bandeau of pearls, surrounding her noble and open forehead, harmonized most exquisitely with the two large braids of magnificent ashy blond hair which bordered her cheeks, which were lightly tinged with red; her fair arms, still whiter than the waves of lace from which they escaped, were half hidden by her gloves, which did not come up to her dimpled elbow: nothing could be more graceful than her bearing, nothing

prettier than her little foot, with its white satin shoe. At the moment when I saw her, her large eyes, of the purest azure, were thoughtful. I do not know whether at this moment she felt the influence of some serious idea, or whether she was deeply impressed by the grave harmony of the piece Liszt was playing, but her half smile seemed to me to have a sweet and inexpressible melancholy; her head was slightly bent over on her bosom, and she was playing mechanically with a great boquet of white violets and roses which she held in her hand.

I could never express to you my feelings at that moment: all that my aunt had said to me of the ineffable goodness of the Princess Amelia came back to my mind. You may smile, my friend, but in spite of myself I felt my eyes moistening as I gazed on this thoughtful, almost sad young girl, so admirably beautiful, surrounded with honours, with such respect, and so idolized by such a father as the grand-duke.

Maximilian, I have often said it to you, I believe men incapable of tasting certain kinds of happiness, which are, so to speak, too complete, too immense for his circumscribed faculties; I think, too, that certain beings are too divinely endowed not to feel sometimes that they are alone here below, and that they feel at times vague regrets for their exquisite delicacy, which exposes them to so many deceptions, to so many chills which are unknown to less tender natures. It seemed to me that at that time the Princess Amelia felt the reaction of such a thought.

Suddenly, by some strange chance (there is a fatality about everything here), she mechanically turned her eyes towards the place where I was standing.

You know how scrupulously etiquette the hierarchy of rank is observed with us. Thanks to my title and to the ties of relationship which attach me to the grand-duke, the persons in the midst of whom I had at first placed myself had receded gradually, so that I remained almost alone and decidedly in the first row, in the embrasure of the gallery door.

It must undoubtedly have been this circumstance which caused the princess, as she started from her revery, to perceive and take notice of me, for she made a slight movement of surprise, and blushed.

She had seen my portrait at the abbey, in my aunt's apartments, and she recognised me—nothing was more simple. The princess had scarcely looked at me for a second, but that look made me feel the most violent, the most profound emotion; I felt my cheeks on fire; I cast down my eyes, and remained some minutes without daring to raise them again towards the princess. When I ventured to lift them, she was talking in a low tone with the Archduchess Sophia, who appeared to listen with the most affectionate interest.

Liszt having put an interval of some moments between the two pieces he was to play, the grand-duke took advantage of that moment to express to him his admiration in the most gracious manner. The prince, as he returned to his place, perceived me, made a sign of the head to me with the greatest kindness, and said some words to the archduchess in pointing me out to her. The latter, after having looked at me for a moment, turned towards the grand-duke, who could not prevent smiling as he replied to her and spoke to his daughter. The Princess Amelia seemed to me embarrassed, for she again blushed.

I was in torments; unfortunately, etiquette did not permit me to quit the spot where I was until the concert was over, which was again beginning. Two or three times I stole a glance at the Princess Amelia; she seemed pensive and thoughtful: my heart was oppressed; I suffered a slight feeling of uneasiness, as if I had been the cause of the pain she felt. Undoubtedly the grand-duke had been asking her, jestingly, if she found any resemblance to the portrait of her cousin of the olden times; and in her ingenuousness, she perhaps reproached herself for not having told her father that she had before recognised me.

When the concert was over, I followed the aid-de-camp. He led me towards the grand-duke, who advanced a few steps to meet me, took me cordially by the arm, and, approaching the Archduchess Sophia, said to her,

"I beg of your royal highness the permission to present to you my cousin, Prince Henry of Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal."

"I have already met the prince at Vienna, and I am happy to see him again here," replied the archduchess, before whom I made a profound bow.

"My dear Amelia," continued the prince, addressing himself to his daughter, "I present to you Prince Henry, your cousin; he is son of Prince Paul, one of my most venerable friends, whom I much regret not to see to-day at Gérolstein."

"Be so kind, sir, as to inform Prince Paul that I share deeply in my father's regrets, for I shall be always happy to become acquainted with his friends," replied my cousin, with a simplicity full of grace.

I had not before heard the sound of Princess Amelia's voice: imagine, my friend, the sweetest, the most delicious, the most harmonious tones; in fine, one of those accents which cause the most delicate cords of the soul to vibrate.

"I hope, my dear Henry, that you will remain some time with your aunt, to whom I am greatly attached. I respect her as a mother, as you know," said the grand-duke, kindly, to me. "Come often to see us, familiarly, in the morning, at three o'clock. If we are going out, you can join us in our walk; you know I have always loved you, because you have one of the most noble hearts."

"I do not know how to express to your royal highness my gratitude for the kind reception you condescend to bestow on me."

"To prove to me your gratitude, then," said the prince, smiling, "ask your cousin for the second contra dance; the first belongs of right to the archduke."

"Will your highness grant me this favour?" said I to the Princess Amelia, bowing before her.

"Call each other simply cousins, after the good old German custom," said the grand-duke, gayly; "ceremony is not proper among relatives."

"Will my cousin do me the honour to dance this contra dance with me?"

"Yes, cousin," replied the Princess Amelia.

CHAPTER III.

Prince Henry d'Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal, to Count Maximilian Kaminetz.

Oldenzaal, Aug. 25th, 1843.

I can hardly tell you, my friends, how pleased, and, at the same time, pained, I was at the fatherly cordiality of the grand-duke; the confidence he testified towards me, the affectionate kindness with which he induced his daughter and myself to substitute for the formula of etiquette these family terms of a most tender intimacy, all penetrated me with gratitude; I reproached myself so much the more bitterly for the fatal attraction of a love which ought not, or could not be agreeable to the prince.

I had promised myself, it is true (and I have not failed in this resolution), never to utter a word which might lead my cousin to suspect the love that I was nourishing; but I feared that my emotion, my glances, might betray me. In spite of myself, however, this sentiment, silent and concealed as it must be, seemed guilty to me.

I had time to make these reflections while the Princess Amelia was dancing the first contra dance with the Archduke Stanislaus. Here, as everywhere, dancing is no more than a kind of march which follows the measure of the orchestra; nothing could show to more advantage the serious grace of my cousin's carriage.

With a happiness mingled with anxiety, I awaited the moment for that conversation that the liberty of the ball would allow me to hold with her. I was sufficiently master of myself to conceal my embarrassment, as I went to seek her with the Marchioness d'Harville.

Thinking of the circumstances of the portrait, I expected to see the Princess Amelia share my embarrassment. I was not mistaken; I recall, almost word for word, our first conversation: let me relate it you, my friend:

"Will your highness permit me," said I to her, "to say *my cousin*, as the grand-duke has authorized me?"

"Certainly, my cousin," she kindly answered me: "I am always happy to obey my father."

"And I am still more proud of this familiarity, my cousin; I have learned through my aunt to know you, that is to say, to appreciate you."

"My father has also spoken to me of you, cousin, and what will perhaps astonish you," added she, timidly, "I know you already, if I may say so, by sight. The lady superior of St. Hermangilda, for whom I have the most affectionate respect, one day showed to us, to my father and myself, a picture."

"Where I was represented as a page of the sixteenth century?"

"Yes, cousin, and my father even used the little deceit of telling me that this portrait was of one of our relations of the olden time, adding such kind words towards this cousin of former days, that our family must be happy to number him among our relations of the present day."

"Alas! my cousin, I fear I resemble no more the moral portrait that the grand-duke designed to make of me, than I do the page of the sixteenth century."

"You deceive yourself, cousin," said the princess to me, gayly; "for at the end of the concert, casting my eyes, by chance, towards the side gallery, I recognised you directly, in spite of the difference of costume."

Then, wishing, undoubtedly, to change a subject of conversation that embarrassed her, she said to me,

"What a wonderful talent M. Liszt possesses! do you not think so?"

"Wonderful. With what pleasure you listened to him!"

"Because, indeed, it seems to me there is a double charm in music without words; not only is it played with excellent execution, but we can in a moment apply our own thoughts to the melodies that we hear, and which become, so to speak, their accompaniment. I know not if you understand me, cousin?"

"Perfectly. Our thoughts are, then, the words that we adapt mentally to the air that we hear."

"Just so, just so: you understand me," said she to me, with an expression of pleased satisfaction; "I fear I should explain but ill what I felt just now, while listening to that melody, so plaintive and so touching."

"God grant, my cousin," said I to her, smiling, "that you may have no words to put to an air so sad?"

Either because my question was indiscreet, and she wished to avoid answering me, or because she had not understood it, the Princess Amelia immediately said to me, pointing out the grand-duke, who, giving his arm to the Archduchess Sophia, was then traversing the dancing gallery,

"Cousin, look at my father: how handsome he is! How noble and fine his air! how eagerly all glances follow him! It seems to me he is more beloved even than he is revered."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "it is not only here in the midst of this court that he is cherished! If the blessings of the people should be echoed to posterity, the name of Rodolphe of Gérolstein would be, with justice, immortal!"

In speaking thus, my enthusiasm was sincere; for you know, my friend, that the dominions of the prince are, with good reason, called *the Paradise of Germany*.

It is impossible to paint to you the grateful glance my cousin threw upon me, on hearing me speak in this manner.

"To appreciate my father thus," said she to me, with emotion, "is to be worthy of the attachment he bears to you."

"And can no one but myself love and admire him! Besides, those rare qualities that make great princes, has he not the genius of kindness that makes princes adored?"

"You know not how truly you speak," exclaimed the princess, still more moved.

"Ah, I know—I know it, and all those whom he governs know it as I do. They love him so much that they mourn in his sorrows, as they rejoice in his happiness; the eagerness of all to come and offer their homage to the Marchioness d'Harville, is bestowed on the choice of his royal highness, as well as the true worth of the future grand-duchess."

"The Marchioness d'Harville is more worthy than any one of the attachment of my father; this is the highest praise of her I can give you."

"And you can, doubtless, appreciate her justly. Have you not known her in France, my cousin?"

"Hardly had I uttered these last words, when some sudden thought, I know not what, came into the Princess Amelia's mind: he cast down her eyes, and, for a second, her features wore an expression of sadness, that made me silent with surprise.

We were then at the end of the contradance; the last figure separated me a moment from my cousin; when I led her back to the Marchioness d'Harville, it seemed to me her features were still slightly moved.

I believed, and I believe still, that my allusion to the abode of the princess, in France, having recalled to her the death of her mother, created in her the painful impression, of which I have just spoken to you.

During this evening, I remarked a circumstance which will, perhaps, appear to you puerile, but which has been to me a new proof of the fascination this young girl inspires in all. Her bandeau of pearls being a little deranged, the Archduchess Sophia, who was leaning upon her arm, was kind enough to be willing herself to replace the bijou upon her brow. Now, to one who knows the proverbial hauteur of the archduchess, such an act of graciousness from her seems scarcely conceivable. Besides, the Princess Amelia, whom I was observing attentively at the moment, appeared at the same time so confused, so grateful, I might almost say, so embarrassed at this graceful attention, that I thought I saw a tear sparkle in her eyes.

Such, my friend, was my first evening at Gérolstein. If I have related it to you with some detail, it is that almost all these circumstances have since had their results for me.

I will now abridge: I will only speak to you of some of the principal circumstances relating to my frequent interviews with my cousin and her father.

The day after this fête, I was among the very small number of persons invited to the celebration of the marriage of the grand-duke and the Marchioness d'Harville. I never saw the countenance of the Princess Amelia more radiant and more serene than during this ceremony. She gazed upon her father and the marchioness with a sort of religious ecstasy, that gave a new charm to her features; it might have been said that they reflected the ineffable happiness of the prince and the Marchioness d'Harville.

That day my cousin was very gay, very affable. I gave her my arm in a walk that we took after dinner in the palace gardens, which were magnificently illuminated. She said to me, on speaking of her father's marriage,

"It seems to me that the happiness of those we cherish is yet more sweet to us than our own; for is there not always a shade of selfishness in the enjoyment of our own personal happiness?"

If I give you, from among a thousand, this reflection of my cousin's, my friend, it is that you may judge of the heart of this adorable creature, who possesses, like her father, the spirit of goodness.

Some days after the marriage of the grand-duke, I held quite a long conversation with him. He asked me of the past, of my plans for the future; he gave me the wisest counsel, the most flattering encouragement; he even spoke to me of several of his plans for government, with a confidence that made me feel as proud as I was flattered; in short — shall I tell it to you? For one moment a most foolish idea crossed my mind; I fancied that the prince had imagined my love, and that in this conversation he wished to study me, feel my sentiments, and perhaps lead me to an avowal.

Unhappily, this mad hope did not last long; the prince brought the conversation to a close by telling me that the time for great wars had passed away; that I ought to profit by my name, my connexions, the education I had received, and the intimate friendship that had united my father and Prince M., prime minister to the emperor, and pass through the diplomatic, instead of the military career; adding, that all the questions which were decided formerly upon the battle-field, would henceforth be decided by Congresses; that soon the intricate and base tradition of ancient diplomacy would give place to an enlarged and *humane* system of politics concerning the true interests of the people, who from day to day gained more knowledge of their rights; that a high, loyal, and generous spirit might have, before many years, a noble and great part to play in political affairs, and might thus do much good; he proposed to me, in short, the assistance of his high patronage to facilitate me at the outset of the career in which he solicited me to embark.

You understand, my friend, that if the prince had had the least design upon me, he had not made me such overtures. I thanked him for his offers with warm gratitude, adding, that I felt all the worth of his counsel, and was determined to follow it.

I had at first used some reserve in my visits to the palace, but in consequence of the urgency of the grand-duke, I soon went there every day about three o'clock. They lived there in all the simplicity of our German courts. It was the life of the great castles in England, rendered still more attractive by the cordial simplicity, the pleasing liberty of German manners. When the weather permitted, we took long rides with the grand-duke, the grand-duchess, my cousin, and the people of their household. When we remained in the palace we were occupied with music. I sang with the grand-duchess and my cousin, whose voice was of a tone of unequalled sweetness and purity—such that I could never hear it, without being moved even to the depths of my soul. At other times, we examined in detail the wonderful collections of pictures and works of art, or the admirable library of the prince, who, you know, is one of the most learned and best-informed men in Europe; frequently I returned to dine at the palace, and on opera days I accompanied the grand-ducal family to the theatre.

Every day passed like a dream: my cousin gradually came to treat me with a truly sisterly familiarity; she did not conceal from me the pleasure that she felt in seeing me; she confided to me all that interested her. Two or three times she begged me to accompany her when she went with the grand-duchess to visit the young orphans; often, also, she spoke to me of my fu-

ture plans with a maturity of reason, a serious and reflective interest, that astonished me, coming from a girl of her age; she was very fond, too, of inquiring of my infancy, and of my mother, alas! ever regretted. Every time that I wrote to my father she begged me to recall her to his remembrance; then, for she embroidered to admiration, she gave me one day for him a charming piece of tapestry, upon which she had worked for a long time. What more shall I tell you, my friend? a brother and sister, meeting again after a long separation, would not have enjoyed a sweeter intimacy. Let me add, that when, by some unusual chance, we were left alone, the entrance of a third could never have changed the subject, or even the accent of our conversation.

You will be, perhaps, astonished, my friend, at this brotherly feeling between two young people, especially as you recall what I have acknowledged to you; but the more confidence and familiarity my cousin showed me, the more I watched over, the more I constrained myself, for fear of putting an end to the adorable familiarity. And then, what increased still more my reserve, the princess showed, in her intercourse with me, so much frankness, so much noble confidence, and especially so little coquetry, that I am almost certain that she has always been ignorant of my violent passion, though there remains a slight doubt on this subject, arising from a circumstance that I will relate you immediately.

If this brotherly intercourse could always have lasted, perhaps this happiness might have been sufficient for me; but even while I was enjoying this with delight, I reflected that my service or the new career in which the prince was inducing me to engage would soon call me to Vienna or abroad; I reflected, in short, that presently, perhaps, the grand-duke would think of marrying his daughter in a manner worthy her.

These thoughts became the more painful to me as the moment of my departure approached. My cousin soon observed the change that was at work in me. The evening before the day I left her, she told me that for a long time she had found me gloomy and abstracted. I endeavoured to elude her questions; I attributed my sadness to a vague ennui.

"I cannot believe you," said she to me: "my father treats you almost as a son; everybody loves you; to be unhappy would be ingratitude."

"Ah, well!" said I to her, without being able to conquer my emotion, "it is not ennui: it is grief—yes, a penetrating grief that I feel."

"And why? What has happened to you?" she asked me, with interest.

"Just now, my cousin, you told me that your father treated me as a son; that here everybody loved me. Ah! well, before long I must renounce these precious attachments: I must, in short, leave Gérolstein, and, I confess to you, this thought fills me with despair."

"And the remembrance of those that are dear to us—is this, then, nothing, my cousin?"

"Ah, yes—but years, but events bring so many unforeseen changes!"

"There are at least attachments which are not changed; such as my father has always shown you. What I feel for you is of this kind, you know well; we are brother and sister—never to forget one another," added she, raising towards me her large blue eyes, filled with tears.

This glance overwhelmed me; I was on the point of betraying myself; fortunately, I restrained myself.

"It is true, that feeling lasts," said I to her, in an embarrassed manner; "but circumstances alter. For instance, my cousin, when in a few years I shall return, do you think that then this intimacy, whose charm I value so fully, may yet continue?"

"Why should it not continue?"

"Because you will then be, undoubtedly, married, my cousin—you will have other duties—and you will have forgotten your poor brother."

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I swear to you, my friend, I said no more to her. I know not yet if she saw in these words an avowal which was displeasing to her, or whether she, like myself, was sadly struck by the inevitable changes that the future must necessarily make in our intercourse; but, instead of answering me, she remained a moment silent, overwhelmed; then rising suddenly, her countenance pale and disordered, she went out, after examining some embroidery by the young Countess d'Oppenheim, one of her ladies of honour, who was working in the embrasure of one of the windows of the saloon where our conversation took place.

The evening of this day I received a new letter from my father, which recalled me suddenly here. The next morning I went to take leave of the grand-duke; he told me that my cousin was a little unwell, that I might intrust to him my last words to her; he pressed me to his heart, like a father, regretting, he added, my sudden departure, and especially that this departure was occasioned by the anxiety that the health of my father gave me; then recalling to me, with the greatest kindness, his counsel on the subject of the new career which he begged me to embrace immediately, he added, that on my return from my embassies, or on my leaves of absence, he should see me again at Gérolstein with warm pleasure.

Happily, on my arrival here I found the state of my father a little improved; he still keeps his bed, and is constantly feeble, but his health no longer gives me any serious anxiety. Unfortunately, he has already noticed my depression, my gloomy taciturnity, several times; but he has supplicated me in vain to confide to him the cause of my melancholy grief. I should not dare it, notwithstanding his blind tenderness for me; you know his severity as regards everything which appears to him wanting in frankness and loyalty. Yesterday I watched with him; when alone by his side, believing him asleep, I could not restrain my tears, which flowed in silence as I thought of my happy days at Gérolstein. He saw me weep, for he soon awaked while I was absorbed in my grief: he questioned me with the most touching kindness; I attributed my sadness to the anxiety that his health had caused me, but he was not deceived by this evasion.

Now that you know all, my good Maximilian, say, is not my fate forlorn enough! What shall I do—what resolve?

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"Ah, my friend, I cannot tell you my anguish. What is to happen, my God! All is utterly lost! I am the most wretched of men if my father does not renounce his project.

"I will tell you what has just happened; just now I had finished this letter, when, to my great astonishment, my father, whom I believed in bed, entered my cabinet, where I was writing to you; he saw upon my desk my four first great pages all filled; I was at the end of this last—"

"'To whom do you write to so at length?' he asked me, smiling.

"To Maximilian, father."

"'Oh!' said he to me, with an expression of affectionate reproach, 'I know that he possesses your confidence entirely; *he is very happy—he!*'

"He pronounced these last words so sadly, in such a wounded tone, that, touched by his accent, I replied to him, giving him my letter, almost without reflection,

"Read, father."

"My friend, he has read all. Do you know what he said to me, after remaining for some time thoughtful?"

"'Henry, I am going to write to the grand-duke all that passed during your stay at Gérolstein.'

"My father, I conjure you, do not do it."

"'Is what you relate to Maximilian perfectly true?'

"Yes, my father!"

"'In this case, until now, your conduct has been upright. The prince will appreciate it. But in future you should not show yourself unworthy of his noble confidence; you would do so if, abusing his offer, you should return hereafter to Gérolstein, with the intention, perhaps, of making yourself beloved by his daughter.'

"My father, could you think—?"

"'I think that you love with passion, and that passion is, sooner or later, an evil counsellor.'

"How, my father? you will write to the prince that—"

"'That you love your cousin desperately.'

"In the name of Heaven, my father, I supplicate you, do nothing of this!"

"'Do you love your cousin?'

"I love her to idolatry; but—"

My father interrupted me.

"'If this is the case, I shall write to the grand-duke to demand of him for you the hand of his daughter.'

"But, my father, such a claim is madness for me!"

"'It is true; nevertheless, I ought frankly to make this demand of the prince, representing to him the reasons that lead me to this step. He has received you with the most true hospitality, he has shown you fatherly kindness; it would be unworthy me and you to deceive him. I know the greatness of his soul; he will feel that I am dealing as an honest man; if he refuses to give you his daughter, and this is almost unquestionable, he will know at least that in future, if you should return to Gérolstein, you ought to be no more in the same intimacy with her. You have shown me, my child,' added my father, kindly, 'the letter that you have written to Maximilian. I am now informed of everything; it is my *duty* to write to the grand-duke, and I am going to write this very moment.'

"You know, my friend, that my father is the best of men, but he has an inflexible tenacity of will when the question is what regards his *duty*; judge of my anguish, my terror. Though the step he is going to take may be, after all, frank and honourable, it does not trouble me less. How will the grand-duke receive this mad offer? Will he not be displeased with it? and will not the Princess Amelia be as much wounded that I have allowed my father to take such a step without her consent?

"Ah, my friend, pity me, I know not what to think. It seems as though I were looking upon an abyss, and that a dizziness were coming over me.

"I finish in haste this long letter; I shall write you soon. Yet once more pity me, for, in truth, I fear I shall become crazy if the fever that excites me lasts longer. Adieu, adieu! Yours from my heart, and ever

"Henry D'H. O."

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We now conduct the reader to the palace of Gérolstein, where Fleur de Marie had dwelt since her return from France.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRINCESS AMELIA.

The apartment occupied by Fleur de Marie (we shall call her the Princess Amelia only *officially*), in the grand-ducal palace, had been furnished, by Rodolphe's care, with extreme taste and elegance. From the balcony of the young girls' oratory, could be seen, in the distance, the two towers of the Convent of St. Hermangilder, which, rising above immense masses of verdure, were themselves commanded by a high, wooded mountain, at the foot of which the abbey stood.

On a beautiful morning in summer, Fleur de Marie was allowing her glances to wander over this splendid landscape, which extended far away in the distance. Her hair was dressed, but she wore a toilet dress of thin material, white, with narrow blue stripes; a large handkerchief of plain cambric falling upon her shoulders, left visible the two ends and the knot of a little silk cravat, of the same blue as the girdle of her dress.

Seated in a large, high-backed elbow chair, made of carved ebony and cramoisie velvet, her elbow supported by one arm of this seat, her head a little bent down, she supported her cheek upon the back of her small white hand, delicately veined with azure.

The languishing attitude of Fleur de Marie, her paleness, the fixedness of her gaze, the bitterness of her half-smile, revealed a deep melancholy.

After some moments, a heavy, sad sigh relieved her breast. Then letting her hand which supported her cheek fall again, she bent her head farther upon her breast. You would have said that the wretched girl was bending beneath the weight of some heavy misfortune.

At this moment a woman of mature age,

with a grave and distinguished air, dressed in elegant simplicity, entered the oratory, almost timidly, and coughed slightly, to attract the attention of Fleur de Marie.

Arousing herself from her revery, she raised her head quickly, and said, saluting her with a motion full of grace,

"What do you wish, my dear countess?"

"I come to inform your highness that my lord begs you to await him; for he will meet you here in a few minutes," replied Princess Amelia's maid of honour, with respectful formality.

"I was wondering that I had not yet saluted my father to-day; I wait his visit each morning with so much impatience! But I hope that I do not owe to any illness of Mademoiselle Harneim the pleasure of seeing you, my dear countess, at the palace two days in succession?"

"Let your highness feel no uneasiness on that point, Mademoiselle Harneim has begged me to take her place to-day; to-morrow she will have the honour of resuming her service of your highness, who will perhaps excuse the change."

"Certainly, for I shall lose nothing by it; after having had the pleasure of seeing you two days in succession, my dear countess, I shall have for two other days Mademoiselle Harneim with me."

"Your highness honours us," replied the lady of honour, bending again; "this extreme kindness encourages me to ask a favour?"

"Speak, speak; you know my eagerness to be of assistance to you."

"It is true that for a long time your highness has accustomed me to your goodness; but this regards a subject so painful, that I should not have the courage to enter upon it, if it did not concern a very deserving object; for this reason I dare to depend upon the extreme indulgence of your highness."

"You have no need of my indulgence, my dear countess; I am always very grateful for every occasion that is given me for doing a little good."

"This concerns a poor creature who, unfortunately, had quitted Gérolstein before your highness had established that institution, which is so charitable, and so useful for young orphan or forsaken girls, whom nothing protects from evil passions?"

"And what has happened to her? what do you beg for her?"

"Her father, a very adventurous man, went to seek his fortune in America, leaving his wife and daughter to a precarious mode of existence. The mother died; the daughter, hardly sixteen years old when left to herself, quitted the country to follow to Vienna a seducer, who soon forsook her. Then, as always happens, the first step in the path of vice led this wretched girl to an abyss of infamy; in a short time she became, like so many other miserable creatures, the opprobrium of her sex."

Fleur de Marie cast down her eyes, blushed, and could not conceal a slight shudder, which did not escape the maid of honour. Fearing to have wounded the chaste susceptibility of the princess by conversing with her upon such a creature, she continued, with embarrassment:

"I ask a thousand pardons of your royal highness; I have undoubtedly offended you by drawing your attention to so polluted a being; but the miserable one shows so sincere a repentance, that I thought I could solicit for her a little pity."

"And you were right. Go on, I pray you," said Fleur de Marie, conquering her sad emotion; "indeed, all errors are worthy of pity, when repentance follows them."

"And that is the case here, as I have remarked to your highness. After two years of this abominable life, grace touched this abandoned one. A prey to a late remorse, she has returned here. Chance so favoured her, that, on her arrival here, she was lodged at a house belonging to a worthy widow, whose gentleness and piety are well known. Encouraged by the pious goodness of the widow, the poor creature has confessed to her her faults, adding that she felt a just horror for her past life, and that she would purchase, at the price of the most severe penance, the happiness of entering a religious house, where she might expiate her errors and deserve their redemption. The worthy widow to whom she has intrusted this confidence, knowing that I had the honour to serve your highness, has written to me to recommend to me this unfortunare one, who, by means of the all-powerful agency of your highness with the Princess Juliana, lady superior of the abbey, might hope to enter the Convent of St. Hermangilda as lay sister; she asks as a favour to be employed in the most painful labours, that her penance may be more meritorious. I have several times desired to converse with this woman before allowing myself to implore for her the pity of your highness, and I am firmly convinced that her repentance will be lasting. It is neither want nor age that has brought her to the true good; she is scarcely eighteen years old; she is yet very beautiful, and possesses a small sum of money, that she wishes to devote to a charitable object if she obtains the favour that she solicits."

"I will take charge of your protégée," said Fleur de Marie, restraining with difficulty her emotion, so much resemblance did her past life offer to that of the unfortunate one in whose favour she was solicited; she added, "the repentance of this miserable one is too praiseworthy to be left without encouragement."

"I know not how to express my gratitude to your highness. I hardly dared hope your highness would deign to be so charitably interested in such a creature."

"She has been guilty—she repents," said Fleur de Marie, with an accent of commiseration and inexpressible sadness; "it is right to nourish pity for her. The more sincere her remorse, the more painful must it be, my dear countess."

"I hear my lord, I believe," said the maid of honour, suddenly, without remarking the deep and increasing emotion of Fleur de Marie.

In fact, Rodolphe was entering a saloon which opened into the oratory, holding in his hand an enormous bunch of roses.

At the sight of the prince, the countess discreetly retired. Hardly had she disappeared, when Fleur de Marie threw herself upon her father's neck, resting her forehead upon his

shoulder, and remained thus some seconds without speaking.

"Good-morning, good-morning, my dear child," said Rodolphe, pressing his daughter to his breast with feeling, without yet observing her sadness. "See this thicket of roses; what a fine harvest I have made for you this morning; it was this which prevented me from coming sooner; I hope that I have never brought you a more magnificent bouquet. Take it."

And the prince, still holding his bouquet in his hand, moved backward gently, to disengage his daughter from his arms and look at her; but seeing her burst into tears, he threw the bouquet upon a table, took Fleur de Marie's hands in his, and exclaimed,

"You weep; my God! what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, my dear father," said Fleur de Marie, drying her tears, and endeavouring to smile upon Rodolphe.

"Tell me, I beg you, what is the matter? What can have made you sad?"

"I assure you, father, it is nothing to distress you. The countess has just solicited my interest for a poor woman, so interesting, so unhappy; that in spite of myself I am moved by her recital."

"Truly? Is it only this?"

"It is only this," answered Fleur de Marie, taking from a table the flowers that Rodolphe had thrown there; "but how you spoil me!" added she, "what a magnificent bouquet, and when I think that each day, you bring me such, gathered by yourself."

"My child," said Rodolphe, gazing upon his daughter with anxiety, "you conceal something from me; your smile is sad—constrained. Tell me, I beg you, what distresses you; do not occupy yourself with this bouquet."

"Ah, you know this bouquet is my joy every morning; and then I love roses so much—I have always loved them so much. You remember," added she, with an affecting smile, "you remember my poor little rose-bush. I have always kept its remains."

At this painful allusion to the past, Rodolphe exclaimed,

"Unhappy child! Are my suspicions founded? In the midst of the splendour that surrounds you, would you yet sometimes think of that horrible time? Alas! I had thought to have made you forget it by tenderness."

"Pardon, pardon, father! these words escaped me. I make you sad."

"I am myself sad, poor angel," said Rodolphe, sorrowfully, "because these returns to the past must be fearful to you — because they would poison your life if you were weak enough to abandon yourself to them."

"Father, this was by chance. Since our arrival here, this is the first time—"

"This is the first time you have spoken of it—yes; but, perhaps, this is not the first time that these thoughts have troubled you. I have perceived your moments of melancholy, and sometimes I have accused the past, as causing your sadness. But, as I was uncertain, I dared not even attempt to combat the sad influence of these remembrances—to show you the uselessness, the injustice of them—for, if your grief had arisen from another cause, if the past had been to you what it ought to be, a vain, bad dream, I should risk awakening in you painful ideas, that I should wish to destroy."

"How good you are! how do these fears show me your ineffable tenderness!"

"What do you mean? My position was so difficult, so delicate. On another occasion I said nothing, but I was ever thinking of what concerned you. By contracting this marriage, which crowned all my desires, I also hoped to give another guarantee to your repose. I knew too well the excessive delicacy of your heart to hope that you could ever—ever cease to think of the past; but I said to myself, that if, by chance, your thoughts ever lingered there, you ought, feeling yourself cherished as a daughter by the noble woman who knew and loved you in the depth of your misfortunes—you ought, I say, to regard the past as sufficiently expiated for by your heavy miseries, and be indulgent, or rather just, towards yourself; for, indeed, my wife is entitled by her high qualities to the respect of all—is it not so? Ah, well, since you are to her a daughter, a cherished sister, ought you not to be encouraged? Is not her tender attachment an entire redemption? Does it not tell you that she knows, as I do, that you have been a victim—that you are not guilty—that others can, indeed, reproach you only with *misfortune*, that has overwhelmed you from your birth? Had you even committed great faults, would they not be a thousand times expiated, redeemed, by all the good you have done, by all that is excellent and adorable that has been developed in you?"

"My father—"

"Ah, let me—let me tell you all my thoughts, since an accident, for which indeed we ought to be grateful, has caused this conversation. For a long time I have desired, and at the same time dreaded it. God will that it may have a salutary result! It was mine to make you forget so many dreadful sorrows, I have a mission to fulfil towards you so august, so sacred, that I should have had the courage to sacrifice for your repose my love for Madame d'Harville—my friendship for Murphy, if I had thought their presence would have recalled to you too bitterly the past."

"Oh, my good father, could you think so? Their presence, the presence of those who know *what I was*, and who yet love me tenderly, does it not, on the contrary, personify forgetfulness and pardon? Indeed, my father, would not my whole life have been made desolate, had you renounced for me your marriage with Madame d'Harville?"

"Ah! I should not have been the only one to desire this sacrifice, if it would secure your happiness. You know not what self-denial Clémence had already voluntarily imposed upon herself, for she also comprehends all the extent of my duty to you."

"Your duty to me, my God! And what have I done to merit so much!"

"What have you done, poor dear angel! Until the moment you were restored to me, your life was only bitterness, misery, desolation; and for your past sufferings I reproach myself as if I had caused them. And when I see you smiling, pleased, I believe myself pardoned; my only aim, my only wish is to render you as entirely happy, as you have been

unfortunate; to raise you as much as you have been lowered, for it seems to me the last traces of the past are effaced when the most eminent, the most honourable persons pay you the respect which is due to you."

"Respect to me? no, no, my father; but to my rank, or, rather, to that you have given me."

"Ah! it is not your rank that is loved, that is revered—it is you, understand; indeed, my dear child, it is yourself, it is yourself alone. There is homage imposed by rank, but it is another imposed by powers of attraction and fascination! You know not how to distinguish between these, because you know not yourself; because you know not that, by a wonderful intelligence and tact, which renders me as proud as idolatrous of you, you carry into all ceremonious intercourse, so new to you, a union of dignity, modesty, and grace, which is irresistible to the most stately characters."

"You love me so much, father, and all love you so much, that every one is sure of pleasing you by showing me deference."

"Ah, the wicked child!" exclaimed Rodolphe, interrupting his daughter, and embracing her tenderly; "what a wicked child, who will not grant a single satisfaction to my fatherly pride!"

"Is not this pride sufficiently satisfied by attributing to you the good feeling that is shown me, my good father?"

"No, indeed, mademoiselle," said the prince, smiling, to his daughter, to chase away the sadness with which he still saw her affected, "no, mademoiselle, it is not the same thing; for it is not allowable for me to be proud of myself, and I can and ought to be proud of you—yes, proud. And again, you know not how divinely you are endowed; for fifteen months your education has become so marvellously complete, that the most difficult mother would be satisfied with you, and this education has increased still more the almost irresistible influence that you spread around you without being yourself aware of it."

"My father, your praises confuse me."

"I speak the truth, nothing but the truth. Do you wish for instances? Let us speak boldly of the past; it is an enemy that I wish to fight hand to hand; we must look it in the face. Do you not, then, remember La Louve, that courageous woman who saved you? Recall that prison scene which you have related me; a crowd of prisoners, more hardened indeed than wicked, were bent upon tormenting one of their companions, feeble, infirm, and yet their drudge; you appear, you speak, and behold, immediately these furies, blushing for their base cruelty towards their victim, show themselves as charitable as they were wicked. Is this, then, nothing? Again, is it—yes or no—owing to you that La Louve, that ungovernable woman, has felt repentance, and desired an honest and laborious life? Ah, believe me, my dear child, that which conquered La Louve and her turbulent companions, merely by the ascendency of goodness, combined with a rare elevation of mind; this, although in other circumstances and in an utterly different sphere, must by the same charm (do not smile at such a parallel, mademoiselle) fascinate the stately Archduchess Sophia and all the circle of my court; for the good and wicked, great and small, submit almost always to the influence of higher, nobler spirits. I do not wish to say that you were *born princess* in the aristocratic sense of the word; that would be a poor flattery to make you my child; but you are of that small number of privileged beings who are born both to speak to a queen so as to charm her, and to earn her love, and also to speak to a poor, debased, and abandoned creature, so as to make her better, to console her, and thus gain her adoration."

"But, my dear father, I beg—"

"Ah, it is so much the worse for you, mademoiselle, that it is so long since my heart has poured forth. Think, then, how, with my fear of awakening in you the remembrances of the past which I wish to annihilate, and that I will forever annihilate in your mind, I dared not converse to you of these comparisons, these parallels, which render you so admirable in my eyes. How many times have Clémence and I been enraptured with you! How many times, moved so that the tears rose in her eyes, has she said to me, 'Is it not wonderful that this child should be what she is, after misfortune has so pursued her? or, rather,' would Clémence continue, 'is it not wonderful that, far from impairing that noble and rare nature, misfortune has, on the contrary, given a higher range to what there was excellent in her.'"

At this moment the door opened, and Clémence, grand-duchess of Gérolstein, entered, holding a letter in her hand.

"Here, my friend," said she to Rodolphe, "is a letter from France. I wished to bring it to you, that I might say good-morning to my indolent child, whom I have not seen this morning," added Clémence, embracing Fleur de Marie tenderly.

"This letter comes just at the right moment," said Rodolphe, gayly, after having read it through. "We were talking just now of the past; of that monster that we must incessantly combat, my dear Clémence, for it threatens the repose and the happiness of our dear child."

"Is this true, my friend? those attacks of melancholy which we have observed—"

"Have no other cause than wicked remembrances; but, fortunately, we now know our enemy, and we will triumph over it."

"But from whom, then, is this letter, my friend?" asked Clémence.

"From the pretty Rigolette, the wife of Germain."

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Fleur de Marie; "what happiness to hear from her!"

"My friend," said Clémence, aside to Rodolphe, at the same time glancing at Fleur de Marie, "do you not fear that this letter may recall to her painful recollections?"

"These are those very remembrances I wish to put an end to, my dear Clémence; we must approach them boldly, and I am sure that I shall find in Rigolette's letter excellent arms against them, for this excellent little creature adored our child, and appreciated her as she should be."

And Rodolphe read aloud the following letter:

"Bouqueval Farm, Aug. 15th, 1841.

"My Lord,

"I take the liberty of writing to you again to make you a sharer of a great happiness which has befallen us, and to ask of you a new favour—of you, to whom we already owe so many, or,

rather, to whom we owe the perfect paradise in which we live, I, my Germain, and his good mother

"This is the cause, my lord; for ten days I have been mad with joy, for it is ten days since I have possessed a love of a little girl; I fancy that she is the very picture of Germain; he, that she is of me; our dear mamma Georges says that she resembles both; the fact is, she has charming blue eyes like Germain, and black hair, curly, like mine. Just now, contrary to his custom, my husband is unjust; he wishes to have our little one always upon his knees, while I, it is my right, is it not, my lord?"

"Fine, worthy young persons! they ought to be happy," said Rodolphe. "If ever couple were well matched, it is this."

"And Rigolette deserves her happiness," said Fleur de Marie.

"I have always blessed the good fortune that caused me to meet them," said Rodolphe, and he continued:

"But indeed, my lord, pardon my burdening you with these little family quarrels that end always with a kiss. Certainly your ears must tingle well, my lord, for there does not pass a day that we do not say, looking at each other, we two, Germain and I, 'How happy we are, O God, how happy we are!' and naturally your name follows directly after these words. Excuse the scrawl there is just here, my lord, and the blot; I had written without thinking *Monsieur Rodolphe*, as I used to say, and I have scratched it out. I hope, by-the-way, that you will find my writing has improved much, as well as my orthography, for Germain always shows me how, and I no longer make great blots stretching all across, as when you made my pens."

"I must confess," said Rodolphe, laughing, "that my protegée is under a slight illusion, and I am sure that Germain is occupied rather with kissing the hand of his pupil than directing it."

"Come, come, my friend, you are right," said Clémence, looking at the letter, "the writing is a little large, but very legible."

"In truth, there is some progress," said Rodolphe; "formerly it would have taken eight pages to contain what she writes now in two."

And he continued:

"It is, however, true that you have made pens for me, my lord; when we think of it, Germain and I, we are quite ashamed, in recalling how far from proud you were. Ah, my God! here again do I find myself speaking to you of something besides what we wish to ask you, my lord; for my husband unites with me, and it is very important; we have formed a plan. You shall see.

"We supplicate you, then, my lord, to have the goodness to choose and give us a name for our dear girl; it is agreed upon with the godfather and godmother, and this godfather and godmother, do you know who they are, my lord? Two persons whom you and her ladyship the Marchioness D'Harville have raised from misery to render happy, happy as we are. In a word, they are Morel, the jeweller, and Jeanne Duport, the sister of a poor prisoner named *Pique Vinagre*, a worthy woman whom I saw in prison when I went to visit my poor Germain there, and whom, afterward, her ladyship, the marchioness, brought out from th hospital.

"Now, my lord, you must know why w have chosen M. Morel for godfather, and Jeann Duport for godmother. We said one to anoth er, we, Germain and I, this will be a way o thanking M. Rodolphe again for his kindness, b taking for godfather and godmother of our littl girl worthy people who owe everything to hin and to the marchioness, without taking into con sideration that Morel the jeweller and Jeann Duport are the cream of honest people. The are of our class, and besides, as Germain and say, they are *our kindred in happiness*, for the are, like us, *of the family of your protégés*, m lord."

"Ah, my father, has not this idea a charmin delicacy," said Fleur de Marie, with emotion "to take as godfather and godmother of thei child those who owe everything to you and m second mother?"

"You are right, dear child," said Clémence "I am most deeply touched by this token."

"And I am very glad that I have so well be stowed my benefits," said Rodolphe, continuin to read.

"Besides, with the aid of the money you hav given him, Monsieur Rodolphe, Morel is no dealer in precious stones; he gains somethin to bring up his family upon, and the means o teaching his children some trade. The good an poor Louise will, I think, marry a worthy la bourer, who loves and respects her, as h should, for she has been unfortunate, but no guilty, and the betrothed of Louise has hear enough to understand this."

"I was very certain," exclaimed Rodolph addressing his daughter, "of finding in this dea little Rigolette's letter, arms against our enemy You hear, it is the expression of the plain com mon sense of this honest and upright soul. Sh says of Louise, '*She has been unfortunate, bu not guilty, and her betrothed has heart enough t understand this.*'"

Fleur de Marie, more and more moved an saddened by the reading of this letter, tremble at the glance that her father fixed upon her, fo a moment, as he pronounced the last words w have underlined.

The prince continued:

"I will tell you also, my lord, that Jeann Duport, through the generosity of the marchio ess, has been able to be separated from her hu band, that wicked man who ate her out of every thing and beat her; she has taken her elde daughter with her, and she keeps a little lac shop, where she sells what she and her childre make; their trade prospers. There is nowher such happy people, and thanks to whom? thank to you, my lord, to the marchioness, who bot know how to give so much, and to give to s good purpose.

"By-the-way, Germain will write to you a usual, my lord, at the end of the month, on th subject of the *bank for labourers out of employ ment, and with gratuitous loans;* the reimburse ments are seldom behindhand, and we perceiv already much good that this spreads in th quarter. Now, at least, poor families can g through the dull season for work without pu ting their linens and beds in the Monte d Pieté. Then when work returns, you shoul

see with what spirit they put themselves to it; they are so proud that confidence is placed in their work and their probity! And, indeed, it is not only this you should see. Besides, how they bless you for having lent them the wherewithal! Yes, my lord, they bless you, *you*; for, although you say you have done nothing in its institution but to nominate Germain for head cashier, and that it is an unknown who has done this good work, we like better to believe that it is to you we owe it; it is more natural.

"Besides, there is a famous trumpet to repeat on every occasion that it is you we should bless; this trumpet is Madame Pipelet, who repeats to every one that it is only her *king of all tenants* (excuse me, Monsieur Rodolphe, she always calls you so) who can have done this charitable work, and *her old, dear* Alfred is of her opinion. As to him, he is so proud and so pleased with his office of director of the bank, that he says that the employment of M. Cabrion would be nothing to him. To end your family of protegées, my lord, I will add that Germain has read in the papers that Martial, a planter in Algiers, had been spoken of with great praises for the courage he had shown in repulsing, at the head of his farmers, an attack of thievish Arabs, and that his wife, as intrepid as himself, had been slightly wounded in the side while she was discharging her gun like a real grenadier. From that time, they say in the papers, she has been called *Madame Carabine*.

"Excuse this long letter, my lord, but I thought you would not be sorry to hear from us concerning those whose good Providence you have been. I write you from the farm at Bouqueval where we have been since the spring with our good mother. Germain leaves every morning for his business, and he returns at night. In the autumn we shall go back to live in Paris. How strange it is, Monsieur Rodolphe, I, who never loved the country, adore it now. I make it clear to myself; it is because Germain loves it to much. Speaking of the farm, Monsieur Rodolphe, you, who undoubtedly know where that good little Goualeuse is—if you have an opportunity, tell her how we always remember her as one of the sweetest and best beings in the world; and that, as to myself, I never think of our happiness without saying to myself, since M. Rodolphe was also the M. Rodolphe of that dear Fleur de Marie, through his care she must be as happy as we others; and this makes my happiness yet more perfect.

"My God! my God! how I talk! What will you say to me, my lord? But ah! you are so good! And then, you see, it is your fault if I chatter as much and as joyously as *Papa Crétu* and *Ramonette*, who no longer dare to rival me in singing. Indeed, Monsieur Rodolphe, I can tell you, I put it into their teeth.

"You will not refuse us one request, will you, my lord? If you give a name to our dear little child, it seems to us it will bring her good fortune, it will be like a happy star for her; believe it, Monsieur Rodolphe, sometimes my good Germain and I almost congratulate ourselves for having known so much sorrow, because we feel doubly how happy our child will be not to know what is the misery through which we have passed.

"If I close by telling you, Monsieur Rodolphe, that we endeavour to aid poor people here and there, according to our means, it is not to boast of ourselves, but that you may know we do not keep to ourselves alone all the happiness you have given us; besides, we always say to those we succour, 'It is not we that you must thank and bless, it is M. Rodolphe, the best, the most generous man that there is in the world;' and they take you for a kind of *saint*, if nothing more.

"Adieu, my lord! believe me, when our little girl shall begin to spell, the first word she shall read will be your name, Monsieur Rodolphe! and afterward, those words you caused to be written upon my trousseau,

'Labour and wisdom—honour and happiness.'

"With the help of these four words, our tenderness and our care, we hope, my lord, that our child will be always worthy to speak the name of him who has been our good Providence, and that of all the wretched ones he has known.

"Pardon, my lord, for finishing this; I have such large tears in my eyes—they are good tears—excuse, if you please—it is not my fault—but I cannot see clearly, so that I write badly.

"I have the honour, my lord, to salute you with as much respect as gratitude,

"RIGOLETTE, wife of Germain.

"P.S.—Ah, my God! my lord, in reading over my letter, I perceive that I have very often written *Monsieur Rodolphe*. You will pardon me? I may hope so? You know well that under one name or another, we respect and bless you the same, my lord."

CHAPTER V.

"DEAR little Rigolette," said Clémence, softened by the letter which Rodolphe had just read. "This simple epistle is full of sensibility."

"Undoubtedly," replied Rodolphe, "a benefit was never better bestowed. Our protégée is endowed with an excellent disposition; she has a heart of gold, and our dear child appreciates her as we do," added he, addressing his daughter. Then, struck with her paleness and emotion, he cried,

"But what is the matter?"

"Alas, what a sad contrast between my position and that of Rigolette. Work and wisdom—honour and happiness—these four words tell all that has happened to her. A laborious and sensible daughter, a beloved wife, a happy mother, an honoured woman—such is her destiny—while I—"

"Great God, what do you say?"

"Pardon, my good father, do not accuse me of ingratitude, but, notwithstanding your ineffable tenderness, notwithstanding that of my second mother, notwithstanding your sovereign power, notwithstanding the respect and splendour with which I am surrounded, my shame is incurable. Nothing can annihilate the past—once more, pardon me, my father: I have until now concealed it from you, but the remembrance of my former degradation throws me into despair—it kills me."

"Clémence, do you hear her?" cried Rodolphe, in despair.

"But, my poor child," said Clémence, taking

affectionately the hands of Fleur de Marie in her own, "our tenderness, the affection of those who surround you, and which you so well merit, does not all this prove to you that the past should be to you only a vain and bad dream?"

"Oh fatality, fatality," resumed Rodolphe. "Now I curse my fears, my silence; that sad idea, so long rooted in her mind, has made there, unknown to us, dreadful ravages, and it is too late to contend against this deplorable error; alas! how unfortunate I am."

"Courage, my good friend," said Clémence to Rodolphe; "you just now said it is better to know the enemy which threatens us. We now know the cause of our dear child's sorrow; we shall triumph over it, because we shall have reason, justice, and our tenderness on our side."

"And then at last, because she will see that her affection, if it were incurable, would render ours incurable also," replied Rodolphe, "for in truth it would be to despair of all justice, human and Divine, if this poor child had only a change of sufferings."

After a silence of some moments, during which Fleur de Marie appeared to be collecting herself, she took with one hand that of Rodolphe, with the other that of Clémence, and said to them with a voice expressive of deep emotion,

"Listen to me, my good father, and you also, my tender mother: this day is a solemn one—God has granted, and I thank him for it, that it should be impossible to me to conceal from you any longer what I feel. In a little time I should, in any event, have made to you the confession you are now about to hear, for all suffering has an end, and concealed as mine has been, I should not have been able to keep silence to you much longer."

"Ah! I understand all," cried Rodolphe; "there is no longer any hope for her."

"I hope for the future, my father, and this hope gives me strength to speak to you thus."

"And what can you hope for the future, my poor child, since your present fate causes you only grief and bitterness?"

"I am going to tell you, my father; but before all, permit me to recall the past to you, to own to you before God who hears me, what I have felt up to this time."

"Speak, speak, we hear you," said Rodolphe, seating himself with Clémence near Fleur de Marie.

"While I remained at Paris, near you, my father," said Fleur de Marie, "I was so happy, oh, so completely happy, that those delicious days would not be too well paid for by years of suffering. You see I have at least known what happiness is."

"During some days perhaps."

"Yes, but what pure and unmingled felicity! Love surrounded me then, as ever, with the tenderest care. I gave myself up without fear to the emotions of gratitude and affection which every moment raised my heart to you. The future dazzled me: a father to adore, a second mother to love doubly, for she had taken the place of my own, whom I had never known—I must own everything; my pride was excited in spite of myself, so much was I honoured in belonging to you. When the few persons of your household, who at Paris had occasion to speak to me, called me 'your highness,' I could not prevent myself from being proud of this title. If I thought then, at times, vaguely of the past, it was to say to myself, 'I, formerly so humble, the beloved daughter of a sovereign prince who is blessed and revered by every one; I, formerly so miserable, I am enjoying all the splendours of luxury, and of an almost royal existence.' Alas! my father, my fortune was so unforeseen, your power surrounded me with such a splendid eclat, that I was excusable perhaps in allowing myself to become so blinded."

"Excusable! nothing was more natural, my poor beloved angel: what wrong was there in being proud of a rank which was your own, of enjoying the advantages of the position to which I had restored you? At that time I recollect you were delightfully gay; how many times have I seen you fall into my arms as if overpowered with happiness, and heard you say to me with an enchanting accent, 'My father, it is too much, too much happiness.' Unfortunately, these are only recollections; they lulled me into a deceitful security, and since then I have not been enough alarmed at the cause of your melancholy."

"But tell us, then, my child," asked Clémence, "who has changed into sadness this pure, this legitimate joy which you first felt?"

"Alas! a very sad and entirely unforeseen circumstance."

"What circumstance?"

"You recollect, my father," said Fleur de Marie, without being able to conquer a shuddering of horror; "you remember the sad scene which preceded our departure from Paris, when your carriage was stopped near the barrier?"

"Yes," replied Rodolphe, sadly. "Brave Chourineur, after having again saved my life, he died there before us, saying, *Heaven is just: I have killed, they kill me.*"

"Ah, well, my father, at the moment when this unfortunate man was expiring, do you know whom I saw looking intently at me? Oh, that look, that look, it has pursued me ever since," added Fleur de Marie, shuddering.

"What look? of whom do you speak?" cried Rodolphe.

"Of the *Ogresse of the Tapis Franc*," murmured Fleur de Marie.

"That monster, have you seen her again? and where?"

"You did not perceive her in the tavern where the Chourineur breathed his last. She was among the women who surrounded him."

"Ah, now," said Rodolphe, dejectedly, "I understand: already struck with terror by the murder of the Chourineur, you thought there was something providential in this dreadful meeting."

"It is but too true, my father. At the sight of the Ogresse I felt a mortal shudder. It seemed to me that, under her look, my heart, until then radiant with happiness and hope, was suddenly frozen. Yes; to meet this woman at the moment when the Chourineur was dying, and repeating the words '*Heaven is just,*' this seemed to me a providential reproof of my proud forgetfulness of the past, which I ought to expiate by humiliation and repentance."

"But the past was laid upon you: you can answer for it before God."

"You were constrained, intoxicated, unfortunate child. Once precipitated, in spite of yourself, in this abyss, you could not leave it notwithstanding your remorse, your terror, your despair, thanks to the atrocious indifference of that society of which you were the victim. You saw yourself forever chained in that cavern; the

cnance which placed you in my path could alone have dragged you from it."

"And then, my child, as your father has told you, you were the victim, not the accomplice, of this infamy," cried Clémence.

"But this infamy, I have submitted to it, my mother," sadly rejoined Fleur de Marie; "nothing can annihilate these horrible recollections. They pursue me incessantly no longer, as formerly, in the midst of the peaceable inhabitants of a farm, or of the degraded women, my companions at Saint Lazarus, but they pursue me even to this palace, peopled with the *élite* of Germany. They pursue me even to the arms of my father, even to the steps of his throne."

Fleur de Marie melted into tears. Rodolphe and Clémence remained mute before this frightful expression of an invincible remorse. They, too, wept, for they felt the powerlessness of their consolations.

"Since then," resumed Fleur de Marie, drying her tears, "at every moment of the day I say to myself, with a bitter shame, 'I am honoured, I am revered; the most eminent persons, the most venerable, surround me with respect; in sight of the whole court, the sister of an emperor has deigned to fasten the bandeau upon my head; and I have lived in the mud of the city—have been spoken to familiarly by thieves and assassins!' Oh, my father! pardon me; but the more my position is elevated, the more I have been struck with the profound degradation into which I had fallen. At each new homage which is rendered me I feel myself guilty of a profanation. Think of it, oh, my God! after having been what *I have been*, to suffer old men to bow before me—to suffer noble young women, women justly respected, who feel themselves flattered to approach me—to suffer, finally, that princesses, doubly august by age and by their sacerdotal character, should heap upon me favours and praises, is not this impious and sacrilegious? And then, if you knew, my father, what I have suffered—what I still suffer every day, in saying, 'If it should please God that the past should be known, with what merited scorn would she be treated who is now elevated so high. What a just—what a frightful punishment!'"

"But, unfortunate child, my wife and I, we know the past, we are worthy of our rank, and yet we love—we adore you."

"You have for me the blind tenderness of a father and a mother."

"And all the good you have done since your abode here—this beautiful and holy institution, this asylum opened by you to orphans and poor abandoned girls—those admirable cares of intelligence and devotion with which you watch over them—your insisting that they call themselves *your sisters*—wishing that they should call you , since, in fact, you treat them as such, is this othing to atone for faults which were not your wn? Finally, the affection which is shown r you by the worthy abbess of Saint Hermanlda, who did not know you till after your arrial here, do you not owe it altogether to the elation of your mind, to the beauty of your soul, your sincere piety?"

"While the praises from the abbess of Saint ermangilda are addressed only to my present nduct, I enjoy them without scruple, my fa-er; but when she quotes my example to the ble ladies who are engaged in religious offices the abbey—when they see in me a model of all the virtues, I am ready to die of confusion, as if I were the accomplice of a wicked falsehood."

After a long silence, Rodolphe resumed, with deep dejection.

"I see—I despair of persuading you: reason is weak when opposed to a conviction, the more firm because it has its source in a generous and elevated sentiment. Since every moment you throw back a look on the past, the contrast between these remembrances and your present position must be, indeed, a continual punishment to you. Pardon me in turn, poor child."

"You, my good father—you ask pardon of me, and for what? Good Heaven!"

"For not having foreseen your susceptibility. From the exceeding delicacy of your heart, I ought to have divined it; and yet, what could I do? It was my duty solemnly to acknowledge you as my daughter. Then this respect, of which the homage is so painful to you, comes of necessity to surround you. Yes; but I was wrong in one point. I have been, do you see, too proud of you—I have wished too much to enjoy the charms of your beauty—those charms of the mind which surprised every one who approached you. I ought to have hidden my treasure—to have lived almost in retirement with Clémence and you; I should have renounced these fêtes—these numerous receptions, at which I loved so much to see you shine, thinking, foolishly, to elevate you so high—so high, that the past would disappear entirely from your eyes. But, alas! the reverse has taken place, and, as you have told me, the more elevated you have been, the deeper and more dark has seemed the abyss from which I drew you. Yet once again, it is my fault. I meant, however, to do right; but I was mistaken," said Rodolphe, drying his tears. "But I was mistaken; and then I supposed myself pardoned too soon. The vengeance of God was not satisfied: it still pursues me in the unhappiness of my daughter!"

A discreet knock at the door of the saloon which adjoined the oratory of Fleur de Marie interrupted this sad conversation.

Rodolphe rose, and half opened the door. He saw Murphy, who said,

"I ask pardon of your royal highness for disturbing you, but a courier from Prince Herkaüsen Oldenzaal has just brought a letter, which, he says, is very important, and must be delivered immediately to your royal highness."

"Thank you, my good Murphy; do not go away," said Rodolphe, with a sigh; "presently I shall want to talk with you."

And the prince, having shut the door, remained a moment in the saloon, to read the letter which Murphy had just brought him. It was in these words:

"My Lord,

"May I hope that the ties of relationship which attach me to your royal highness, and the friendship with which you have always deigned to honour me, will excuse me for a proceeding which might be considered very rash, if it was not imposed by the conscience of an honest man.

"It is fifteen months, my lord, since you returned from France, bringing with you a daughter, so much the more beloved because you had thought her forever lost, while, on the contrary, she had never quitted her mother, whom you married at Paris *in extremis*, in order to legitimatize the birth of the Princess Amelia, who is

thus the equal of the other princesses of the Germanic Confederation.

"Her birth is, then, sovereign, her beauty is incomparable, her heart is as worthy of her birth as her mind is worthy of her beauty, as my sister, the Abbess of Saint Hermangilda, has written me. The abbess, as you know, has often the honour of seeing this well-beloved daughter of your royal highness.

"During the time which my son passed at Gerolstein he saw, almost every day, the Princess Amelia; he loves her desperately, but he has always concealed this passion.

"I have thought it my duty, my lord, to inform you of this circumstance. You have deigned, as a father, to receive my son, and have invited him to the bosom of your family, and to live in that intimacy which was so precious to him. I should fail in loyalty to your highness if I dissimulated a circumstance which modified the reception which was reserved for my son.

"I know that it would be madness in us to dare hope to ally ourselves more nearly to the family of your royal highness.

"I know that the daughter of whom you have so good a right to be proud may aspire to a higher destiny.

"But I know, also, that you are the most tender of fathers, and that if you ever judged my son worthy of belonging to you, and of contributing to the happiness of the Princess Amelia, you would not be deterred by the grave disproportion which places such a fortune beyond our hopes.

"It is not for me to make a eulogium of Henry, my lord, but I appeal to the encouragement and to the praise you have so often condescended to bestow on him.

"I dare not, and I cannot say more to you, my lord; my emotion is too profound.

"Whatever may be your determination, believe that we shall submit to it with respect, and that I shall be always faithful to the sentiments of the most profound devotion with which I have the honour to be,

"Your royal highness's most humble and obedient servant, GUSTAVUS PAUL,

"Prince of Herkaüsen Oldenzaal."

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER reading the letter of the prince, the father of Henry, Rodolphe remained for some time sad and thoughtful; a ray of hope then lightened up his face; he returned to his daughter, on whom Clémence was vainly lavishing the most tender consolations.

"My child, you have yourself said it was God's will that this day should be one of solemn explanations," said Rodolphe to Fleur de Marie; "I did not anticipate a new and grave circumstance which was to justify your words."

"To what does it refer, my father?"

"My friend, what is it?"

"New causes of fear!"

"For you."

"For me?"

"You have confessed to us but half your troubles, my poor child."

"Be so kind as to explain yourself, my father," said Fleur de Marie, blushing.

"Now I can do it; I could not sooner, not knowing how much you despaired of your fate. Listen, my beloved daughter! You believe yourself, or, rather, you are, very unhappy. When, at the beginning of our conversation, you spoke to me of the hopes which remained to you, I understood—my heart was broken, for I was to part with you forever—that I was to see you shut yourself up in a cloister—to see you descend living to a tomb. Is it your wish to enter a convent?"

"My father!"

"My child, is this true?"

"Yes, if you will permit me to do it," replied Fleur de Marie, with a stifled voice.

"Leave us!" cried Clémence.

"The Abbey of Saint Hermangilda is very near Gerolstein. I shall see you often, you and my father."

"Do you consider that such vows are eternal, my dear child? you are only eighteen years old, and perhaps some day—"

"Oh, I shall never repent the resolution I have taken. I shall never find repose and forgetfulness but in the solitude of the cloister, if you, my father, and you, my second mother, continue your affection to me."

"The duties, the consolations of the religious life might, indeed," said Rodolphe, "if they could not heal at least, calm the sorrows of your poor depressed and distracted spirit. And though half the happiness of my life is the forfeit, I may perhaps, approve your resolution. I know what you suffer, and I do not say that renouncing the world may not be the fatally logical end of your sorrowful existence."

"What, you also, Rodolphe," cried Clémence.

"Permit me, my friend, to express all my thoughts," replied Rodolphe. Then addressing his daughter, "But before taking this last determination, we must examine if there may not be other prospects for the future, more agreeable to your wishes and ours. In this case, I should not regard any sacrifice, if I could secure you such a future existence."

Fleur de Marie and Clémence made a movement of surprise. Rodolphe continued, fixing his eyes on his daughter,

"What do you think of your cousin Henry?" After a moment of hesitation, she threw herself weeping into the arms of the prince.

"You love him, my poor child?"

"You never asked me, my father," replied Fleur de Marie, drying her tears.

"My friend, we were not deceived," said Clémence.

"So you love him," added Rodolphe, taking his daughter's hands in his own, "you love him well, my dear child?"

"Oh if you knew," replied Fleur de Marie, "how much it has cost me to hide from you the sentiment as soon as I discovered it in my heart—alas, at the least question from you, I should have owned everything. But shame restrained me, and would always have restrained me."

"And do you think that Henry knows your love for him?" said Rodolphe.

"Great God, my father, I do not think so," cried Fleur de Marie, in terror.

"And he, do you think he loves you?"

"No, my father, no—oh, I hope not—he will suffer too much."

"And how did this love come, my beloved angel?"

"Alas, almost without my knowing it—you remember the picture of the page?"

"Which is in the apartment of the Abbess of Saint Hermangilda—it was Henry's portrait."

"Yes, dear father, believing this to be a painting of another age, one day in your presence, I did not conceal from the superior that I was struck with the beauty of this portrait. You said to me then, in jest, that the picture represented one of our relations of the olden time, who, when very young, had displayed great courage and excellent qualities. The grace of this figure, joined to what you told me of the noble character of this relative, added yet to my first impression. From that day, I often took pleasure in recalling this portrait, and that without the least scruple, believing that it belonged to one of my cousins long since dead. Little by little I habituated myself to these gentle thoughts, knowing that it was not permitted me to love on this earth," added Fleur de Marie with a heart-rending expression, and her tears bursting forth anew. "I gave to these romantic reveries a sort of melancholy interest, half smiles, half tears. I looked upon the pretty page of the past time as a lover beyond the grave, whom I should perhaps one day meet in eternity. It seemed to me that such a love was alone worthy of a heart which belonged entirely to you, my father. But pardon me these sad, childish imaginations."

"Nothing can be more touching, on the contrary, poor child," said Clémence.

"Now," replied Rodolphe, "I understand why you one day reproached me with an air of chagrin for having deceived you about the picture."

"Alas, yes, dear father. Judge of my confusion when, afterward, the superior informed me that this picture was that of her nephew, one of our relations. Then my trouble was extreme; I endeavoured to forget my first impressions, but the more I endeavoured, the more they became rooted in my heart, in consequence even of the perseverance of my efforts. Unfortunately, yet, I often hear you, dear father, praising the heart, the mind, the character of Prince Henry."

"You already loved him, my dear child, even when you had as yet seen only his portrait, and heard of his rare qualities!"

"Without loving him, I felt towards him an attraction, for which I bitterly reproached myself. But I consoled myself by thinking that no one in the world would know this sad secret, which covered me with shame in my own eyes. To dare to love, me, me, and then not to be contented with your tenderness and that of my second mother. Did I not owe to you enough to employ all my strength, all the resources of my heart in loving you both? Oh, believe me, among the reproaches I made myself, these last were the most painful. Finally, I saw my cousin for the first time, at that grand fête you gave to the Archduchess Sophia. Prince Henry resembled his portrait in such a striking manner, that I recognised him immediately. The same evening, dear father, you presented my cousin to me, authorizing between us the intimacy which our relationship permitted."

"And soon you loved each other?"

"Ah, my father, he expressed his respect, his attachment, his admiration, with so much eloquence; you had yourself told me so much good of him."

"He deserved it; there is no more elevated character; there is no better or braver heart."

"Your pardon, dear father, do not praise him so much; I am already so unhappy."

"And I must convince you of all the rare qualities of your cousin. What I say surprises you; I understand it, my child—go on."

"I felt the danger that I incurred in seeing Prince Henry every day, and yet I could not withdraw myself from the danger. Notwithstanding my blind confidence in you, dear father, I dared not express my fears to you. I directed all my courage to concealing my love; however, I own to you, dear father, notwithstanding my remorse, often in this fraternal intimacy of every day, forgetting the past, I felt gleams of happiness till then unknown to me, but followed soon, alas! by dark despair, when I again fell under the influence of my sad recollections. For, alas! if they pursued me in the midst of the homage and respect of persons almost indifferent to me, judge, judge, dear father, of my tortures when Prince Henry lavished on me the most delicate praises, followed me with such frank and pious adoration; putting, as he said, the brotherly attachment that he felt for me under the holy protection of his mother, whom he lost when he was very young. I endeavoured to merit this sweet name of sister, which he bestowed upon me, by advising my cousin respecting his future prospects, according to my weak knowledge; by interesting myself in all which related to him; by promising always to ask of you such assistance for him as you might be able to give. But often, also, what torments have I felt, how I have restrained my tears when, by chance, Prince Henry interrogated me about my infancy, my early youth. Oh! to deceive—always to deceive, always to fear, always to lie, always to tremble, before the inexorable look of one's judge. Oh! my father, I was guilty, I know it; I had no right to love; but I expiated this sad love by many bitter sorrows. What shall I say to you? The departure of Prince Henry, in causing me a new and violent chagrin, enlightened me—I saw that I loved him more than I imagined. Thus," added Fleur de Marie, with deep dejection, and as if this confession had exhausted her strength, "I should have soon made you this avowal, for this fatal love has filled up the measure of my sufferings. Say, now that you know all, my father, is there any future prospect for me but that of the cloister?"

"There is another, my child; yes, and this future is as sweet, as smiling, as happy, as the other is dark and gloomy."

"What do you say, dear father?"

"Hear me, in my turn. You must feel that I love you too much, that my tenderness is too clearsighted, to have allowed your love and that of Henry to have escaped me; at the end of a few days I was certain that he loved you, more even, perhaps, than you loved him."

"My father, no, no; it is impossible; he does not love me at this time."

"He loves you, I tell you; he loves you passionately, to madness, almost."

"Oh! my God! my God!"

"Listen farther. When I told you that pleasantry about the picture I did not know that Henry was about to visit his aunt at Gérolstein. When he came, I yielded to the inclination I have always felt towards him; I invited him to come to see us often. I had before always treated him like my son; I changed in no degree my manner towards him. At the end of some days, Clémence and myself no longer doubted the regard you felt for each other. If your position was painful, my poor child, mine was not less so, it was extremely delicate. As a father, knowing the rare and excellent qualities of Henry, I could not but be profoundly

happy at your attachment, for I could never have dreamed of a husband more worthy of you."

"Ah! dear father, pity, pity!"

"But, as a man of honour, I thought of the sad past life of my child. Thus, far from encouraging the hopes of Henry, I gave him, in several conversations, advice absolutely contrary from what he would have expected from me if I had thought of giving him your hand. In such a situation, one so delicate, as a father and a man of honour, it was incumbent on me to keep a rigorous neutrality, not to encourage the love of your cousin, but to treat him with the same affability as formerly. You have been hitherto so unhappy, my beloved child, that seeing you, so to speak, reviving under the impulse of this noble and pure love, I could not for anything in the world have deprived you of its divine and rare joys. Admitting even that this love must afterward be broken off, you would at least have known some days of innocent happiness, and then, finally, this love might secure your future repose."

"My repose?"

"Listen farther. The father of Henry, Prince Paul, has just written to me—here is his letter. Though he regards this alliance as an unhoped-for favour, he asks of me your hand for his son, who, he says, feels for you the most respectful, the most passionate love."

"Oh, my God! my God!" said Fleur de Marie, hiding her face in her hands, "I might have been so happy!"

"Courage, my well-beloved daughter; if you wish it, this happiness is yours," cried Rodolphe, tenderly.

"Oh! never, never; do you forget?"

"I forget nothing; but if to-morrow you enter the convent, not only I lose you forever, but you quit me for a life of tears and austerity. Ah! well! to lose you, to lose you: let me at least know that you are happy, and married to the man you love and who adores you."

"Married to him! Me, dear father!"

"Yes; but on the condition that, immediately after your marriage, contracted here at night, without other witnesses than Murphy for you and Baron Graun for Henry, you shall both go to some tranquil retreat in Switzerland or Italy, to live unknown as wealthy citizens. Now, my beloved daughter, do you know why I resign myself to a separation from you? Do you know why I desire Henry to quit his title when he is out of Germany. It is because I am sure that, in the midst of a solitary happiness, concentrated in an existence deprived of all display, little by little you will forget this odious past, which is especially painful to you because it forms such a bitter contrast to the ceremonious homage with which you are constantly surrounded."

"Rodolphe is right," cried Clémence: "alone with Henry, continually happy with his happiness and your own, you will no longer have time to think, my dear child, of your former sorrows."

"Then, as it will be impossible for me to be long without seeing you, every year Clémence and I will go to visit you."

"And some day, when the wound of which you suffer, poor little angel, shall be healed, when you shall have found forgetfulness in happiness, and this moment will come sooner than you think, you will return to us, never to leave us."

"Forgetfulness in happiness," murmured Fleur de Marie, who, in spite of herself, was soothed by this enchanting vision.

"Yes, yes, my child," replied Clémence, "when at every moment of the day you see yourself blessed, respected, adored by the husband of your choice, by the man whose noble and generous heart your father has extolled to you a thousand times, shall you have leisure to think of the past, and even if you should think of it, why should the past sadden you? why should it prevent you from believing in the radiant felicity of your husband?"

"Finally, it is true, for tell me, my child," replied Rodolphe, who could scarcely restrain his tears at seeing that his daughter hesitated, "adored by your husband, when you shall have the knowledge and the proof of the happiness which he owes to you, what reproaches can you make yourself?"

"My father," said Fleur de Marie, forgetting the past for this ineffable hope, "can so much happiness be reserved for me?"

"Ah, I was sure of it," cried Rodolphe, in an ecstasy of triumphant joy; "is there a father who wishes it, who cannot restore happiness to an adored child?"

"She merits so much that we ought to be heard, my friend," said Clémence, sharing the transport of her husband.

"To marry Henry, and some day to pass my whole life between him, my second mother, and my father," replied Fleur de Marie, yielding more and more to the sweet intoxication of her thoughts.

"Yes, my beloved angel, we shall all be happy. I will reply to Henry's father that I consent to the marriage," cried Rodolphe, pressing Fleur de Marie in his arms with an indescribable emotion. "Take courage, our separation will be short; the new duties which your marriage will impose upon you will confirm your steps still more in that path of forgetfulness and felicity in which you will henceforth tread, for finally, if you should one day be a mother, it would not be only for yourself that it would be necessary you should be happy."

"Ah!" cried Fleur de Marie, with a heart-rending cry, for this word *mother* awoke her from the enchanting dream which was lulling her. "Mother? me? Oh never. I am unworthy this holy name; I should die with shame before my child, if I had not died with shame before its father in making him the avowal of the past."

"What does she say, gracious Heaven!" cried Rodolphe, stunned by the abrupt change.

"I a mother!" resumed Fleur de Marie, with bitter despair, "I respected, I blessed by an innocent and pure child, I, formerly the object of everybody's scorn, I profane thus the sacred name of mother? Oh, never! miserable fool that I was to allow myself to be drawn away to an unworthy hope."

"My daughter, listen to me in pity."

Fleur de Marie stood upright, pale, and beautiful, in the majesty of incurable misfortune.

"My father, we forget that before marrying me Prince Henry must know my past life."

"I have not forgotten it," cried Rodolphe. "He must know all, he shall know all."

"And would you not rather see me die than see me so degraded in his eyes?"

"But he shall also know what an irresistible fatality plunged you into the abyss. He shall know your restoration."

"And he will finally feel," replied Clémence, pressing Fleur de Marie in her arms, "that

when I call you my daughter, he may without shame call you his wife."

"And I, my mother, I love Prince Henry too much, I esteem him too much ever to give him a hand which has been touched by the bandits of the city."

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A short time after this sad scene, the official Gazette of Gerolstein contained the following announcement:

"Yesterday took place, at the Grand-ducal Abbey of Saint Hermangilda, in presence of his royal highness the reigning grand-duke and all the court, the taking of the veil by the very high and very powerful princess, her Royal Highness Amelia of Gérolstein.

"The novitiate was received by the most illustrious and most reverend Lord Charles Maximan, archbishop duke of Oppenheim; Lord Annibal Andre Montano, of the Princes of Delpha, Bishop of Ceuta *in partibus infidelium* and apostolic nuncio, gave the salutation and the papal benediction.

"The sermon was pronounced by the most Reverend Lord Peter d'Asfeld, canon of the Chapter of Cologne, count of the holy Roman Empire—Veni Creator Optime."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROFESSION.

Rodolphe to Clémence.

Gérolstein, Jan. 12, 1842.*

In assuring me to-day of the complete restoration of your father's health, my dear friend, you give me reason to hope that you can, by the end of the week, bring him back here. I foresaw that in the residence at Rosenfeld, situated in the midst of forests, he would be exposed, notwithstanding all possible precaution, to the severity of our cold; unfortunately, his passion for hunting rendered our advice useless. I conjure you, Clémence, as soon as your father can bear the motion of the carriage, to set out immediately, quit that wild country and wild dwelling, only habitable for those old Germans whose bodies were of iron and whose race has disappeared.

I fear lest you also should fall sick: the fatigues of this hurried journey, the anxiety which preyed upon you until you reached your father, all these causes must have affected you sadly. Why could I not accompany you?

Clémence, I beg of you, be not imprudent; I know how bold and how devoted you are. I know how anxiously you will attend to your father; but he will be as much in despair as myself if your health should be impaired by this journey. I deplore doubly the illness of the count, for it takes you from me at a moment when I could have drawn deeply up from the fountain of consolation of your tenderness.

The ceremony of the *profession* of our poor child is fixed for to-morrow—to-morrow, the 13th of *January*, fatal epoch. It was upon the *thirteenth of January* that I drew the sword against my father.

Ah! my friend, I too soon thought myself forgiven. The intoxicating hope of passing my life with you and my daughter made me forget that it was not myself, but that it was *she* who had been punished thus far, and that my punishment was still to come.

And it did come—when, six months since, the unhappy one unveiled to us the double torment of her heart; *her incurable shame at the past, added to her unhappy love for Henry.*

These two bitter and burning sensations, the one heightened by the other by a fatal logic, caused her to take up the unconquerable resolution to take the veil. You know, my dear friend, how, in combating this design with all the strength of our adoration for her, we could not deny that her worthy and courageous conduct should have been ours. How could we answer those terrible words?

I love Prince Henry too well to give him a hand which has been touched by the bandits of the city.

She was obliged to sacrifice herself to her noble scruples, to the ineffaceable remembrance of her shame; she has done it valiantly; she has renounced the splendors of the world; she has descended from the steps of a throne to kneel, clothed in sackloth, upon the pavement of a church; she crossed her hands upon her breast, bowed her angelic head, and her beautiful fair locks, which I loved so much, and which I preserve as a treasure, fell, cut off by the sharp iron.

Oh! my friend, you know our heart-rending emotion at this mournful and solemn moment; this emotion is, even now, as poignant as at the time. In writing these words to you, I weep like a child. * * * *

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I have seen her this morning; although she seemed to me less pale than usual, and declares she does not suffer, her health makes me anxious. Alas! when under the veil and band which surround her noble forehead, I see her attenuated features, which have the cold whiteness of marble, and which make her large blue eyes seem larger still, I cannot help dreaming over the gentle and pure splendor with which her beauty sparkled at our marriage. Never did she look so charmingly. Our happiness seemed to radiate from her beautiful countenance.

As I told you, I saw her this morning; she has not been informed that the Princess Juliana voluntarily resigns in her favour the dignity of abbess; to-morrow, therefore, on the day of her *profession*, our child will be elected abbess, as there is a unanimous desire among the noble ladies of the community to confer upon her this dignity.

Since the beginning of her novitiate, there has been but one opinion upon her piety, her charity, her religious exactness in fulfilling all the duties of her order, whose austerities she exaggerates most unfortunately. She has exercised in this convent the influence which she exercises everywhere without attempting to do so, and in ignorance of the fact which increases her power.

Her conversation this morning confirmed my doubts. She has not found in the solitude of the cloister, and in the severe practice of monastic duties, repose and forgetfulness. She congratulated herself, however, upon her resolution, which she considers the accomplishment of an imperious duty; but she suffers continually, for she is not formed for those mystical contemplations, in the midst of which, certain people, forgetting all affection, all earthly remembrances, are lost in ascetic delights.

"No; Fleur de Marie believes, prays, submits herself to the rigorous and harsh observance of her order; she pours out the most evangelical

* About six months have passed since Fleur de Marie entered the Convent of St. Hermangildá as a novice.

consolations, the most humble cares upon the poor sick women who are taken care of in the hospital of the abbey. She has even refused the assistance of a lay sister for the moderate care of that cold and bare cell where we remarked with such sad astonishment, you remember, my dear friend, the dried branches of *her little rose-bush*, suspended beneath her crucifix. She is, indeed, the cherished example, the venerated model of the community. But she confessed to me this morning, while bitterly reproaching herself for this weakness, that she is not so much absorbed by the duties and austerities of a religious life as to prevent the past from constantly appearing before her, not only as it was, but as it might have been.

"'I blame myself for it, my father,' said she to me, with that calm and gentle resignation which you know belongs to her, 'I blame myself, but I cannot help often thinking that if God had spared me the degradation which has withered forever my future life, I might have lived always near you, beloved by the husband of your choice. In spite of myself, my life is divided between these grievous regrets and the frightful recollections of *the city;* in vain I pray to God to free me from these frightful recollections, to fill my heart alone with pious love for him, with holy hopes; in short, to take me entirely to himself, since I wish to give myself entirely to him. He does not grant my prayers—undoubtedly because earthly thoughts render me unworthy to enter into communion with him.'

"'But then,' cried I, seized with a foolish glimmering of hope, 'there is still time—to-day your novitiate ends; but it is not until to-morrow that your solemn profession will take place; you are still free—renounce this rude and austere life, which does not afford you the consolation you expected; if you must suffer, come and suffer in our arms: let our tenderness assuage your sorrows.'

"Shaking sadly her head, she answered me, with that inflexible justness of reasoning which has so often struck us,

"'It is true, my dear father, the solitude of the cloister is sad for me—for me, already accustomed to your kindness every moment. It is true, I am pursued with bitter regrets and grievous recollections; but, at least, I have the consciousness of fulfilling a duty; I understand, I know, that everywhere but here I should be out of place; I should again be in that cruelly false position in which I have already suffered so much both for myself and for you—for I, too, am proud. Your daughter shall be such as she ought to be; shall do what she ought to do; shall suffer what she ought to suffer. To-morrow all will know from what a slough you have rescued me: in seeing me repentant at the foot of the cross, they will, perhaps, pardon the past in consideration of my present humility. It would not be so, my dear father, if they saw me, as a few months ago, shining in the midst of the splendours of your court. Besides, to satisfy the just and severe demands of the world, will satisfy myself; and I am grateful to God with all the power of my soul when I think that *He alone* can offer to your daughter an asylum and position worthy of her and of you: a position, in short, which shall not form a sad contrast to my former degradation, and in which I can deserve the only respect which is due to me, that which is granted to repentance and sincere humility.'

"Alas! Clémence, what could I reply to that?

"Fatality! fatality! for this unfortunate child is endowed, so to speak, with an inexorable *logic* in all that concerns the sensitiveness of the heart and one's honour. With such a mind and soul, one cannot think of palliating or hiding false positions—we must suffer the imperious consequences.

"I left her, as usual, with a breaking heart.

"Without founding the least hope upon this interview, which will be the last before her *profession*, I said to myself, 'To-day she might renounce the cloister.' But you see, my dear friend, her will is irrevocable, and I must indeed agree with her, and repeat her words:

"'*God alone can offer her an asylum and a position worthy of her and of me.*'"

"Once more, her resolution is admirably logical, and suited to the position in society in which we are placed. With Fleur de Marie's exquisite sensibility, no other condition was possible for her. But I have often told you, my friend, if sacred duties, more sacred still than those of family, did not detain me in the midst of a people who love me, and to whom I stand, in a slight degree, in the place of Providence, I should go away with you, my daughter, Henry, and Murphy, to live happily and obscurely in some unknown retreat. Then, far from the imperious laws of a society which is powerless to cure the evils which it has caused, we might have forced this unhappy child into happiness and forgetfulness. While here, in the midst of splendour, of ceremony, as restrained as this, it was impossible. But still, once more, fatality! fatality! I cannot abdicate my power without compromising the happiness of this people, who rely upon me. Brave and worthy people! how little do they know how much their happiness costs me!

"Adieu, a tender adieu, my beloved Clémence. It is a consolation to me to see you as afflicted as myself at the fate of my child, for thus I can say *our* sorrow, and there is no egotism in my suffering.

"Sometimes I ask myself, with fear, what would become of me without you, in the midst of such grievous circumstances? Often these thoughts make me still more sad at Fleur de Marie's fate; for you remain to me, you. But for her, who is there?

"Adieu, a sad adieu, noble friend, good angel of unhappy days. Come back soon; this absence weighs upon you as well as me.

"My life and love to you! soul and heart to you! R.

"I send you this letter by a courier: in case of any unexpected change, I will despatch to you another immediately after the sad ceremony. A thousand wishes and hopes to your father for the establishment of his health. I forgot to give you intelligence of poor Henry; his state of health is better, and no longer gives us such anxiety. His excellent father, himself ill, has recovered strength to take care of Henry, to watch over him; a miracle of paternal love—which does not astonish us—the rest of us.

"Thus, my dear friend, to-morrow — to-morrow—fatal and unpropitious day for me.

"Yours forever, R."

"Abbey of St. Hermangilda, 4 o'clock in the morning.

"Calm yourself, dear Clémence, calm yourself; although the hour in which I write this letter, and the place whence it is dated, might alarm you.

"Thanks to God, the danger is past, but the crisis was terrible.

"Yesterday, after having written to you, agitated by a fatal presentiment, in recalling to myself the paleness and appearance of suffering in my daughter, the state of weakness in which she had languished for some time, remembering, in short, that she was to pass in prayer, in a large, icy-cold church, almost all the night before her profession, I sent Murphy and David to the abbey to ask the Princess Juliana to permit them to remain, until to-morrow, in the outer house which Henry usually inhabited. Thus, my daughter could have prompt assistance, and I could have intelligence if, as I feared, strength should fail her to accomplish this rigorous, I will not say cruel, obligation to remain a January night in prayer in the excessive cold. I had also written to Fleur de Marie, that while I respected the exercise of her religious duties, I begged her to take care of her health, and to pass the evening in prayer in her cell, and not in the church. This is the letter she sent in reply:

"'My dear father, I thank you deeply, and with all my heart, for this new and tender proof of your interest; have no anxiety, I believe I am in the way of accomplishing my duty. Your daughter, my dear father, can show neither fear nor weakness. Such are the rules; I must conform to them. If some physical suffering result from it, with joy do I offer them to God! You will approve it, I hope; you, who have always practised renunciation and duty with so much courage. Adieu, my dear father. I will not say I am going to pray for you. When I pray to God, I always pray for you, for it is impossible to prevent mingling you with the Divinity I implore; you have been to me on earth what God, if I deserve it, will be to me in heaven.

"'Deign this evening to bless in thought your daughter, my dear father. To-morrow she will be the spouse of the Lord.

"'She kisses your hand with pious respect.

"'Sister Amelia.'

"This letter, which I could not read without shedding tears, reassured me, however, but little; I, too, must pass a sad evening. Night having come, I went to shut myself up in the pavilion which I have had built not far from the monument erected to my father's memory, in expiation of that fatal night.

"Towards one o'clock in the morning, I heard Murphy's voice; I shuddered with alarm; he had come in haste from the convent.

"How shall I tell you, my friend? As I had foreseen, the unfortunate child, notwithstanding her courage and strong will, had not strength to accomplish entirely the barbarous custom, which it had been impossible for the Princess Juliana to dispense with, as the rules on this subject were precise.

"At eight o'clock in the evening, Fleur de Marie kneeled down on the stone pavement in the church. Until midnight she continued praying. But at this hour, overcome by her weakness, the horrible cold, and her emotion, for she wept long and silently, she fainted. Two nuns, who, by the Princess Juliana's order, had watched with her, took her up, and carried her to her cell.

"David was immediately called. Murphy came in a carriage to seek me; I flew to the convent; I was received by the Princess Juliana. She told me that David feared the sight of me would make too great an impression upon my daughter; that her fainting, from which she had recovered, presented nothing very alarming, having been only caused by great weakness.

"At first a horrible thought seized me. I feared they wished to hide from me some great misfortune, or, at least, to prepare me to hear it; but the superior said to me, 'I assure you, my lord, the Princess Amelia is out of danger; a simple cordial which Dr. David has given her has restored her strength.'

"I could not doubt what the abbess affirmed; I believed her, and awaited intelligence from my daughter with sad impatience.

"At the end of a quarter of an hour David returned. Thanks to God, she was better; and she had desired to continue her watching and prayers in the church, consenting only to kneel upon a cushion. And as I resisted, and was indignant that the superior should have granted her request, adding that I formally opposed myself to it, he replied to me that it would have been dangerous to contradict the wishes of my daughter at a time when she was under the influence of a strong nervous emotion; and, besides, he had agreed with the Princess Juliana that the poor child should quit the church at the hour of matins to take a little repose, and prepare for the ceremony.

"'She is now in church, then?' said I to him.

"'Yes, my lord, but in half an hour she will have quitted it.'

"I caused myself to be conducted to the north gallery, from which the whole choir of the church can be seen.

"There, in the midst of the darkness of this vast church, only illuminated by the pale light of the lamp from the chancel, I saw her near the grating on her knees, her hands joined, and praying with fervour.

"I also knelt, and thought of my child.

"Three o'clock struck; two sisters who were seated, but who had not moved their eyes from her, went and whispered to her. In a few moments she made a sign, got up, and crossed the church with a firm step—although, my friend, when she passed under the lamp, her countenance appeared to me as white as the long veil which floated around her.

"I also went out of the gallery, intending at first to go to meet her, but I feared a new emotion would prevent her from taking a few moments' repose. I sent David to learn how she was; he came back to tell me she felt better, and intended to try to sleep a little.

"I remain at the abbey, for the ceremony which will take place to-morrow.

"I think now, my friend, it is useless to send you this incomplete letter. I shall finish it to-morrow by relating the events of that sad day.

"Until then farewell, my friend. I am worn out with grief. Pity me."

CHAPTER LAST.

THE THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY.

Rodolphe to Clémence.

"Thirteenth of January—an anniversary now doubly dreadful!!!

"My friend, we are losing her forever!

"All is finished—all!

"Listen to the story!

"It is, then, true, there is an atrocious voluptuousness in relating a horrible grief.

"Yesterday I bewailed the chance which retained you away from me. To-day, Clémence, I congratulate myself that you are not here; you would suffer too much.

"This morning—I had hardly slept through the night—I was awakened by the sound of the bells; I groaned with terror; it seemed to me funereal, a funeral knell.

"In fact, my daughter is dead to us—dead: do you hear, Clémence, from this day you must begin to wear mourning for her in your heart—in your heart, so filled with maternal affection for her.

"Is our child buried under the marble of a tomb or under the vaults of a cloister—for us what is the difference?

"From this day, do you understand, Clémence, we must regard her as dead. Besides, she is so very weak; her health, impaired by so much sorrow, by so many shocks, is so feeble. Why not that other death, still more complete? Fate is not weary.

"And then, besides, after my letter of yesterday, you may understand that it would perhaps be more happy for her if she were dead.

"DEAD! These four letters have a singular appearance, do you not think so? when one writes them in reference to an idolized daughter, a daughter so fair, so charming, of such angelic goodness, scarcely eighteen, and dead to the world!

"Indeed, for us and for her, why vegetate in suffering in the gloomy tranquillity of this cloister? Of what importance that she lives, if she is lost to us—she might have loved life so much—what a fatality has attended her!

"What I am saying is horrible: there is a barbarous egotism in paternal love.

* * * * * * * *

"At noon her profession took place with solemn pomp.

"Hidden behind the curtains of our gallery, I was present at it.

"I felt, over again, but with still more intensity, all those poignant emotions which we suffered at her novitiate.

"A singular thing, she is adored: it is generally believed that she is drawn towards a religious life by an irresistible vocation; her profession might be looked upon as a happy event for her, and yet, on the contrary, an overpowering sadness weighs down the whole assembly.

"At the bottom of the church, among the people, I saw two under-officers of my guard, two old and rude soldiers, hold down their heads and weep.

"There seemed to be in the act a sad presentiment. If there was foundation for it, it has been but half realized.

"The profession terminated, our child was brought back into the hall of the chapter, where the nomination of the new abbess was to take place.

"Thanks to my privilege as sovereign, I went into this hall to await the return of Fleur de Marie.

"She soon entered.

"Her emotion, her weakness was so great, that two sisters supported her.

"I was alarmed, less even by her paleness and the deep alteration of her features than by the expression of her smile: it seemed to me marked by a sort of secret satisfaction.

"Clémence, I say it to you, perhaps soon we shall need all our courage—much courage—I *feel*, so to speak, *within me* that our child is struck with death!

"After all, her life would be so unhappy. Here is the second time that, in thinking the death of my daughter possible, I have said that death would put an end to her cruel existence. This idea is a horrible symptom; but if sorrow must strike us, it is better to be prepared, is it not, Clémence?

"To prepare one's self for such a misfortune is to taste little by little beforehand that slow anguish—it is an unheard-of refinement of grief. It is a thousand times more dreadful than to have the blow fall unexpectedly; at least the stupor, the annihilation would spare one a part of this cutting anguish.

"But the customs of compassion prescribe to us a *preparation*. Probably I should never act otherwise myself, my poor friend, if I had to acquaint you with the sad event of which I speak to you. Thus be alarmed, if you observe that I speak to you of *her* with the delicacy, the caution of desperate sadness, after having announced to you that I do not feel serious inquietude respecting her health.

"Yes, be alarmed, if I speak to you as I am writing now, for though I left her, to finish this letter, an hour ago, in a tolerably calm state, I repeat it to you, Clémence, I seem to *feel within me* that she suffers more than she appears to do. Heaven grant that I deceive myself, and that I take for presentiments the despairing sadness which this melancholy ceremony inspires.

"Fleur de Marie then entered the large hall of the chapel.

"All the stalls were occupied by the nuns.

"She went modestly to take the lowest place on the left, supporting herself on the arm of one of the sisters, for she still seemed very weak.

"At the upper end of the hall the Princess Juliana was seated, the grand prioress beside her; on the other hand a second dignitary, holding in her hand the golden cross, the symbol of the authority of the abbess.

"A profound silence prevailed. The princess arose, took her cross in her hand, and said, with a serious tone and an expression of much emotion,

"'My dear daughters, my great age obliges me to confide to younger hands this emblem of my spiritual power,' and she showed her cross. 'I am authorzied to do it by a bull of our holy father; I will present, then, to the benediction of my Lord Archbishop of Oppenheim, and to the approbation of his royal highness the grand-duke, our sovereign, and to yours, my dear daughters, the one of your number whom you have designated to succeed me. Our grand prioress will make known to you the result of the election, and to the person whom you shall have elected I will deliver up my cross and ring.'

"I never moved my eyes from my daughter. Standing in her stall, her two hands crossed on her bosom, her eyes cast down, half enveloped in her white veil, and the long descending folds of her black robe, she remained immovable and thoughtful; she had never for a moment supposed that she could be chosen: her elevation had been only confided to me by the abbess.

"The grand prioress took a register and read:

"'Each of our dear sisters having been, according to rule, invited, eight days since, to place their votes in the hands of our holy mother, and mutually to keep secret their choice until this moment, in the name of our holy mother, I declare, that one of you, my dear sisters, has, by her exemplary piety, by her evangelical virtues, merited the unanimous suffrage of the community; and this is our Sister Amelia, during her

lifetime the most high and puissant Princess of Gérolstein.'

"At these words, a sort of murmur of sweet surprise and happy satisfaction passed round the hall; the looks of all the nuns were fixed upon my daughter, with an expression of tender sympathy. Notwithstanding my all-engrossing anxieties, I was myself deeply moved with this nomination, which, made separately and secretly, offered, nevertheless, a touching unanimity.

"Fleur de Marie, astounded, became still more pale; her knees trembled so much that she was obliged to support herself with one hand on the side of the stall.

"The abbess spoke again, with a very clear, but grave voice:

"'My dear daughters, is it indeed Sister Amelia whom you consider most worthy and most deserving of all of you? Is it indeed she whom you acknowledge as your spiritual superior? Let each of you in turn answer me, my dear daughters.'

"And each nun answered, in a loud tone,

"'I have voluntarily and freely chosen, and I do choose Sister Amelia for my holy mother and superior.'

"Overpowered with an inexpressible emotion, my poor child fell on her knees, joined her hands, and so remained till every vote was given.

"Then the abbess, placing the cross and ring in the hands of the grand prioress, advanced towards my daughter, to take her by the hand and lead her to the seat of the abbess.

* * * * *

"My friend, my tender friend, I have interrupted myself a moment. I must take courage and finish the relation of this heart-rending scene.

"'Raise yourself, my dear daughter,' said the abbess to her; 'come to take the place which belongs to you; your evangelical virtues, and not your rank, have gained it for you.'

"Saying these words, the venerable princess bent towards my daughter to assist her to rise.

"Fleur de Marie took a few trembling steps, then arriving in the middle of the hall of the chapter, she stopped and said, with a voice the calmness and firmness of which astonished me,

"'Pardon me, holy mother, I would speak to my sisters.'

"'Ascend first, my dear daughter, your seat as abbess,' said the princess; 'it is from thence that you must let them hear your voice.'

"'That place, holy mother, cannot be mine,' replied Fleur de Marie, with a low and trembling voice.

"'What do you say, my dear daughter?'

"'Such a high dignity is not made for me, holy mother.'

"'But the voices of all your sisters call you to it.'

"'Permit me, holy mother, to make here on my knees a solemn confession; my sisters will see, and you also, holy mother, that the most humble condition is not humble enough for me.'

"'Your modesty misleads you, my dear daughter,' said the superior, with kindness, believing, in fact, that the unfortunate child was yielding to a feeling of exaggerated modesty; but I, I divined those confessions which Fleur de Marie was about to make. Seized with horror, I cried out with a supplicating voice,

"'My child, I conjure you—'

"At these words, to tell you, my friend, all that I read in the profound look which Fleur de Marie cast upon me, would be impossible. As you will see directly, she had understood me—yes, she had understood that I should partake in the shame of this horrible revelation: she understood that, after such a revelation, I might be accused of falsehood, for I had always left it to be believed that Fleur de Marie had never left her mother.

"At this thought the poor child believed herself guilty of the blackest ingratitude towards me. She had not strength to go on—she was silent, and held down her head from exhaustion.

"'Yet once again, my dear daughter,' resumed the abbess, 'your modesty deceives you; the unanimity of your sisters' choice proves to you how worthy you are to take my place. If you have taken part in the pleasures of the world, your renouncing these pleasures is but the more meritorious. It is not her Royal Highness Princess Amelia who is chosen—it is *Sister Amelia*. For us, your life began when you entered this house of the Lord, and it is this example and holy life which we recompense. I say to you, moreover, my dear daughter, that if before entering this retreat your life had been as guilty as it has been, on the contrary, pure and praiseworthy, that the angelic virtues of which you have given us the example since your abode here would expiate and redeem, in the eyes of the Lord, any past life, however guilty it may have been. After this, my daughter, judge if your modesty ought not to be assured.'

"These words of the abbess were the more precious to Fleur de Marie, inasmuch as she believed the past ineffaceable. Unfortunately, this scene had deeply distressed her, and though she affected calmness and firmness, it seemed to me that her countenance changed in an alarming manner. Twice she groaned as she passed her poor emaciated hand over her forehead.

"'I think I have convinced you, my dear daughter,' resumed the Princess Juliana, 'and you would not cause your sisters a severe pain by refusing this mark of their confidence and their affection.'

"'No, holy mother,' said she, with an expression which struck me, and with a voice becoming weaker and weaker, 'I *now* think I may accept it. But as I feel greatly fatigued and somewhat ill, if you will permit it, holy mother, the ceremony of my consecration shall not take place for a few days.'

"'It shall be as you desire, my dear daughter; but while we wait till your office shall be blessed and consecrated, take this ring: come to your place; our dear sisters will render you their homage, according to the rules.'

"I saw at every moment her emotion increasing, her countenance changing more and more; finally, this scene was beyond her strength; she fainted before the procession of the sisters was finished.

"Judge of my terror; we carried her into the apartment of the abbess.

"David had not left the convent; he hastened and bestowed the first cares upon her. Oh that he may not have deceived me; he assures me that this new accident was caused only by extreme weakness occasioned by the fastings, the fatigues, and the privation of sleep which my daughter has imposed upon herself during her novitiate.

"I believed him, because, in fact, her angelic features, though of a frightful paleness, did not betray any suffering; when she recovered her

consciousness, I was even struck with the serenity which shone on her forehead. It seems to me that she was concealing the secret hope of an approaching deliverance.

"The superior having returned to the chapter to close the session, I remained alone with my daughter.

"'My good father, can you forget my ingratitude? Can you forget that, at the moment I was about to make this painful confession, you asked me to spare you!'

"'Oh! do not speak of it, I supplicate you.' 'And I had not dreamed,' continued she, with bitterness, 'that in saying, in the face of all, from what an abyss of degradation you had drawn me, I was revealing a secret that you had kept out of tenderness to me; it was to accuse you publicly, you, my father, of a dissimulation to which you had resigned yourself only to secure to me a brilliant and honoured existence. Oh! can you pardon me?'

"Instead of answering her, I pressed my lips upon her forehead; she felt my tears flow.

"After having kissed my hands several times, she said to me,

"'Now I feel better, my good father, now that I am, as our rules say, here, and dead to the world. I should wish to make some dispositions in favour of several persons, but, as all I possess is yours, will you authorize me, my good father?'

"'Can you doubt it? but I beseech you,' said I to her, 'do not indulge these sad thoughts; by-and-by you shall employ yourself in this duty; you have time enough.'

"'Undoubtedly, my good father, I have yet much time to live,' added she, with an accent that, I know not why, made me shudder. I looked at her more attentively; but no change in her features justified my uneasiness. 'Yes, I have yet much time to live,' resumed she, 'but I must not occupy myself longer with terrestrial things, for to-day I renounce all which attached me to the world. I beseech you, do not refuse me.'

"'Direct me: I will do everything you wish.'

"'I should wish that my tender mother would always keep in the little back parlour where she usually sits, my embroidery frame, with the tapestry I have begun in it.'

"'Your wishes shall be fulfilled, my child: your room has remained exactly as it was the day you left the palace; for everything belonging to you is an object of religious worship to us. Clémence will be deeply touched at your remembrance of her.'

"'As to you, my good father, take, I beg you, my large ebony chair, in which I have thought, have dreamed so much.'

"'It shall be placed by the side of mine in my working cabinet, and I shall see you in it every day, seated beside me, as you so often used to sit.' Could I tell her this, and restrain my tears?

"'Now I should wish to leave some memorials of me to those who took so much interest in me when I was unfortunate. To Madame Georges I should like to give my writing-desk, of which I have lately made use. This gift will be appropriate,' added she, with a sweet smile, 'for it was she at the farm who began to teach me to write. As to the venerable curate of Bouqueval, who instructed me in religion, I destine for him the beautiful Christ in my oratory."

"'Good, my child.'

"'I should like to send my bandeau of pearls to my good little Rigolette. It is a simple ornament that she can wear on her beautiful black hair; and then, if it were possible, since you know where Martial and La Louve are, in Algiers, I should wish that this courageous woman, who saved my life, should have my enamelled cross. These different pledges of remembrance, my good father, I should wish to have sent to them *from Fleur de Marie.*'

"'I will execute your wishes; have you forgotten no one?'

"'I believe not, my good father.'

"'Think carefully: among those who love you, is there not some one very unhappy—as unhappy as your mother and myself; some one, finally, who regrets as deeply as we do your entrance into the convent?'

"The poor child understood me; she pressed my hand; a slight blush coloured for a moment her pale face.

"Anticipating a question which she feared, undoubtedly, to ask me, I said to her, 'He is better; they no longer fear for his life.'

"'And his father?'

"'He feels the improvement in the health of his son—he, too, is better. And to Henry, what will you give him? A remembrance from you will be such a dear, such a precious consolation to him.'

"'My father, offer him my *prie-dieu.* Alas! I have often watered it with my tears, in begging of Heaven strength to forget Henry, since I was not worthy of his love.'

"'How happy he will be to see that you had a thought for him!'

"'The house of asylum for orphans and young women abandoned by their relations, I should desire, my good father—'"

* * * * *

Here Rodolphe's letter was interrupted by the following words, which were almost illegible.

"Clémence, Murphy will finish this letter: I have no longer any mind—I am distracted. Ah, the thirteenth of January!!!"

The conclusion of this letter, in the handwriting of Murphy, was thus conceived.

"Madam—In obedience to the orders of his royal highness, I complete this sad recital. The two letters of my lord must have prepared your royal highness for the overwhelming news which it remains to me to acquaint you with.

"It was three o'clock; my lord was employed in writing to your royal highness; I was waiting in a neighbouring apartment until he should give me the letter, to forward it immediately by a courier. Suddenly I saw the Princess Juliana enter with an air of consternation. 'Where is his royal highness?' said she to me with a voice filled with emotion. 'Princess, my lord is writing to the grand-duchess the news of the day.' 'Sir Walter, you must inform my lord—a terrible event. You are his friend, be so kind as to inform him; from you the blow will be less terrible.'

"I understood everything: I thought it more prudent to take this sad revelation upon myself, the superior having added that the Princess Amelia was slowly sinking away, and that my lord must hasten to receive the last sighs of his daughter. I unfortunately had not time to take any precautions. I entered the saloon; his royal highness perceived my paleness. 'You have come to acquaint me of some misfortune.' 'An irreparable misfortune, my lord—courage.' 'Ah,

my presentiments!' cried he, and, without adding a word, he ran to the cloister. I followed him.

"From the apartment of the superior, the Princess Amelia had been transported into her cell after her last interview with my lord. One of the sisters was watching by her; at the end of an hour she perceived that the voice of the Princess Amelia, who spoke to her at intervals, was becoming weaker, and that she was more distressed. The sister hastened to inform the superior; Doctor David was called; he hoped to remedy this new loss of strength by a cordial, but it was in vain; the pulse was scarcely perceptible; he saw, with despair, that reiterated emotions had probably exhausted the strength of the Princess Amelia; there remained no hope of saving her.

"It was then that my lord arrived. Princess Amelia had just received the last sacrament: a ray of intelligence still lingered about her; in one of her hands, crossed on her bosom, was the *remains of her little rosebush.*

"My lord fell on his knees by her pillow: he sobbed, 'My daughter, my beloved child,' cried he, in a heart-rending tone.

"The Princess Amelia heard him, turned her head gently towards him, opened her eyes, endeavoured to smile, and said, with a feeble voice,

"'My good father, pardon—Henry also—my good mother—pardon.'

"These were her last words!

"After an hour of silent agony, she gave up her spirit to God.

"When his daughter had yielded up her last sigh, my lord did not say a word; his calmness was frightful; he closed the eyes of the princess, kissed her forehead again and again, took piously the remains of the little rosebush, and left the cell.

"I followed him; he returned to the house without the cloister, and showing me the letter that he had begun to write to your royal highness, and to which he in vain attempted to add some words, for his hand trembled convulsively, he said to me,

"'It is impossible for me to write. I am annihilated, my mind is gone. Write to the grand-duchess that I no longer have a daughter!'

"I have executed the orders of my lord.

"Permit me, as his oldest servant, to beseech your royal highness to hasten your return as soon as the health of the Count d'Orbigny will permit it. The presence of your royal highness alone can calm the despair of the prince. He wishes to watch every night by his daughter till the day when she will be buried in the grand-ducal chapel.

"I have accomplished my sad task, madam: be so kind as to excuse the incoherence of this letter, and accept the expression of respectful devotion with which I have the honour to be your royal highness's very obedient servant,

"WALTER MURPHY."

* * * * * * * * *

The night before the funeral service of the Princess Amelia, Clémence arrived at Gérolstein with her father.

Rodolphe was not alone the day of the funeral of Fleur de Marie.

The following letter, addressed to the editor of the Journal des Debats, is affixed to the last number of the Mysteries of Paris, in that journal:

"*To the Editor:*"

"Sir—The Mysteries of Paris is finished; permit me publicly to thank you for having lent to this work, unfortunately as imperfect as incomplete, the great and powerful publicity of the Journal des Debats; my gratitude is the more ardent, sir, as several of the ideas put forth in this work differ essentially from those which you sustain with as much energy as talent, and because it is rare to meet with the courageous and loyal impartiality you have given proof of with regard to me.

"I invoke again this impartiality, sir, to say some words to you in favour of a modest publication, founded, and exclusively carried on by labourers under the title of the POPULAR HIVE. Some honest and enlightened artisans have raised this popular tribunal, where they expose their claims with as much propriety as moderation (I refer, among others, to a very touching letter addressed to the king by M. Duquesne, journeyman printer). The organization of labour, the limitation of rivalship, the tariff of salaries, are treated of in it by labourers themselves; and in this respect their voice, it seems to me, deserves to be heard attentively by all those who are engaged in public affairs.

"But, unfortunately, many years will, perhaps, pass before these great questions, of such vital interest for the masses, will be solved. Meantime, every day brings forward and unveils new miseries, new individual sufferings. The founders of the HIVE have hoped that in making every month an appeal in favour of their unfortunate brethren, they shall, perhaps, be listened to by the more fortunate part of the world.

"Permit me, sir, to quote for you the first page of the Popular Hive.

"'"To assist the honourably unfortunate who complain, is good. To inquire out those who struggle with honour, with energy, and to come to their assistance sometimes unknown to them, to prevent in time the misery or the temptations which lead to crime, this is better."—*Rodolphe, in the Mysteries of Paris.*

"'If, in our conviction, the people can be delivered or assisted efficaciously only by measures legislatively arranged, this is no reason for us to despise or to repulse blindly gifts offered with delicacy.

"'The part which M. Eugene Sue makes Rodolphe fill in the Mysteries of Paris, having inspired us with the idea of inquiring into the circumstances of honest and unfortunate families, and who under these titles are worthy of evangelical brotherhood, we make to the friends of humanity a pious appeal, for a benefit is sufficient sometimes to turn away a misfortune, to save from misery, from despair, from crime, perhaps, a family deprived of everything; and if charities are degrading, what we advise principally will be to procure work and places sufficiently well paid, in order that every one may be placed beyond terrible necessity.

"'We have relieved several interesting and distressed families: benefactors may apply to the office of the Hive, where they may learn the address of the sufferers, in order that they may in person administer their gifts.

"'We quote, among others, a family composed of father, mother, and four children, the oldest six years. They have in vain solicited employment which would support them, but they have not been able to obtain it for the very reason which ought to have excited the greatest interest for them—*because they had a numerous family.*

"'Another of these families had just lost its head, an honest painter, who, while at work, fell from the fourth story of a house. He left a wife and several young children in the most profound grief and greatest destitution.'

"I take pleasure, I confess it to you, sir, in quoting this page, where my name is mentioned in such a flattering manner, for I shall regard myself always recompensed beyond my hopes, whenever I feel I have inspired by my writings any generous action or charitable thought, and the idea put in execution by the founders of the

Popular Hive seems to be of the number of these.

"Thus, rich persons who wish to subscribe to this monthly journal, sixteen francs per year (at the office of the Hive, Rue de Quatre Fils, No. 17 au Marais), will be every month informed of some respectable and unfortunate person whom it will, perhaps, be agreeable to them to relieve, for, we say it aloud, there is generally in France much commiseration for the suffering, but very often the occasion is wanting to exercise charity in a manner profitable to the heart, and, if it may be so said, in an *interesting* way. In this respect, the Popular Hive will offer valuable information to those chosen spirits who are seeking out pure and noble sources of enjoyment.

"One last word, sir: as you deserve one half of the cred it of my work, from the immense publicity you have given it, I can inform you of a result at which you will congratulate yourself, I hope, as I do. I have received letters from Bordeaux and Lyons, from several rich and compassionate persons, who are employed in realizing, in those two cities, my project of a bank of *gratuitous loans for labourers out of employment*, and one who makes here the most generous and most enlightened use of an immense fortune, has given me, on the subject of a similar institution in Paris, the most encouraging hopes.

"We have now only to wish, sir, that some legislator, a true friend of the people, will take in hand the following questions:

"The supplying advocates for the poor.

"The lowering the immense rates of interest claimed by the Monte de Piete (a legalized pawn-broking establishment which has a monopoly of the business).

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"To the reform of the penal code, relating to abuses of trust.

"And, perhaps, this book, which has been recently attacked with so much bitterness and violence, may have at least produced some good results.

"Be pleased, sir, to accept the expression of my lively gratitude, and the assurance of my most devoted sentiments.

"EUGENE SUE.

"Paris, October 15, 1843."

THE END

THE HAUNTED MAN

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THE HAUNTED MAN.

CHAPTER I

THE GIFT BESTOWED.

Everybody said so.

Far be it from me to assert that what everybody says must be true. Everybody is, often, as likely to be wrong as right. In the general experience, everybody has been wrong so often, and it has taken, in most instances, such a weary while to find out how wrong, that the authority is proved to be fallible. Everybody may sometimes be right; "but *that's* no rule," as the ghost of Giles Scroggins says in the ballad.

The dread word, Ghost, recalls me.

Everybody said that he looked like a haunted man. The extent of my present claim for everybody is, that they were so far right. He did.

Who could have seen his hollow cheek; his sunken brilliant eye; his black-attired figure, indefinably grim, although well-knit and well-proportioned; his grizzled hair hanging, like tangled sea-weed, about his face,—as if he had been, through his whole life, a lonely mark for the chafing and beating of the great deep of humanity,—but might have said he looked like a haunted man?

Who could have observed his manner, taciturn, thoughtful, gloomy, shadowed by habitual reserve, retiring always and jocund never, with a distraught air of reverting to a byegone place and time, or of listening to some old echoes in his mind, but might have said it was the manner of a haunted man?

Who could have heard his voice, slow-speaking, deep, and grave, with a natural fulness and melody in it which he seemed to set himself against and stop, but might have said it was the voice of a haunted man?

Who that had seen him in his upper chamber, part library and part laboratory,—for he was, as the world knew, far and wide, a learned man in chemistry, and a teacher on whose lips and hands a crowd of aspiring ears and eyes hung daily,—who that had seen him there, upon a winter night, alone, surrounded by his drugs and instruments and books; the shadow of his shaded lamp a monstrous beetle on the wall, motionless among a crowd of spectral shapes raised there by the flickering of the fire upon the quaint objects around him; some of these phantoms (the reflection of glass vessels that held liquids), trembling at heart like things that knew his power to uncombine them, and to give back their component parts to fire and vapour; —who that had seen him then, his work done, and he pondering in his chair before the rusted grate and red flame, moving his thin mouth as if in speech, but silent as the dead, would not have said that the man seemed haunted and the chamber too?

Who might not, by a very easy flight of fancy, have believed that everything about him took this haunted tone, and that he lived on haunted ground?

His dwelling was so solitary and vault-like, —an old, retired part of an ancient endowment for students, once a brave edifice, planted in an open place, but now the obsolete whim of forgotten architects, smoke-age-and-weather-darkened, squeezed on every side by the overgrowing of the great city, and choked, like an old well, with stones and bricks; its small quadrangles, lying down in very pits formed by the streets and buildings, which, in course of time, had been constructed above its heavy chimney stacks; its old trees, insulted by the neighboring smoke, which deigned to droop so low when it was very feeble and the weather very moody; its grass-plots, struggling with the mildewed earth to be grass, or to win any show of compromise; its silent pavements, unaccustomed to the tread of feet, and even to the observation of eyes, except when a stray face looked down from the upper world, wondering what nook it was; its sun-dial in a little bricked-up corner, where no sun had straggled for a hundred years, but where, in compensation for the sun's neglect, the snow would lie for weeks when it lay nowhere else, and the black east wind would spin like a huge humming-top, when in all other places it was silent and still.

His dwelling, at its heart core—within doors —at his fireside—was so lowering and old, so crazy, yet so strong, with its worm-eaten beams of wood in the ceiling, and its sturdy floor shelving downward to the great oak chimney-piece; so environed and hemmed in by the pressure of the town, yet so remote in fashion, age, and custom; so quiet, yet so thundering with echoes when a distant voice was raised or a door was shut—echoes, not confined to the many low passages and empty rooms, but rumbling and grumbling till they were stifled in the heavy air of the forgotten Crypt where the Norman arches were half-buried in the earth.

You should have seen him in his dwelling about twilight, in the dead winter time.

When the wind was blowing shrill and shrewd, with the going down of the blurred sun. When it was just so dark, as that the forms of things were indistinct and big, but not wholly lost. When sitters by the fire began to see wild faces and figures, mountains and abysses, ambuscades and armies, in the coals. When people in the streets bent down their heads, and ran before the weather. When those who were obliged to meet it, were stopped at angry corners, stung by wandering snow-flakes alighting on the lashes of their eyes, which fell too sparingly, and were blown away too quickly, to leave a trace upon the frozen ground. When windows of private houses closed up

tight and warm. When lighted gas began to burst forth in the busy and the quiet streets, fast blackening otherwise. When stray pedestrians, shivering along the latter, looked down at the glowing fires in kitchens, and sharpened their sharp appetites by sniffing up the fragrance of whole miles of dinners.

When travellers by land were bitter cold, and looked wearily on gloomy landscapes, rustling and shuddering in the blast. When mariners at sea, outlying upon icy yards, were tossed and swung above the howling ocean dreadfully. When light-houses, on rocks and headlands, showed solitary and watchful; and benighted sea-birds breasted on against their ponderous lanterns, and fell dead. When little readers of story-books, by the firelight, trembled to think of Cassim Baba cut into quarters, hanging in the Robber's Cave, or had some small misgivings that the fierce little old woman, with the crutch, who used to start out of the box in the merchant Abudah's bedroom, might, one of these nights, be found upon the stairs, in the long, cold, dusky journey up to bed.

When, in rustic places, the last glimmering of daylight died away from the ends of avenues; and the trees, arching overhead, were sullen and black. When, in parks and woods, the high wet fern and sodden moss, and beds of fallen leaves, and trunks of trees, were lost to view in masses of impenetrable shade. When mists arose from dyke, and fen, and river. When lights in old halls and in cottage windows were a cheerful sight. When the mill stopped, the wheelwright and the blacksmith shut their workshops, the turnpike-gate closed, the plough and harrow were left lonely in the fields, the labourer and team went home, and the striking of the church clock had a deeper sound than at noon, and the church-yard wicket would be swung no more that night.

When twilight everywhere released the shadows, prisoned up all day, that now closed in and gathered like mustering swarms of ghosts. When they stood lowering, in corners of rooms, and frowned out from behind half-opened doors. When they had full possession of unoccupied apartments. When they danced upon the floors, and walls, and ceilings of inhabited chambers, while the fire was low, and withdrew like ebbing waters when it sprung into a blaze. When they fantastically mocked the shapes of household objects, making the nurse an ogress, the rocking-horse a monster, the wondering child, half-scared and half-amused, a stranger to itself,—the very tongs upon the hearth, a straddling giant with his arms a-kimbo, evidently smelling the blood of Englishmen, and wanting to grind people's bones to make his bread.

When these shadows brought into the minds of older people, other thoughts, and showed them different images. When they stole from their retreats, in the likenesses of forms and faces from the past, from the grave, from the deep, deep gulf, where the things that might have been, and never were, are always wandering.

When he sat, as already mentioned, gazing at the fire. When, as it rose and fell, the shadows went and came. When he took no heed of them, with his bodily eyes; but, let them come or let them go, looked fixedly at the fire. You should have seen him, then.

When the sounds that had arisen with the shadows, and come out of their lurking places at the twilight summons, seemed to make a deeper stillness all about him. When the wind was rumbling in the chimney, and sometimes crooning, sometimes howling in the house. When the old trees outside were so shaken and beaten, that one querulous old rook, unable to sleep, protested now and then, in a feeble, dozy, high-up "Caw!" When, at intervals, the window trembled, the rusty vane upon the turret-top complained, the clock beneath it recorded that another quarter of an hour was gone, or the fire collapsed and fell in with a rattle.

—When a knock came at his door, in short, as he was sitting so, and roused him.

"Who's that?" said he. "Come in!"

Surely there had been no figure leaning on the back of his chair; no face looking over it. It is certain that no gliding footstep touched the floor, as he lifted up his head, with a start, and spoke. And yet there was no mirror in the room on whose surface his own form could have cast its shadow for a moment; and Something had passed darkly and gone!

"I'm humbly fearful, sir," said a fresh-coloured busy man, holding the door open with his foot for the admission of himself and a wooden tray he carried, and letting it go again by very gentle and careful degrees, when he and the tray had got in, lest it should close noisily, "that it's a good bit past the time to-night. But Mrs. William has been taken off her legs so often—"

"By the wind? Ay! I have heard it rising."

"— By the wind, sir—that it's a mercy she got home at all. Oh dear, yes. Yes. It was by the wind, Mr. Redlaw. By the wind."

He had, by this time, put down the tray for dinner, and was employed in lighting the lamp, and spreading a cloth on the table. From this employment he desisted in a hurry, to stir and feed the fire, and then resumed it; the lamp he had lighted, and the blaze that rose under his hand, so quickly changing the appearance of the room, that it seemed as if the mere coming in of his fresh red face and active manner had made the pleasant alteration.

"Mrs. William is of course subject at any time, sir, to be taken off her balance by the elements. She is not formed superior to *that*."

"No," returned Mr. Redlaw good-naturedly, though abruptly.

"No, sir. Mrs. William may be taken off her balance by Earth; as, for example, last Sunday week, when sloppy and greasy, and she going out to tea with her newest sister-in-law, and having a pride in herself, and wishing to appear perfectly spotless though pedestrian. Mrs. William may be taken off her balance by Air; as being once over-persuaded by a friend to try a swing at Peckham Fair, which acted on her constitution instantly like a steam-boat. Mrs. William may be taken off her balance by Fire; as on a false alarm of engines at her mother's, when she went two mile in her night-cap. Mrs. William may be taken off her balance by Water; as at Battersea, when rowed into the piers by her young nephew, Charley

Swidger junior, aged twelve, which had no idea of boats whatever. But these are elements. Mrs. William must be taken out of elements for the strength of *her* character to come into play."

As he stopped for a reply, the reply was "Yes," in the same tone as before.

"Yes, sir. Oh dear, yes!" said Mr. Swidger, still proceeding with his preparations, and checking them off as he made them. "That's where it is, sir. That's what I always say myself, sir Such a many of us Swidgers!—Pepper. Why there's my father, sir, superannuated keeper and custodian of this Institution, eigh-ty-seven year old. He's a Swidger!—Spoon."

"True, William," was the patient and abstracted answer, when he stopped again.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Swidger. "That's what I always say, sir. You may call him the trunk of the tree!—Bread. Then you come to his successor, my unworthy self—Salt—and Mrs. William, Swidgers both.—Knife and fork. Then you come to all my brothers and their families, Swidgers, man and woman, boy and girl. Why, what with cousins, uncles, aunts, and relationships of this, that, and t'other degree, and what-not degree, and marriages, and lyings-in, the Swidgers—Tumbler—might take hold of hands, and make a ring round England!"

Receiving no reply at all here, from the thoughtful man whom he addressed, Mr. William approached him nearer, and made a feint of accidentally knocking the table with a decanter, to rouse him. The moment he succeeded, he went on, as if in great alacrity of acquiescence.

"Yes, sir! That's just what I say myself, sir. Mrs. William and me have often said so. 'There's Swidgers enough,' we say, 'without *our* voluntary contributions'—Butter. In fact, sir, my father is a family in himself—Castors—to take care of; and it happens all for the best that we have no child of our own, though it's made Mrs. William rather quiet-like too. Quite ready for the fowl and mashed potatoes, sir? Mrs. William said she'd dish it in ten minutes when I left the Lodge?"

"I am quite ready," said the other, waking as from a dream, and walking slowly to and fro.

"Mrs. William has been at it again, sir!" said the keeper, as he stood warming a plate at the fire, and pleasantly shading his face with it. Mr. Redlaw stopped in his walking, and an expression of interest appeared in him.

"What I always say myself, sir. She *will* do it! There's a motherly feeling in Mrs. William's breast that must and will have went."

"What has she done?"

"Why, sir, not satisfied with being a sort of mother to all the young gentlemen that come up from a wariety of parts, to attend your courses of lectures at this ancient foundation—it's surprising how stone-chancy catches the heat, this frosty weather, to be sure!" Here he turned the plate, and cooled his fingers.

"Well?" said Mr. Redlaw.

"That's just what I say myself, sir," returned Mr. William, speaking over his shoulder, as if in ready and delighted assent. "That's exactly where it is, sir! There ain't one of our students but appears to regard Mrs. William in that light. Every day, right through the course, they put their heads into the Lodge, one after another, and have all got something to tell her, or something to ask her. 'Swidge' is the appellation by which they speak of Mrs. William in general, among themselves, I'm told; but that's what I say, sir. Better be called ever so far out of your name, if it's done in real liking, than have it made ever so much of, and not cared about! What's a name for? To know a person by. If Mrs. William is known by something better than her name—I allude to Mrs. William's qualities and disposition—never mind her name, though it *is* Swidger, by rights. Let 'em call her Swidge, Widge, Bridge, —Lord! London Bridge, Blackfriars', Chelsea, Putney, Waterloo, or Hammersmith Suspension—if they like!"

The close of this triumphant oration brought him and the plate to the table, upon which he half laid and half dropped it, with a lively sense of its being thoroughly heated, just as the subject of his praises entered the room, bearing another tray and a lantern, and followed by a venerable old man with long gray hair.

Mrs. William, like Mr. William, was a simple, innocent-looking person, in whose smooth cheeks the cheerful red of her husband's official waistcoat was very pleasantly repeated. But whereas Mr. William's light hair stood on end all over his head and seemed to draw his eyes up with it in an excess of bustling readiness for any thing, the dark brown hair of Mrs. William was carefully smoothed down, and waved away under a trim tidy cap, in the most exact and quiet manner imaginable. Whereas Mr. William's very trousers hitched themselves up at the ankles, as if it were not in their iron-grey nature to rest without looking about them, Mrs. William's neatly-flowered skirts—red and white, like her own pretty face—were as composed and orderly, as if the very wind that blew so hard out of doors could not disturb one of their folds. Whereas his coat had something of a fly-away and half-off appearance about the collar and breast, her little bodice was so placid and neat, that there should have been protection for her, in it, had she needed any, with the roughest people. Who could have had the heart to make so calm a bosom swell with grief, or throb with fear, or flutter with a thought of shame! To whom would its repose and peace have not appealed against disturbance, like the innocent slumber of a child!

"Punctual, of course, Milly," said her husband, relieving her of the tray, "or it wouldn't be you. Here's Mrs. William, sir!—He looks lonelier than ever to-night," whispering to his wife as he was taking the tray, "and ghostlier altogether."

Without any show of hurry or noise, or any show of herself even, she was so calm and quiet, Milly set the dishes she had brought upon the table,—Mr. William, after much clattering and running about, having only gained possession of a butter-boat of gravy, which he stood ready to serve.

"What is that the old man has in his arms?" asked Mr. Redlaw, as he sat down to his solitary meal.

"Holly, sir," replied the quiet voice of Milly.

"That's what I say myself, sir," interposed Mr. William, striking in with the butter-boat

"Berries is so seasonable to the time of year! —Brown gravy!"

"Another Christmas come, another year gone!" murmured the Chemist, with a gloomy sigh "More figures in the lengthening sum of recollection that we work and work at to our torment, till Death idly jumbles all together, and rubs all out. So, Philip!" breaking off, and raising his voice as he addressed the old man, standing apart, with his glistening burden in his arms, from which the quiet Mrs. William took small branches, which she noiselessly trimmed with her scissors, and decorated the room with, while her aged father-in-law looked on, much interested in the ceremony.

"My duty to you, sir," returned the old man. "Should have spoken before, sir, but know your ways, Mr. Redlaw—proud to say—and wait till spoke to! Merry Christmas, sir, and happy New Year, and many of 'em. Have had a pretty many of 'em myself—ha, ha!—and may take the liberty of wishing 'em. I'm eighty-seven!"

"Have you had so many that were merry and happy?" asked the other.

"Ay, sir, ever so many," returned the old man.

"Is his memory impaired with age? It is to be expected now," said Mr. Redlaw, turning to the son, and speaking lower.

"Not a morsel of it, sir," replied Mr. William. "That's exactly what I say myself, sir. There never was such a memory as my father's. He's the most wonderful man in the world. He don't know what forgetting means. It's the very observation I'm always making to Mrs. William, sir, if you'll believe me!"

Mr. Swidger, in his polite desire to seem to acquiesce at all events, delivered this as if there were no iota of contradiction in it, and it were all said in unbounded and unqualified assent.

The Chemist pushed his plate away, and, rising from the table, walked across the room to where the old man stood looking at a little sprig of holly in his hand.

"It recalls the time when many of those years were old and new, then?" he said, observing him attentively, and touching him on the shoulder. "Does it?"

"Oh, many, many!" said Philip, half awaking from his revery. "I'm eighty-seven!"

"Merry and happy, was it?" asked the Chemist, in a low voice. "Merry and happy, old man?"

"Maybe as high as that, no higher," said the old man, holding out his hand a little way above the level of his knee, and looking retrospectively at his questioner, "when I first remember 'em! Cold, sunshiny day it was, out a walking, when some one—it was my mother as sure as you stand there, though I don't know what her blessed face was like, for she took ill and died that Christmas-time—told me they were food for birds. The pretty little fellow thought —that's me, you understand—that birds' eyes were so bright, perhaps, because the berries that they lived on in the winter were so bright. I recollect that. And I'm eighty-seven!"

"Merry and happy!" mused the other, bending his dark eyes upon the stooping figure, with a smile of compassion. "Merry and happy—and remember well?"

"Ay, ay, ay!" resumed the old man, catching the last words. "I remember 'em well in my school-time, year after year, and all the merry-making that used to come along with them. I was a strong chap then, Mr. Redlaw; and, if you'll believe me, hadn't my match at foot-ball within ten mile! Where's my son William? Hadn't my match at foot-ball, William, within ten mile!"

"That's what I always say, father!" returned the son promptly, and with great respect. "You ARE a Swidger, if ever there was one of the family!"

"Dear!" said the old man, shaking his head as he again looked at the holly. "His mother —my son William's my youngest son—and I have sat among 'em all, boys and girls, little children and babies, many a year, when the berries like these were not shining half so bright all round us as their bright faces. Many of 'em are gone; she's gone; and my son George (our eldest, who was her pride more than all the rest!) is fallen very low: but I can see them, when I look here, alive and healthy, as they used to be in those days; and I can see him, thank God, in his innocence. It's a blessed thing to me, at eighty-seven."

The keen look that had been fixed upon him with so much earnestness, had gradually sought the ground.

"When my circumstances got to be not so good as formerly, through not being honestly dealt by, and I first come here to be custodian," said the old man, "—which was upwards of fifty years ago—where's my son William? More than half a century ago, William!"

"That's what I say, father," replied the son, as promptly and dutifully as before, "that's exactly where it is. Two times ought's an ought, and twice five ten, and there's a hundred of 'em."

"It was quite a pleasure to know that one of our founders—or more correctly speaking," said the old man, with a great glory in his subject and his knowledge of it, "one of the learned gentlemen that helped endow us in Queen Elizabeth's time, for we were founded afore her day—left in his will, among the other bequests he made us, so much to buy holly, for garnishing the walls and windows, come Christmas. There was something homely and friendly in it. Being but strange here, then, and coming at Christmas time, we took a liking for his very picter that hangs in what used to be, anciently, afore our ten poor gentlemen commuted for an annual stipend in money, our great Dinner Hall.—A sedate gentleman in a peaked beard, with a ruff round his neck, and a scroll below him, in old English letters, 'Lord! keep my memory green!' You know all about him, Mr. Redlaw?"

"I know the portrait hangs there, Philip."

"Yes, sure, it's the second on the right, above the panneling. I was going to say—he has helped to keep *my* memory green, I thank him; for going round the building every year, as I'm a doing now, and freshening up the bare rooms with these branches and berries, freshens up my bare old brain. One year brings back another, and that year another, and those others numbers! At last, it seems to me as if the birth-time of our Lord was the birth-time of all I have ever had affection for, or mourned for, or delighted in,—and they're a pretty many, for I'm eighty-seven!"

"Merry and happy," murmured Redlaw to himself. The room began to darken strangely.

"So you see, sir," pursued old Philip, whose hale wintry cheek had warmed into a ruddier glow, and whose blue eyes had brightened while he spoke, "I have plenty to keep, when I keep this present season. Now, where's my quiet Mouse? Chattering's the sin of my time of life, and there's half the building to do yet, if the cold don't freeze us first, or the wind don't blow us away, or the darkness don't swallow us up."

The quiet Mouse had brought her calm face to his side, and silently taken his arm, before he finished speaking.

"Come away, my dear," said the old man. "Mr. Redlaw won't settle to his dinner, otherwise, till it's cold as the winter. I hope you'll excuse me rambling on, sir, and I wish you good-night, and, once again, a merry—"

"Stay!" said Mr. Redlaw, resuming his place at the table, more, it would have seemed from his manner, to reassure the old keeper, than in any remembrance of his own appetite. "Spare me another moment, Philip. William, you were going to tell me something of your excellent wife's honour. It will not be disagreeable to her to hear you praise her. What was it?"

"Why, that's where it is, you see, sir," returned Mr. William Swidger, looking towards his wife in considerable embarrassment. "Mrs. William's got her eye upon me."

"But you're not afraid of Mrs. William's eye?"

"Why, no, sir," returned Mr. Swidger, "that's what I say myself. It wasn't made to be afraid of. It wouldn't have been made so mild, if that was the intention. But I wouldn't like to—Milly!—him, you know. Down in the Buildings."

Mr. William, standing behind the table, and rummaging disconcertedly among the objects upon it, directed persuasive glances at Mrs. William, and secret jerks of his head and thumb at Mr. Redlaw, as alluring her towards him.

"Him, you know, my love," said Mr. William. "Down in the Buildings. Tell, my dear! You're the works of Shakspeare in comparison with myself. Down in the Buildings, you know, my love.—Student."

"Student?" repeated Mr. Redlaw, raising his head.

"That's what I say, sir!" cried Mr. William, in the utmost animation of assent. "If it wasn't the poor student down in the Buildings, why should you wish to hear it from Mrs. William's lips? Mrs. William, my dear—Buildings."

"I didn't know," said Milly, with a quiet frankness, free from any haste or confusion, "that William had said anything about it, or I wouldn't have come. I asked him not to. It's a sick young gentleman, sir—and very poor, I am afraid—who is too ill to go home this holiday-time, and lives, unknown to any one, in but a common kind of lodging for a gentleman, down in Jerusalem Buildings. That's all, sir."

"Why have I never heard of him?" said the Chemist, rising hurriedly. "Why has he not made his situation known to me? Sick!—give me my hat and cloak. Poor!—what house?—what number?"

"Oh, you mustn't go there, sir," said Milly, leaving her father-in-law, and calmly confronting him with her collected little face and folded hands.

"Not go there?"

"Oh dear, no!" said Milly, shaking her head as at a most manifest and self-evident impossibility. "It couldn't be thought of!"

"What do you mean? Why not?"

"Why, you see, sir," said Mr. William Swidger, persuasively and confidentially, "that's what I say. Depend upon it, the young gentleman would never have made his situation known to one of his own sex. Mrs. William has got into his confidence, but that's quite different. They all confide in Mrs. William; they all trust *her*. A man, sir, couldn't have got a whisper out of him; but woman, sir, and Mrs. William combined—!"

"There is good sense and delicacy in what you say, William," returned Mr. Redlaw, observant of the gentle and composed face at his shoulder. And laying his finger on his lip, he secretly put his purse into her hand.

"Oh dear no, sir!" cried Milly, giving it back again. "Worse and worse! Couldn't be dreamed of!"

Such a staid matter-of-fact housewife she was, and so unruffled by the momentary haste of this rejection, that, an instant afterwards, she was tidily picking up a few leaves which had strayed from between her scissors and her apron, when she had arranged the holly.

Finding, when she rose from her stooping posture, that Mr. Redlaw was still regarding her with doubt and astonishment, she quietly repeated—looking about, the while, for any other fragments that might have escaped her observation:

"Oh dear no, sir! He said that of all the world he would not be known to you, or receive help from you—though he is a student in your class. I have made no terms of secrecy with you, but I trust to your honour completely."

"Why did he say so?"

"Indeed I can't tell, sir," said Milly, after thinking a little, "because I am not at all clever, you know; and I wanted to be useful to him in making things neat and comfortable about him, and employed myself that way. But I know he is poor, and lonely, and I think he is somehow neglected too.—How dark it is!"

The room had darkened more and more. There was a very heavy gloom and shadow gathering behind the Chemist's chair.

"What more about him?" he asked.

"He is engaged to be married when he can afford it," said Milly, "and is studying, I think, to qualify himself to earn a living. I have seen, a long time, that he has studied hard and denied himself much.—How very dark it is!"

"It's turned colder, too," said the old man, rubbing his hands. "There's a chill and dismal feeling in the room. Where's my son William? William, my boy, turn the lamp, and rouse the fire!"

Milly's voice resumed, like quiet music very softly played:

"He muttered in his broken sleep yesterday afternoon, after talking to me" (this was to herself) "about some one dead, and some great wrong done that could never be forgotten; but

whether to him or to another person, I don't know. Not *by* him, I am sure."

"And, in short, Mrs. William, you see—which she wouldn't say herself, Mr. Redlaw, if she was to stop here till the new year after this next one—" said Mr. William, coming up to him to speak in his ear, "has done him worlds of good. Bless you, worlds of good! All at home just the same as ever—my father made as snug and comfortable—not a crumb of litter to be found in the house, if you were to offer fifty pound ready money for it—Mrs. William apparently never out of the way—yet Mrs. William backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, up and down, up and down, a mother to him!"

The room turned darker and colder, and the gloom and shadow gathering behind the chair was heavier.

"Not content with this, sir, Mrs. William goes and finds, this very night, when she was coming home (why, it's not above a couple of hours ago), a creature more like a young wild beast than a young child, shivering upon a door step. What does Mrs. William do, but brings it home to dry it, and feed it, and keep it till our old Bounty of food and flannel is given away, on Christmas morning! If it ever felt a fire before, it's as much as it ever did; for it's sitting in the old Lodge chimney, staring at ours as if its ravenous eyes would never shut again. It's sitting there, at least," said Mr. William, correcting himself, on reflection, "unless it's bolted!"

"Heaven keep her happy!" said the Chemist aloud, "and you too, Philip! and you, William! I must consider what to do in this. I may desire to see this student, I'll not detain you longer now. Good-night!"

"I thankee, sir, I thankee!" said the old man, "for Mouse, and for my son William, and for myself. Where's my son William? William, you take the lantern and go on first, through them long dark passages, as you did last year and the year afore. Ha, ha! *I* remember—though I'm eighty-seven! 'Lord keep my memory green!' It's a very good prayer, Mr. Redlaw, that of the learned gentleman in the peaked beard, with a ruff round his neck—hangs up, second on the right above the panneling, in what used to be, afore our ten poor gentlemen commuted, our great Dinner Hall. 'Lord keep my memory green!' It's very good and pious, sir. Amen! Amen!"

As they passed out and shut the heavy door, which, however carefully withheld, fired a long train of thundering reverberations when it shut at last, the room turned darker.

As he fell a-musing in his chair alone, the healthy holly withered on the wall, and dropped —dead branches.

As the gloom and shadow thickened behind him, in that place where it had been gathering so darkly, it took, by slow degrees,—or out of it there came, by some unreal, unsubstantial process, not to be traced by any human sense, —an awful likeness of himself!

Ghastly and cold, colourless in its leaden face and hands, but with his features, and his bright eyes, and his grizzled hair, and dressed in the gloomy shadow of his dress, it came into its terrible appearance of existence, motionless, without a sound. As *he* leaned his arm upon the elbow of his chair, ruminating before the fire, *it* leaned upon the chair-back, close above him, with its appalling copy of his face looking where his face looked, and bearing the expression his face bore.

This, then, was the Something that had passed and gone already. This was the dread companion of the haunted man!

It took, for some moments, no more apparent heed of him, than he of it. The Christmas Waits were playing somewhere in the distance, and, through his thoughtfulness, he seemed to listen to the music. It seemed to listen too.

At length he spoke; without moving or lifting up his face.

"Here again!" he said.

"Here again," replied the Phantom.

"I see you in the fire," said the haunted man; "I hear you in music, in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night."

The Phantom moved its head, assenting.

"Why do you come, to haunt me thus?"

"I come as I am called," replied the Ghost.

"No. Unbidden," exclaimed the Chemist.

"Unbidden be it," said the Spectre. "It is enough. I am here."

Hitherto the light of the fire had shone on the two faces—if the dread lineaments behind the chair might be called a face—both addressed towards it, as at first, and neither looking at the other. But, now, the haunted man turned suddenly, and stared upon the Ghost. The Ghost, as sudden in its motion, passed to before the chair, and stared on him.

The living man, and the animated image of himself dead, might so have looked, the one upon the other. An awful survey, in a lonely and remote part of an empty old pile of building, on a winter night, with the loud wind going by upon its journey of mystery—whence, or whither, no man knowing since the world began—and the stars, in unimaginable millions, glittering through it, from eternal space, where the world's bulk is as a grain, and its hoary age is infancy.

"Look upon me!" said the Spectre. "I am he, neglected in my youth, and miserably poor, who strove and suffered, and still strove and suffered, until I hewed out knowledge from the mine where it was buried, and made rugged steps thereof, for my worn feet to rest and rise on."

"I *am* that man," returned the Chemist.

"No mother's self-denying love," pursued the Phantom, "no father's counsel, aided *me*. A stranger came into my father's place when I was but a child, and I was easily an alien from my mother's heart. My parents, at the best, were of that sort whose care soon ends, and whose duty is soon done; who cast their offspring loose, early, as birds do theirs; and, if they do well, claim the merit; and, if ill, the pity."

It paused and seemed to tempt and goad him with its look, and with the manner of its speech, and with its smile.

"I am he," pursued the Phantom, "who, in this struggle upward, found a friend. I made him—won him—bound him to me! We worked together, side by side. All the love and confidence that in my earlier youth had had no out-

let, and found no expression, I bestowed on him."

"Not all," said Redlaw, hoarsely.

"No, not all," returned the Phantom. "I had a sister."

The haunted man, with his head resting on his hands, replied, "I had!" The Phantom, with an evil smile, drew closer to the chair, and resting its chin upon its folded hands, its folded hands upon the back, and looking down into his face with searching eyes, that seemed instinct with fire, went on:

"Such glimpses of the light of home as I had ever known, had streamed from her. How young she was, how fair, how loving! I took her to the first poor roof that I was master of, and made it rich. She came into the darkness of my life, and made it bright. She is before me!"

"I saw her, in the fire, but now. I hear her in music, in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night," returned the haunted man.

"*Did* he love her?" said the Phantom, echoing his contemplative tone. "I think he did, once. I am sure he did. Better had she loved him less—less secretly, less dearly, from the shallower depths of a more divided heart!"

"Let me forget it!" said the Chemist, with an angry motion of his hand. "Let me blot it from my memory!"

The Spectre, without stirring and with its unwinking, cruel eyes still fixed upon his face, went on:

"A dream, like hers, stole upon my own life."

"It did," said Redlaw.

"A love, as like hers," pursued the Phantom, "as my inferior nature might cherish, arose in my own heart. I was too poor to bind its object to my fortune then, by any thread of promise or entreaty. I loved her far too well, to seek to do it. But, more than ever I had striven in my life, I strove to climb! Only an inch gained, brought me something nearer to the height. I toiled up! In the late pauses of my labour at that time—my sister (sweet companion!) still sharing with me the expiring embers and the cooling hearth—when day was breaking, what pictures of the future did I see!"

"I saw them, in the fire, but now," he murmured. "They come back to me in music, in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night, in the revolving years."

"—Pictures of my own domestic life, in after-time, with her who was the inspiration of my toil. Pictures of my sister, made the wife of my dear friend, on equal terms—for he had some inheritance, we none—pictures of our sobered age and mellowed happiness, and of the golden links, extending back so far, that should bind us, and our children, in a radiant garland," said the Phantom.

"Pictures," said the haunted man, "that were delusions. Why is it my doom to remember them too well!"

"Delusions," echoed the Phantom in its changeless voice, and glaring on him with its changeless eyes. "For my friend (in whose breast my confidence was locked as in my own), kissing between me and the centre of the system of my hopes and struggles, won her to himself, and shattered my frail universe. My sister, doubly dear, doubly devoted, doubly cheerful in my home, lived on to see me famous, and my old ambition so rewarded when its spring was broken, and then—"

"Then died," he interposed. "Died, gentle as ever; happy; and with no concern but for her brother. Peace!"

The Phantom watched him silently.

"Remembered!" said the haunted man, after a pause. "Yes. So well remembered, that even now, when years have passed, and nothing is more idle or more visionary to me than the boyish love so long outlived, I think of it with sympathy, as if it were a younger brother's or a son's. Sometimes I even wonder when her heart first inclined to him, and how it had been affected towards me. Not lightly once, I think. But that is nothing. Early unhappiness, a wound from a hand I loved and trusted, and a loss that nothing can replace, outlive such fancies."

"Thus," said the Phantom, "I bear within me a Sorrow and a Wrong. Thus I prey upon myself. Thus, memory is my curse; and, if I could forget my sorrow and my wrong, I would!"

"Mocker!" said the Chemist, leaping up, and making, with a wrathful hand, at the throat of his other self. "Why have I always that taunt in my ears?"

"Forbear!" exclaimed the Spectre in an awful voice. "Lay a hand on Me, and die!"

He stopped midway, as if its words had paralysed him, and stood looking on it. It had glided from him; it had its arm raised high in warning; and a smile passed over its unearthly features, as it reared its dark figure in triumph.

"If I could forget my sorrow and wrong, I would," the Ghost repeated. "If I could forget my sorrow and my wrong, I would!"

"Evil spirit of myself," returned the haunted man, in a low, trembling tone, "my life is darkened by that incessant whisper."

"It is an echo," said the Phantom.

"If it be an echo of my thoughts—as now, indeed, I know it is," rejoined the haunted man, "why should I, therefore, be tormented? It is not a selfish thought. I suffer it to range beyond myself. All men and women have their sorrows,—most of them their wrongs; ingratitude, and sordid jealousy, and interest, besetting all degrees of life. Who would not forget their sorrows and their wrongs?"

"Who would not, truly, and be the happier and better for it?" said the Phantom.

"These revolutions of years, which we commemorate," proceeded Redlaw, "what do *they* recall! Are there are any minds in which they do not re-awaken some sorrow or some trouble? What is the remembrance of the old man who was here to-night? A tissue of sorrow and trouble."

"But common natures," said the Phantom, with its evil smile upon its glassy face, "unenlightened minds, and ordinary spirits, do not feel or reason on these things like men of higher cultivation and profounder thought."

"Tempter," answered Redlaw, "whose hollow look and voice I dread more than words can express, and from whom some dim foreshadowing of greater fear is stealing over me while I speak, I hear again an echo of my own mind."

"Receive it as a proof that I am powerful," returned the Ghost. "Hear what I offer! Forget the sorrow, wrong, and trouble you have known!"

"Forget them!" he repeated.

"I have the power to cancel their remembrance—to leave but very faint, confused traces of them, that will die out soon," returned the Spectre. "Say! Is it done?"

"Stay!" cried the haunted man, arresting by a terrified gesture the uplifted hand. "I tremble with distrust and doubt of you; and the dim fear you cast upon me deepens into a nameless horror I can hardly bear. I would not deprive myself of any kindly reflection, or any sympathy that is good for me, or others. What shall I lose, if I assent to this? What else will pass from my remembrance?"

"No knowledge; no result of study; nothing but the intertwisted chain of feelings and associations, each in its turn dependent on, and nourished by, the banished recollections. Those will go."

"Are they so many?" said the haunted man, reflecting in alarm.

"They have been wont to show themselves in the fire, in music, in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night, in the revolving years," returned the Phantom scornfully.

"In nothing else?"

The Phantom held its peace.

But having stood before him, silent, for a little while, it moved towards the fire; then stopped.

"Decide!" it said, "before the opportunity is lost!"

"A moment! I call Heaven to witness," said the agitated man, "that I have never been a hater of my kind,—never morose, indifferent, or hard, to anything around me. If, living here alone, I have made too much of all that was and might have been, and too little of what is, the evil, I believe, has fallen on me, and not on others. But, if there were poison in my body, should I not, possessed of antidotes and knowledge how to use them, use them? If there be poison on my mind, and through this fearful shadow I can cast it out, shall I not cast it out?"

"Say," said the Spectre, "is it done?"

"A moment longer!" he answered hurriedly. "*I would forget it if I could!* Have *I* thought that, alone, or has it been the thought of thousands upon thousands, generation after generation? All human memory is fraught with sorrow and trouble. My memory is as the memory of other men, but other men have not this choice. Yes, I close the bargain. Yes! I WILL forget my sorrow, wrong, and trouble!"

"Say," said the Spectre, "is it done?"

"It is!"

"IT IS. And take this with you, man whom I here renounce! The gift that I have given, you shall give again, go where you will. Without recovering yourself the power that you have yielded up, you shall henceforth destroy its like in all whom you approach. Your wisdom has discovered that the memory of sorrow, wrong, and trouble is the lot of all mankind, and that mankind would be the happier, in its other memories, without it. Go! Be its benefactor! Freed from such remembrance, from this hour, carry involuntarily the blessing of such freedom with you. Its diffusion is inseparable and inalienable from you. Go! Be happy in the good you have won, and in the good you do!"

The Phantom, which had held its bloodless hand above him while it spoke, as if in some unholy invocation, or some ban; and which had gradually advanced its eyes so close to his, that he could see how they did not participate in the terrible smile upon its face, but were a fixed, unalterable, steady horror; melted from before him, and was gone.

As he stood rooted to the spot, possessed by fear and wonder, and imagining he heard repeated in melancholy echoes, dying away fainter and fainter, the words, "Destroy its like in all whom you approach!" a shrill cry reached his ears. It came, not from the passages beyond the door, but from another part of the old building, and sounded like the cry of some one in the dark who had lost the way.

He looked confusedly upon his hands and limbs, as if to be assured of his identity, and then shouted in reply, loudly and wildly; for there was a strangeness and terror upon him, as if he too were lost.

The cry responding, and being nearer, he caught up the lamp, and raised a heavy curtain in the wall, by which he was accustomed to pass into and out of the theatre where he lectured, which adjoined his room. Associated with youth and animation, and a high amphitheatre of faces which his entrance charmed to interest in a moment, it was a ghostly place when all this life was faded out of it, and stared upon him like an emblem of Death.

"Halloa!" he cried. "Halloa! This way! Come to the light!" When, as he held the curtain with one hand, and with the other raised the lamp and tried to pierce the gloom that filled the place, something rushed past him into the room like a wild-cat, and crouched down in a corner.

"What is it?" he said, hastily.

He might have asked "What is it?" even had he seen it well, as presently he did, when he stood looking at it, gathered up in its corner.

A bundle of tatters, held together by a hand, in size and form almost an infant's, but, in its greedy, desperate little clutch, a bad old man's A face rounded and smoothed by some half dozen years, but pinched and twisted by the experiences of a life. Bright eyes, but not youthful. Naked feet, beautiful in their childish delicacy—ugly in the blood and dirt that cracked upon them. A baby savage, a young monster, a child who had never been a child, a creature who might live to take the outward form of man, but who, within, would live and perish a mere beast.

Used, already, to be worried and hunted like a beast, the boy crouched down as he was looked at, and looked back again, and interposed his arm to ward off the expected blow.

"I'll bite," he said, "if you hit me!"

The time had been, and not many minutes since, when such a sight as this would have wrung the Chemist's heart. He looked upon it now, coldly; but, with a heavy effort to remember something—he did not know what—he asked the boy what he did there, and whence he came.

"Where's the woman?" he replied. "I want to find the woman."

"Who?"

"The woman. Her that brought me here, and set me by the large fire. She was so long gone, that I went to look for her, and lost myself. I don't want you. I want the woman."

He made a spring, so suddenly, to get away, that the dull sound of his naked feet upon the floor was near the curtain, when Redlaw caught him by his rags.

"Come! you let me go!" muttered the boy, struggling, and clenching his teeth. "I've done nothing to you. Let me go, will you, to the woman!"

"That is not the way. There is a nearer one," said Redlaw, detaining him, in the same blank effort to remember some association that ought, of right, to bear upon this monstrous object. "What is your name?"

"Got none."

"Where do you live?"

"Live! What's that?"

The boy shook his hair from his eyes to look at him for a moment, and then, twisting round his legs and wrestling with him, broke again into his repetition of "You let me go, will you? I want to find the woman."

The Chemist led him to the door. "This way," he said, looking at him still confusedly, but with repugnance and avoidance, growing out of his coldness. "I'll take you to her."

The sharp eyes in the child's head, wandering round the room, lighted on the table where the remnants of the dinner were.

"Give me some of that!" he said, covetously.

"Has she not fed you?"

"I shall be hungry again to-morrow, sha'n't I? Ain't I hungry every day?"

Finding himself released, he bounded at the table like some small animal of prey, and hugging to his breast bread and meat, and his own rags, all together, said:

"There! Now take me to the woman!"

As the Chemist, with a new-born dislike to touch him, sternly motioned him to follow, and was going out of the door, he trembled and stopped.

"The gift that I have given, you shall give again, go where you will!"

The Phantom's words were blowing in the wind, and the wind blew chill upon him.

"I'll not go there, to-night," he murmured faintly. "I'll go nowhere to-night. Boy, straight down this long-arched passage, and past the great dark door into the yard,—you will see the fire shining on a window there."

"The woman's fire?" inquired the boy.

He nodded, and the naked feet had sprung away. He came back with his lamp, locked his door hastily, and sat down in his chair, covering his face like one who was frightened at himself.

For now he was, indeed, alone. Alone, alone.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIFT DIFFUSED.

A SMALL man sat in a small parlour, partitioned off from a small shop by a small screen, pasted all over with small scraps of newspapers. In company with the small man, was almost any amount of small children you may please to name—at least it seemed so; they made, in that very limited sphere of action, such an imposing effect, in point of numbers.

Of these small fry, two had, by some strong machinery, been got into bed in a corner, where they might have reposed snugly enough in the sleep of innocence, but for a constitutional propensity to keep awake, and also to scuffle in and out of bed. The immediate occasion of these predatory dashes at the waking world, was the construction of an oyster-shell wall in a corner, by two other youths of tender age; on which fortification the two in bed made harassing descents (like those accursed Picts and Scots who beleaguer the early historical studies of most young Britons) and then withdrew to their own territory.

In addition to the stir attendant on these inroads, and the retorts of the invaded, who pursued hotly, and made lunges at the bed-clothes under which the marauders took refuge, another little boy, in another little bed, contributed his mite of confusion to the family stock, by casting his boots upon the waters; in other words, by launching these and several small objects, inoffensive in themselves, though of hard substance considered as missiles, at the disturbers of his repose—who were not slow to return these compliments.

Besides which, another little boy—the biggest there, but still little—was tottering to and fro, bent on one side, and considerably affected in his knees by the weight of a large baby, which he was supposed, by a fiction that obtains sometimes in sanguine families, to be hushing to sleep. But oh! the inexhaustible regions of contemplation, and watchfulness into which this baby's eyes were then only beginning to compose themselves to stare, over his unconscious shoulder!

It was a very Moloch of a baby, on whose insatiate altar the whole existence of this particular young brother was offered up a daily sacrifice. Its personality may be said to have consisted in its never being quiet, in any one place, for five consecutive minutes, and never going to sleep when required. "Tetterby's baby" was as well known in the neighborhood as the postman or the pot-boy. It roved from door-step to door-step, in the arms of little Johnny Tetterby, and lagged heavily at the rear of troops of juveniles who followed the Tumblers or the Monkey, and came up, all on one side, a little too late for every thing that was attractive, from Monday morning until Saturday night. Wherever childhood congregated to play, there was little Moloch making Johnny fag and toil. Wherever Johnny desired to stay, little Moloch became fractious, and would not remain. Whenever Johnny wanted to go out, Moloch was asleep, and must be watched. Whenever Johnny wanted to stay at home, Moloch was awake, and must be taken out. Yet Johnny was verily pursuaded that it was a faultless baby, without its peer in the realm of England, and was quite content to catch meek glimpses of things in general from behind its skirts, or over its limp flagging bonnet, and to go staggering about with it like a

very little porter with a very large parcel, which was not directed to any body, and could never be delivered any where.

The small man who sat in the small parlour, making fruitless attempts to read his newspaper peaceably in the midst of this disturbance, was the father of the family, and the chief of the firm described in the inscription over the little shop front, by the name and title of A. Tetterby and Co., Newsmen. Indeed, strictly speaking, he was the only personage answering to that designation, as Co. was a mere poetical abstraction, altogether baseless and impersonal.

Tetterby's was the corner shop in Jerusalem Buildings. There was a good show of literature in the window, chiefly consisting of picture-newspapers out of date, and serial pirates, and footpads. Walking-sticks, likewise, and marbles, were included in the stock in trade. It had once extended into the light confectionary line; but it would seem that those elegancies of life were not in demand about Jerusalem Buildings, for nothing connected with that branch of commerce remained in the window, except a sort of small glass lantern containing a languishing mass of bull's-eyes, which had melted in the summer and congealed in the winter until all hope of ever getting them out, or of eating them without eating the lantern too, was gone for ever. Tetterby's had tried its hand at several things. It had once made a feeble little dart at the toy business; for, in another lantern, there was a heap of minute wax dolls, all sticking together upside down, in the direst confusion, with their feet on one another's heads, and a precipitate of broken arms and legs at the bottom. It had made a move in the millinery direction, which a few dry, wiry bonnet shapes remained in a corner of the window to attest. It had fancied that a living might lie hidden in the tobacco trade, and had stuck up a representation of a native of each of the three integral portions of the British empire, in the act of consuming that fragrant weed; with a poetic legend attached, importing that united in one cause they sat and joked, one chewed tobacco, one took snuff, one smoked; but nothing seemed to have come of it—except flies. Time had been when it had put a forlorn trust in imitative jewellry, for in one pane of glass there was a card of cheap seals, and another of pencil cases, and a mysterious black amulet of inscrutable intention labelled ninepence. But, to that hour, Jerusalem Buildings had bought none of them. In short, Tetterby's had tried so hard to get a livelihood out of Jerusalem Buildings in one way or other, and appeared to have done so indifferently in all, that the best position in the firm was too evidently Co.'s; Co., as a bodiless creation, being untroubled with the vulgar inconveniences of hunger and thirst, being chargeable neither to the poor's-rates nor the assessed taxes, and having no young family to provide for.

Tetterby himself, however, in his little parlour, as already mentioned, having the presence of a young family impressed upon his mind in a manner too clamorous to be disregarded, or to comport with the quiet perusal of a newspaper, laid down his paper, wheeled, in his distraction, a few times round the parlour, like an undecided carrier-pigeon, made an ineffectual rush at one or two flying little figures in bed-gowns that skimmed past him, and then, bearing suddenly down upon the only unoffending member of the family, boxed the ears of little Moloch's nurse.

"You bad boy!" said Mr. Tetterby, "haven't you any feeling for your poor father after the fatigues and anxieties of a hard winter's day since five o'clock in the morning, but you must wither his rest, and corrode his latest intelligence, with *your* wicious tricks? Isn't it enough, sir, that your brother 'Dolphus is toiling and moiling in the fog and cold, and you rolling in the lap of luxury with a—with a baby, and every thing you can wish for," said Mr. Tetterby, heaping this up as a great climax of blessings, "but you must make a wilderness of home, and maniacs of your parents? Must you, Johnny? Hey?" At each interrogation Mr. Tetterby made a feint of boxing his ears again, but thought better of it, and held his hand.

"Oh, father!" whimpered Johnny, "when I wasn't doing any thing, I'm sure, but taking such care of Sally, and getting her to sleep. Oh, father!"

"I wish my little woman would come home!" said Mr. Tetterby, relenting and repenting, "I only wish my little woman would come home! I ain't fit to deal with 'em. They make my head go round, and get the better of me. Oh, Johnny! Isn't it enough that your dear mother has provided you with that sweet sister!" indicating Moloch; "Isn't it enough that you were seven boys before, without a ray of gal, and that your dear mother went through what she *did* go through, on purpose that you might all of you have a little sister, but must you so behave yourself as to make my head swim?"

Softening more and more, as his own tender feelings and those of his injured son were worked on, Mr. Tetterby concluded by embracing him, and immediately breaking away to catch one of the real delinquents. A reasonably good start occurring, he succeeded, after a short but smart run, and some rather severe cross-country work under and over the bedsteads, and in and out among the intricacies of the chairs, in capturing this infant, whom he condignly punished, and bore to bed. This example had a powerful, and apparently mesmeric influence on him of the boots, who instantly fell into a deep sleep, though he had been, but a moment before, broad awake, and in the highest possible feather. Nor was it lost upon the two young architects, who retired to bed, in an adjoining closet, with great privacy and speed. The comrade of the Intercepted One also shrinking into his nest with similar discretion, Mr. Tetterby, when he paused for breath, found himself unexpectedly in a scene of peace.

"My little woman herself," said Mr. Tetterby, wiping his flushed face, "could hardly have done it better! I only wish my little woman had had it to do, I do indeed!"

Mr. Tetterby sought upon his screen for a passage appropriate to be impressed upon his children's minds on the occasion, and read the following.

"'It is an undoubted fact that all remarkable men have had remarkable mothers, and have

respected them in after life as their best friends.' Think of your own remarkable mother, my boys," said Mr Tetterby, "and know her value while she is still among you!"

He sat down again in his chair by the fire, and composed himself, cross-legged, over his newspaper.

"Let anybody, I don't care who it is, get out of bed again," said Tetterby, as a general proclamation, delivered in a very soft-hearted manner, "and astonishment will be the portion of that respected contemporary!"—which expression Mr Tetterby selected from his screen. "Johnny, my child, take care of your only sister, Sally; for she's the brightest gem that ever sparkled on your early brow."

Johnny sat down on a little stool, and devotedly crushed himself beneath the weight of Moloch.

"Ah, what a gift that baby is to you, Johnny!" said his father, "and how thankful you ought to be! 'It is not generally known,' Johnny," he was now referring to the screen again, "'but it is a fact ascertained, by accurate calculations, that the following immense per centage of babies never attain to two years old; that is to say—'"

"Oh, don't, father, please!" cried Johnny. "I can't bear it, when I think of Sally."

Mr. Tetterby desisting, Johnny, with a profounder sense of his trust, wiped his eyes, and hushed his sister.

"Your brother 'Dolphus," said his father, poking the fire, "is late to-night, Johnny, and will come home like a lump of ice. What's got your precious mother?"

"Here's mother, and 'Dolphus, too, father!" exclaimed Johnny, "I think."

"You're right," returned his father, listening. "Yes, that's the footstep of my little woman."

The process of induction, by which Mr. Tetterby had come to the conclusion that his wife was a little woman, was his own secret. She would have made two editions of himself, very easily. Considered as an individual, she was rather remarkable for being robust and portly; but considered with reference to her husband, her dimensions became magnificent. Nor did they assume a less imposing proportion, when studied with reference to the size of her seven sons, who were but diminutive. In the case of Sally, however, Mrs. Tetterby had asserted herself, at last; as nobody knew better than the victim Johnny, who weighed and measured that exacting idol every hour in the day.

Mrs. Tetterby, who had been marketing, and carried a basket, threw back her bonnet and shawl, and sitting down, fatigued, commanded Johnny to bring his sweet charge to her straightway, for a kiss. Johnny having complied, and gone back to his stool, and again crushed himself, Master Adolphus Tetterby, who had by his time unwound his Torso out of a prismatic comforter, apparently interminable, requested the same favor. Johnny having again complied, and again gone back to his stool, and again crushed himself, Mr. Tetterby, struck by a sudden thought, preferred the same claim on his own parental part. The satisfaction of this third desire completely exhausted the sacrifice, who had hardly breath enough left to get back to his stool, crush himself again, and pant at his relations.

"Whatever you do, Johnny," said Mrs. Tetterby, shaking her head, "take care of her, or never look your mother in the face again."

"Nor your brother," said Adolphus.

"Nor your father, Johnny," added Mr. Tetterby.

Johnny, much affected by this conditional renunciation of him, looked down at Moloch's eyes to see that they were all right, so far, and skilfully patted her back (which was uppermost), and rocked her with his foot.

"Are you wet, 'Dolphus, my boy?" said his father. "Come and take my chair, and dry yourself."

"No, father, thankee," said Adolphus, smoothing himself down with his hands. "I an't very wet, I don't think. Does my face shine much, father?"

Well, it *does* look waxy, my boy," returned Mr. Tetterby.

"It's the weather, father," said Adolphus, polishing his cheeks on the worn sleeve of his jacket. "What with rain, and sleet, and wind, and snow, and fog, my face gets quite brought out into a rash some times. And shines, it does—oh, don't it, though!"

Master Adolphus was also in the newspaper line of life, being employed, by a more thriving firm than his father and Co., to vend newspapers at a railway station, where his chubby little person, like a shabbily-disguised Cupid, and his shrill little voice (he was not much more than ten years old), were as well known as the hoarse panting of the locomotives, running in and out. His juvenility might have been at some loss for a harmless outlet, in this early application to traffic, but for a fortunate discovery he made of a means of entertaing himself, and of dividing the long day into stages of interest, without neglecting business. This ingenious invention, remarkable, like many great discoveries, for its simplicity, consisted in varying the first vowel in the word "paper," and substituting, in its stead, at different periods of the day, all the other vowels in grammatical succession. Thus, before day-light in the winter-time, he went to and fro, in his little oilskin cap and cape, and his big comforter, piercing the heavy air with his cry of "Morn-ing Pa-per!" which, about an hour before noon, changed to "Morn-ing Pepper!" which, at about two, changed to "Morning Pip-per!" which, in a couple of hours, changed to "Morn-ing Pop-per!" and so declined with the sun into "Eve-ning Pup-per!" to the great relief and comfort of this young gentleman's spirits.

Mrs. Tetterby, his lady-mother, who had been sitting with her bonnet and shawl thrown back, as aforesaid, thoughtfully turning her wedding ring round and round upon her finger, now rose, and divesting herself of her out-of-door attire, began to lay the cloth for supper.

"Ah, dear me, dear me, dear me!" said Mrs. Tetterby. "That's the way the world goes!"

"Which is the way the world goes, my dear?" asked Mr. Tetterby, looking round.

"Oh, nothing," said Mrs. Tetterby.

Mr. Tetterby elevated his eyebrows, folded his newspaper afresh, and carried his eyes up

it, and down it, and across it, but was wandering in his attention, and not reading it.

Mrs. Tetterby, at the same time, laid the cloth, but rather as if she were punishing the table than preparing the family supper; hitting it unnecessarily hard with the knives and forks, slapping it with the plates, dinting it with the salt cellar, and coming heavily down upon it with the loaf.

"Ah, dear me, dear me, dear me!" said Mrs. Tetterby. "That's the way the world goes!"

"My duck," returned her husband, looking round again, "you said that before. Which is the way the world goes?"

"O, nothing!" said Mrs. Tetterby.

"Sophia!" remonstrated her husband, "you said *that* before, too."

"Well, I'll say it again if you like," returned Mrs. Tetterby. "Oh nothing—there! And again if you like, oh nothing—there! And again if you like, oh nothing—now then?"

Mr. Tetterby brought his eye to bear upon the partner of his bosom, and said, in mild astonishment:

"My little woman, what has put you out?"

"I'm sure *I* don't know," she retorted. "Don't ask me. Who said I was put out at all! *I* never did."

Mr. Tetterby gave up the perusal of his newspaper as a bad job, and, taking a slow walk across the room, with his hands behind him, and his shoulders raised—his gait according perfectly with the resignation of his manner—addressed himself to his two eldest offspring.

"Your supper will be ready in a minute, 'Dolphus," said Mr. Tetterby. "Your mother has been out in the wet, to the cook's shop, to buy it. It was very good of your mother so to do. *You* shall get some supper too, very soon, Johnny. Your mother's pleased with you, my man, for being so attentive to your precious sister."

Mrs. Tetterby, without any remark, but with a decided subsidence of her animosity towards the table, finished her preparations, and took, from her ample basket, a substantial slab of hot pease pudding wrapped in paper, and a basin covered with a saucer, which, on being uncovered, sent forth an odour so agreeable, that the three pair of eyes in the two beds opened wide, and fixed themselves upon the banquet. Mr. Tetterby, without regarding this tacit invitation to be seated, stood repeating slowly, "Yes, yes, your supper will be ready in a minute, 'Dolphus—your mother went out in the wet, to the cook's shop, to buy it. It was very good of your mother so to do"—until Mrs. Tetterby, who had been exhibiting sundry tokens of contrition behind him, caught him round the neck, and wept.

"O, 'Dolphus!" said Mrs. Tetterby, "how could I go and behave so!"

This reconciliation affected Adolphus the younger and Johnny to that degree, that they both, as with one accord, raised a dismal cry, which had the effect of immediately shutting up the round eyes in the beds, and utterly routing the two remaining little Tetterbys, just then stealing in from the adjoining closet to see what was going on in the eating way.

"I am sure, 'Dolphus," sobbed Mrs. Tetterby, "coming home, I had no more idea than a child unborn—."

Mr. Tetterby seemed to dislike this figure of speech, and observed, "Say than the baby, my dear."

"— Had no more idea than the baby," said Mrs. Tetterby.—"Johnny, don't look at me, but look at her, or she'll fall out of your lap and be killed, and then you'll die in agonies of a broken heart, and serve you right.—No more idea I hadn't than that darling, of being cross when I came home; but somehow, 'Dolphus—." Mrs. Tetterby paused, and again turned her wedding-ring round and round upon her finger.

"I see!" said Mr. Tetterby. "I understand! My little woman was put out. Hard times, and hard weather, and hard work, make it trying now and then. I see, bless your soul! No wonder! 'Dolf, my man," continued Mr. Tetterby, exploring the basin with a fork, "here's your mother been and bought, at the cook's shop, besides, pease pudding, a whole knuckle of lovely roast leg of pork, with lots of crackling left upon it, and with seasoning gravy and mustard quite unlimited. Hand in your plate, my boy, and begin while it's simmering.

Master Adolphus, needing no second summons, received his portion with eyes rendered moist by appetite, and withdrawing to his particular stool, fell upon his supper tooth and nail. Johnny was not forgotten, but received his rations on bread, lest he should, in a flush of gravy, trickle any on the baby. He was required, for similar reasons, to keep his pudding, when not on active service, in his pocket.

There might have been more pork on the knucklebone,—which knucklebone the carver at the cook's shop had assuredly not forgotten in carving for previous customers,—but there was no stint of seasoning, and that is an accessory dreamily suggesting pork, and pleasantly cheating the sense of taste. The pease pudding, too, the gravy and mustard, like the Eastern rose in respect of the nightingale, if they were not absolutely pork, had lived near it; so, upon the whole, there was the flavour of a middle-sized pig. It was irresistible to the Tetterbys in bed, who, though professing to slumber peacefully, crawled out when unseen by their parents, and silently appealed to their brothers for any gastronomic token of fraternal affection. They, not hard of heart, presenting scraps in return, it resulted that a party of light skirmishers in night-gowns were careering about the parlour all through supper, which harassed Mr. Tetterby exceedingly, and once or twice imposed upon him the necessity of a charge, before which these guerilla troops retired in all directions and in great confusion.

Mrs. Tetterby did not enjoy her supper. There seemed to be something on Mrs. Tetterby's mind. At one time she laughed without reason, and at another time she cried without reason, and at last she laughed and cried together in a manner so very unreasonable that her husband was confounded.

"My little woman," said Mr. Tetterby, "if the world goes that way, it appears to go the wrong way, and to choke you."

"Give me a drop of water," said Mrs. Tetterby, struggling with herself, "and don't speak to me for the present, or take any notice of me. Don't do it!"

Mr. Tetterby having administered the water, turned suddenly on the unlucky Johnny (who was full of sympathy), and demanded why he was wallowing there, in gluttony and idleness, instead of coming forward with the baby, that the sight of her might revive his mother. Johnny immediately approached, borne down by its weight; but Mrs. Tetterby holding out her hand to signify that she was not in a condition to bear that trying appeal to her feelings, he was interdicted from advancing another inch on pain of perpetual hatred from all his dearest connections; and accordingly retired to his stool again, and crushed himself as before.

After a pause, Mrs. Tetterby said she was better now, and began to laugh.

"My little woman," said her husband, dubiously, "are you quite sure you're better? Or are you, Sophia, about to break out in a fresh direction?"

"No, 'Dolphus, no," replied his wife. "I'm quite myself." With that, settling her hair, and pressing the palms of her hands upon her eyes, she laughed again.

"What a wicked fool I was, to think so for a moment!" said Mrs. Tetterby. "Come nearer, 'Dolphus, and let me ease my mind, and tell you what I mean. Let me tell you all about it."

Mr. Tetterby bringing his chair closer, Mrs. Tetterby laughed again, gave him a hug, and wiped her eyes.

"You know 'Dolphus, my dear," said Mrs. Tetterby, "that when I was single, I might have given myself away in several directions. At one time, four after me at once; two of them were sons of Mars."

"We're all sons of Ma's, my dear," said Mr. Tetterby, "jointly with Pa's."

"I don't mean that," replied his wife, "I mean soldiers—serjeants."

"Oh!" said Mr. Tetterby.

"Well, 'Dolphus, I'm sure I never think of such things now, to regret them; and I'm sure we got as good a husband, and would do as much to prove that I was fond of him, as—"

"As any little woman in the world," said Mr. Tetterby. "Very good. *Very* good."

If Mr. Tetterby had been ten feet high, he could not have expressed a gentler consideration for Mrs. Tetterby's fairy-like stature; and if Mrs. Tetterby had been two feet high, she could not have felt it more appropriately her due.

"But you see, 'Dolphus," said Mrs. Tetterby, "This being Christmas-time, when all people who can, make holiday, and when all people who have got money, like to spend some, I did, somehow, get a little out of sorts when I was in the streets just now. There was so many things to be sold—such delicious things to eat and such fine things to look at, such delightful things to have—and there was so much calculating and calculating necessary, before I durst lay out a sixpence for the commonest thing; and my basket was so large, and wanted so much filling; and my stock of money was so small, and would go such a little way;—you hate me, don't you, 'Dolphus?"

"Not quite," said Mr. Tetterby, "as yet."

"Well! I'll tell you the whole truth," pursued his wife, penitently, "and then perhaps you will. I felt all this, so much, when I was trudging about in the cold, and when I saw a lot of other calculating faces and large baskets trudging about, too, that I began to think whether I mightn't have done better, and been happier, if—I—hadn't—" the wedding ring went round again, and Mrs. Tetterby shook her downcast head as she turned it.

"I see," said her husband quietly; "if you hadn't married at all, or if you had married somebody else?"

"Yes," sobbed Mrs. Tetterby. "That's really what I thought. Do you hate me now, 'Dolphus?"

"Why no," said Mr. Tetterby, "I don't find that I do, as yet,"

Mrs. Tetterby gave him a thankful kiss, and went on.

"I begin to hope you won't, now, 'Dolphus, though I am afraid I haven't told you the worst. I can't think what came over me. I don't know whether I was ill, or mad, or what I was, but I couldn't call up anything that seemed to bind us to each other, or to reconcile me to my fortune. All the pleasures and enjoyments we had ever had—*they* seemed so poor and insignificant, I hated them. I could have trodden on them. And I could think of nothing else, except our being poor, and the number of mouths there were at home."

"Well, well, my dear," said Mr. Tetterby, shaking her hand encouragingly, "that's truth, after all. We *are* poor, and there *are* a number of mouths at home here."

"Ah! but, Dolf, Dolf!" cried his wife, laying her hands upon his neck, "my good, kind, patient fellow, when I had been at home a very little while—how different! Oh, Dolf dear, how different it was! I felt as if there was a rush of recollection on me, all at once, that softened my hard heart, and filled it up till it was bursting. All our struggles for a livelihood, all our cares and wants since we have been married, all the times of sickness, all the hours of watching, we have ever had, by one another, or by the children, seemed to speak to me, and say that they had made us one, and that I never might have been, or could have been, or would have been, any other than the wife and mother I am. Then, the cheap enjoyments that I could have trodden on so cruelly, got to be so precious to me—Oh so priceless, and dear!—that I couldn't bear to think how much I had wronged them; and I said, and say again a hundred times, how could I ever behave so, 'Dolphus, how could I ever have the heart to do it!"

The good woman, quite carried away by her honest tenderness and remorse, was weeping with all her heart, when she started up with a scream, and ran behind her husband. Her cry was so terrified, that the children started from their sleep and from their beds, and clung about her. Nor did her gaze belie her voice, as she pointed to a pale man in a black cloak who had come into the room.

"Look at that man! Look there! What does he want?"

"My dear," returned her husband, "I'll ask him if you'll let me go. What's the matter? How you shake!"

"I saw him in the street, when I was out just now. He looked at me, and stood near me. I am afraid of him."

"Afraid of him! Why?"

"I don't know why—I—stop! husband!" for he was going toward the stranger.

She had one hand pressed upon her forehead, and one upon her breast; and there was a peculiar fluttering all over her, and a hurried, unsteady motion of her eyes, as if she had lost something.

"Are you ill, my dear?"

"What is it that is going from me again?" she muttered, in a low voice. "What *is* this that is going away?"

Then she abruptly answered: "Ill? No, I am quite well," and stood looking vacantly at the floor.

Her husband, who had not been altogether free from the infection of her fear at first, and whom the present strangeness of her manner did not tend to reassure, addressed himself to the pale visitor in the black cloak, who stood still, and whose eyes were bent upon the ground.

"What may be your pleasure, sir," he asked, "with us?"

"I fear that my coming in unperceived," returned the visitor, "has alarmed you; but you were talking, and did not hear me."

"My little woman says—perhaps you heard her say it," returned Mr. Tetterby, "that it's not the first time you have alarmed her to-night."

"I am sorry for it. I remember to have observed her, for a few moments only, in the street. I had no intention of frightening her."

As he raised his eyes in speaking, she raised hers. It was extraordinary to see what dread she had of him, and with what dread he observed it—and yet how narrowly and closely.

"My name," he said, "is Redlaw. I come from the old college hard by. A young gentleman who is a student there, lodges in your house, does he not?"

"Mr. Denham?" said Tetterby.

"Yes."

It was a natural action, and so slight as to be hardly noticeable; but the little man, before speaking again, passed his hand across his forehead, and looked quickly round the room, as though he were sensible of some change in its atmosphere. The Chemist, instantly transferring to him the look of dread he had directed toward the wife, stepped back, and his face turned paler.

"The gentleman's room," said Tetterby, "is up-stairs, sir. There's a more convenient private entrance; but as you have come in here, it will save your going out into the cold, if you'll take this little staircase," showing one communicating directly with the parlor, "and go up to him that way, if you wish to see him."

"Yes, I wish to see him," said the Chemist. Can you spare a light?"

The watchfulness of his haggard look, and the inexplicable distrust that darkened it, seemed to trouble Mr. Tetterby. He paused; and looking fixedly at him in return, stood for a minute or so, like a man stupified or fascinated.

At length he said, "I'll light you, sir, if you'll follow me."

"No," replied the Chemist, "I don't wish to be attended, or announced to him. He does not expect me. I would rather go alone. Please to give me the light, if you can spare it, and I'll find the way."

In the quickness of his expression of this desire, and in taking the candle from the newsman, he touched him on the breast. Withdrawing his hand hastily, almost as though he had wounded him by accident (for he did not know in what part of himself his new power resided, or how it was communicated, or how the manner of its reception varied in different persons), he turned and ascended the stairs.

But when he reached the top, he stopped and looked down. The wife was standing in the same place, twisting her ring round and round upon her finger. The husband, with his head bent forward on his breast, was musing heavily and sullenly. The children, still clustering about the mother, gazed timidly after the visitor, and nestled together when they saw him looking down.

"Come!" said the father, roughly. "There's enough of this. Get to bed here!"

"The place is inconvenient and small enough," the mother added, "without you. Get to bed."

The whole brood, scared and sad, crept away; little Johnny and the baby lagging last. The mother, glancing contemptuously round the sordid room, and tossing from her the fragments of their meal, stopped on the threshold of her task of clearing the table, and sat down, pondering idly and dejectedly. The father betook himself to the chimney-corner, and impatiently raking the small fire together, bent over it as if he would monopolise it all. They did not interchange a word.

The Chemist, paler than before, stole upward like a thief; looking back upon the change below, and dreading equally to go on or return.

"What have I done!" he said, confusedly. "What am I going to do!"

"To be the benefactor of mankind," he thought he heard a voice reply.

He looked round, but there was nothing there; and a passage now shutting out the little parlour from his view, he went on, directing his eyes before him at the way he went.

"It is only since last night," he muttered, gloomily, "that I have remained shut up, and yet all things are strange to me. I am strange to myself. I am here, as in a dream. What interest have I in this place, or in any place that I can bring to my remembrance? My mind is going blind!"

There was a door before him, and he knocked at it. Being invited, by a voice within, to enter, he complied.

"Is that my kind nurse?" said the voice. "But I need not ask her. There is no one else to come here."

It spoke cheerfully, though in a languid tone, and attracted his attention to a young man lying on a couch, drawn before the chimney-piece, with the back towards the door. A meagre, scanty stove, pinched and hollowed

like a sick man's cheeks, and bricked into the centre of a hearth that it could scarcely warm, contained the fire, to which his face was turned. Being so near the windy house-top, it wasted quickly, and with a busy sound, and the burning ashes dropped down fast.

"They chink when they shoot out here," said the student, smiling, "so, according to the gossips, they are not coffins, but purses. I shall be well and rich yet, some day, if it please God, and shall live perhaps to love a daughter Milly, in remembrance of the kindest nature, and the gentlest heart in the world."

He put up his hand as if expecting her to take it, but being weakened, he lay still, with his face resting on his other hand, and did not turn round.

The Chemist glanced about the room;—at the student's books and papers, piled upon a table in a corner, where they, and his extinguished reading-lamp, now prohibited and put away, told of the attentive hours that had gone before this illness, and perhaps caused it;—at such signs of his old health and freedom, as the out-of-door attire that hung idle on the wall;—at those remembrances of other and less solitary scenes, the little miniatures upon the chimney-piece, and the drawing of home;—at that token of his emulation, perhaps, in some sort, of his personal attachment too, the framed engraving of himself, the looker-on. The time had been, only yesterday, when not one of these objects, in its remotest association of interest with the living figure before him, would have been lost on Redlaw. Now, they were but objects; or, if any gleam of such connection shot upon him, it perplexed, and not enlightened him, as he stood looking round with a dull wonder.

The student, recalling the thin hand which had remained so long untouched, raised himself on the couch, and turned his head.

"Mr. Redlaw!" he exclaimed, and started up.

Redlaw put out his arm.

"Don't come nearer to me. I will sit here. Remain you where you are!"

He sat down on a chair near the door, and having glanced at the young man standing leaning with his hand upon the couch, spoke with his eyes averted towards the ground.

"I heard, by an accident, by what accident is no matter, that one of my c ass was ill and solitary. I received no other description of him, than that he lived in this treet. Beginning my inquiries at the first house in it, I have found him."

"I have been ill, sir," returned the student, not merely with a modest hesitation, but with a kind of awe of him, "but am greatly better. An attack of fever—of the brain, I believe—has weakened me, but I am much better. I cannot say I have been solitary, in my illness, or I should forget the ministering hand that has been near me."

"You are speaking of the keeper's wife," said Redlaw.

"Yes." The student bent his head, as if he rendered her some silent homage.

The Chemist, in whom there was a cold, monotonous apathy, which rendered him more like a marble image on the tomb of the man who had started from his dinner yesterday at the first mention of the student's case, than the breathing man himself, glanced again at the student leaning with his hand upon the couch, and looked upon the ground, and in the air, as if for light for his blinded mind.

"I remembered your name," he said, "when it was mentioned to me down stairs, just now; and I recollect your face. We have held but very little personal communication together?"

"Very little."

"You have retired and withdrawn from me, more than any of the rest, I think?"

The student signified assent.

"And why?" said the Chemist; not with the least expression of interest, but with a moody, wayward kind of curiosity. "Why? How comes it that you have sought to keep especially from me, the knowledge of your remaining here, at this season, when all the rest have dispersed, and of your being ill? I want to know why this is?"

The young man, who had heard him with increasing agitation, raised his downcast eyes to his face, and clasping his hands together, cried with sudden earnestness, and with trembling lips:

"Mr. Redlaw! You have discovered me. You know my secret!"

"Secret?" said the Chemist, harshly. "*I* know?"

"Yes! Your manner, so different from the interest and sympathy which endear you to so many hearts, your altered voice, the constraint there is in everything you say, and in your looks," replied the student, "warn me that you know me. That you would conceal it, even now, is but a proof to me (God knows I need none!) of your natural kindness, and of the bar there is between us."

A vacant and contemptuous laugh was all his answer.

"But, Mr. Redlaw," said the student, "as a just man, and a good man, think how innocent I am, except in name and descent, of participation in any wrong inflicted on you, or in any sorrow you have borne."

"Sorrow!" said Redlaw, laughing. "Wrong! What are those to me?"

"For Heaven's sake," entreated the shrinking student, "do not let the mere interchange of a few words with me change you like this, sir! Let me pass again from your knowledge and notice. Let me occupy my old reserved and distant place among those whom you instruct. Know me only by the name I have assumed, and not by that of Longford—"

"Longford!" exclaimed the other.

He clasped his head with both his hands, and for a moment turned upon the young man his own intelligent and thoughtful face. But the light passed from it, like the sunbeam of an instant, and it clouded as before.

"The name my mother bears, sir," faltered the young man, "the name she took, when she might, perhaps, have taken one more honoured. Mr. Redlaw," hesitating, "I believe I know that history. Where my information halts, my guesses at what is wanting may supply something not remote from the truth. I am the child of a marriage that has not proved itself a well-assorted or a happy one. From infancy,

I have heard you spoken of with honour and respect—with something that was almost reverence. I have heard of such devotion, of such rising up against the obstacles which press men down, that my fancy, since I learnt my little lesson from my mother, has shed a lustre on your name. At last, a poor student myself, from whom could I learn but you?"

Redlaw, unmoved, unchanged, and looking at him with a staring frown, answered by no word or sign.

"I cannot say," pursued the other, "I should try in vain to say, how much it has impressed me, and affected me, to find the gracious traces of the past, in that certain power of winning gratitude and confidence which is associated among us students (among the humblest of us, most) with Mr. Redlaw's generous name. Our ages and positions are so different, sir, and I am so accustomed to regard you from a distance, that I wonder at my own presumption when I touch, however lightly, on that theme. But to one who—I may say, who felt no common interest in my mother once—it may be something to hear, now that is all past, with what indescribable feelings of affection I have, in my obscurity, regarded him; with what pain and reluctance I have kept aloof from his encouragement, when a word of it would have made me rich; yet how I have felt it fit that I should bold my course, content to know him, and to be unknown. Mr. Redlaw," said the student, faintly, "what I would have said, I have said ill, for my strength is strange to me as yet; but for anything unworthy in this fraud of mine, forgive me, and for all the rest forget me!"

The staring frown remained on Redlaw's face, and yielded to no other expression until the student, with these words, advanced towards him, as if to touch his hand, when he drew back and cried to him:

"Don't come nearer to me!"

The young man stopped, shocked by the eagerness of his recoil, and by the sternness of his repulsion; and he passed his hand thoughtfully, across his forehead.

"The past is past," said the Chemist. "It dies like the brutes. Who talks to me of its traces in my life? He raves or lies! What have I to do with your distempered dreams? If you want money, here it is. I came to offer it; and that is all I came for. There can be nothing else that brings me here," he muttered, holding his head again, with both his hands. "There *can* be nothing else, and yet—"

He had tossed his purse upon the table. As he fell into this dim cogitation with himself, the student took it up, and held it out to him.

"Take it back, sir," he said, proudly, though not angrily. "I wish you could take from me, with it, the remembrance of your words and offer."

"You do?" he retorted, with a wild light in his eyes. "You do?"

"I do!"

The Chemist went close to him, for the first time, and took the purse, and turned him by the arm, and looked him in the face.

"There is sorrow and trouble in sickness, is there not?" he demanded with a laugh.

The wondering student answered, "Yes."

"In its unrest, in its anxiety, in its suspense, in all its train of physical and mental miseries?" said the Chemist, with a wild unearthly exultation. "All best forgotten, are they not?"

The student did not answer, but again passed his hand, confusedly, across his forehead. Redlaw still held him by the sleeve, when Milly's voice was heard outside.

"I can see very well now," she said, "thank you, Dolf. Don't cry, dear. Father and mother will be comfortable again, to-morrow, and home will be comfortable, too. A gentleman with him, is there!"

Redlaw released his hold, as he listened.

"I have feared from the first moment," he murmured to himself, "to meet her. There is a steady quality of goodness in her, that I dread to influence. I may be the murderer of what is tenderest and best within her bosom."

She was knocking at the door.

"Shall I dismiss it as an idle foreboding, or still avoid her?" he muttered, looking uneasily around.

She was knocking at the door again.

"Of all the visitors who should come here," he said, in a hoarse alarmed voice, turning to his companion, "this is the one I should desire most to avoid. Hide me!"

The student opened a frail door in the wall, communicating, where the garret-roof began to slope towards the floor, with a small inner room. Redlaw passed in hastily, and shut it after him.

The student then resumed his place upon the couch, and called her to enter.

"Dear Mr. Edmund," said Milly, looking round, "they told me there was a gentleman here."

"There is no one here but I."

"There has been some one?"

"Yes, yes, there has been some one."

She put her little basket on the table, and went up to the back of the couch, as if to take the extended hand—but it was not there. A little surprised, in her quiet way, she leaned over to look at his face, and gently touched him on the brow.

"Are you quite as well to-night? Your head is not so cool as in the afternoon."

"Tut!" said the student, petulantly, "very little ails me."

A little more surprise, but no reproach, was expressed in her face, as she withdrew to the other side of the table, and took a small packet of needlework from her basket. But she laid it down again, on second thoughts, and going noiselessly about the room, set every thing exactly in its place, and in the neatest order; even to the cushions on the couch, which she touched with so light a hand, that he hardly seemed to know it, as he lay looking at the fire. When all this was done, and she had swept the hearth, she sat down, in her modest little bonnet, to her work, and was quietly busy on it directly.

"It's the new muslin curtain for the window, Mr. Edmund," said Milly, stitching away, as she talked. "It will look very clean and nice, though it costs very little, and will save your eyes, too, from the light. My William says the room should not be too light just now, when

you are recovering so well, or the glare might make you giddy."

He said nothing; but there was something so fretful and impatient in his change of position, that her quick fingers stopped, and she looked at him anxiously.

"The pillows are not comfortable," she said, laying down her work and rising. "I will soon put them right."

"They are very well," he answered. "Leave them alone, pray. You make so much of every thing."

He raised his head to say this, and looked at her so thanklessly, that, after he had thrown himself down again, she stood timidly pausing. However, she resumed her seat, and her needle, without having directed even a murmuring look toward him, and was soon as busy as before.

"I have been thinking, Mr. Edmund, that *you* have been often thinking of late, when I have been sitting by, how true the saying is, that adversity is a good teacher. Health will be more precious to you, after this illness, than it has ever been. And years hence, when this time of year comes round, and you remember the days when you lay here sick, alone, that the knowledge of your illness might not afflict those who are dearest to you, your home will be doubly dear and doubly blest. Now, isn't that a good, true thing?"

She was too intent upon her work, and too earnest in what she said, and too composed and quiet altogether, to be on the watch for any look he might direct toward her in reply; so the shaft of his ungrateful glance fell harmless, and did not wound her.

"Ah!" said Milly, with her pretty head inclining thoughtfully on one side, as she looked down, following her busy fingers with her eyes. "Even on me—and I am very different from you, Mr. Edmund, for I have no learning and don't know how to think properly—this view of such things has made a great impression, since you have been lying ill. When I have seen you so touched by the kindness and attention of the poor people down stairs, I have felt that you thought even that experience some repayment for the loss of health, and I have read in your face, as plain as if it was a book, that but for some trouble nd sorrow we should never know half the good there is about us."

His getting up from the couch interrupted her, or she was going on to say more

"We needn't magnify the merit, Mrs. William," he rejoined slightingly. "The people down stairs will be paid in good time, I dare say, for any little extra service they may have rendered me; and perhaps they anticipate no less. I am much obliged to you, too."

Her fingers stopped, and she looked at him.

"I can't be made to feel the more obliged by your exaggerating the case," he said. "I am sensible that you have been interested in me, and I say I am much obliged to you. What more would you have?"

Her work fell on her lap, as she still looked at him walking to and fro with an intolerant air, and stopping now and then.

"I say again, I am much obliged to you. Why weaken my sense of what is your due in obligation, by preferring enormous claims upon me? Trouble, sorrow, affliction, adversity! One might suppose I had been dying a score of deaths here!"

"Do you believe, Mr. Edmund," she asked, rising and going nearer to him, "that I spoke of the poor people of the house, with any reference to myself! To me?" laying her hand upon her bosom with a simple and innocent smile of astonishment.

"Oh! I think nothing about it, my good creature," he returned "I have had an indisposition, which your solicitude—observe! I say solicitude—makes a great deal more of, than it merits; and it's over, and we can't perpetuate it."

He coldly took a book, and sat down at the table.

She watched him for a little while, until her smile was quite gone, and then, returning to where her basket was, said gently:

"Mr. Edmund, would you rather be alone?"

"There is no reason why I should detain you here," he replied.

"Except—" said Milly, hesitating, and showing her work.

"Oh! the curtain," he answered, with a supercilious laugh. "That's not worth staying for."

She made up the little packet again, and put it in her basket. Then, standing before him with such an air of patient entreaty that he could not choose but look at her, she said:

"If you should want me, I will come back willingly. When you did want me, I was quite happy to come; there was no merit in it. I think you must be afraid, that, now you are getting well, I may be troublesome to you; but I should not have been, indeed. I should have come no longer than your weakness and confinement lasted. You owe me nothing; but it is right that you should deal as justly by me as if I was a lady—even the very lady that you love; and if you suspect me of meanly making much of the little I have tried to do to comfort your sick room, you do yourself more wrong than ever you can do me. That is why I am sorry. That is why I am very sorry."

If she had been as passionate as she was quiet, as indignant as she was calm, as angry in her look as she was gentle, as loud of tone as she was low and clear, she might have left no sense of her departure in the room, compared with that which fell upon the lonely student when she went away.

He was gazing drearily upon the place where she had been, when Redlaw came out of his concealment, and came to the door.

"When sickness lays its hand on you again," he said, looking fiercely back at him, "—may it be soon!—Die here! Rot here!"

"What have you done?" returned the other, catching at his cloak. "What change have you wrought in me? What curse have you brought upon me? Give me back myself!"

"Give me back *myself*!" exclaimed Redlaw like a madman. "I am infected! I am infectious! I am charged with poison for my own mind, and the minds of all mankind. Where I felt interest, compassion, sympathy, I am turning into stone. Selfishness and ingratitude spring up in my blighting footsteps. I am only so much less base than the wretches

whom I make so, that in the moment of their transformation I can hate them."

As he spoke—the young man still holding to his cloak—he cast him off, and struck him; then, wildly hurried out into the night air where the wind was blowing, the snow falling, the cloud-drift sweeping on, the moon dimly shining; and where, blowing in the wind, falling with the snow, drifting with the clouds, shining in the moonlight, and heavily looming in the darkness, were the Phantom's words, "The gift that I have given, you shall give again, go where you will!"

Wither he went, he neither knew nor cared, so that he avoided company. The change he felt within him made the busy streets a desert, and himself a desert, and the multitude around him, in their manifold endurances and ways of life, a mighty waste of sand, which the winds tossed into unintelligible heaps, and made a ruinous confusion of. Those traces in his breast which the Phantom had told him would "die out soon," were not, as yet so far upon their way to death, but that he understood enough of what he was, and what he made of others, to desire to be alone.

This put it in his mind—he suddenly bethought himself, as he was going along, of the boy who had rushed into his room. And then he recollected, that of those with whom he had communicated since the Phantom's disappearance, that boy alone had shown no sign of being changed.

Monstrous and odious as the wild thing was to him, he determined to seek it out, and prove if this were really so; and also to seek it with another intention, which came into his thoughts at the same time.

So, resolving with some difficulty where he was, he directed his steps back to the old college, and to that part of it where the general porch was, and where, alone, the pavement was worn by the tread of the students' feet.

The keeper's house stood just within the iron gates, forming a part of the chief quadrangle. There was a little cloister outside, and from that sheltered place he knew he could look in at the window of their ordinary room, and see who was within. The iron gates were shut, but his hand was familiar with the fastening, and drawing it back by thrusting in his wrist between the bars, he passed through softly, shut it again, and crept up to the window crumbling the thin crust of snow with his feet.

The fire, to which he had directed the boy last night, shining brightly through the glass, made an illuminated place upon the ground. Instinctively avoiding this, and going round it, he looked in at the window. At first, he thought that there was no one there, and that the blaze was reddening only the old beams in the ceiling and the dark walls; but peering in more narrowly, he saw the object of his search coiled asleep before it on the floor. He passed quickly to the door, opened it, and went in.

The creature lay in such a fiery heat, that, as the Chemist stooped to rouse him, it scorched his head. So soon as he was touched, the boy, not half awake, clutching his rags together with the instinct of flight upon him, half rolled and half ran into a distant corner of the room, where, heaped upon the ground, he struck his foot out to defend himself.

"Get up!" said the Chemist. You have not forgotten me?"

"You let me alone!" returned the boy. This is the woman's house—not yours"

The Chemist's steady eye controlled him somewhat, or inspired him with enough submission to be raised upon his feet, and looked at.

"Who washed them, and put those bandages where they were bruised and cracked!" asked the Chemist, pointing to their altered state.

"The woman did."

"And is it she who has made you cleaner in the face, too?"

"Yes; the woman."

Redlaw asked these questions to attract his eyes towards himself, and with the same intent now held him by the chin, and threw his wild hair back, though he loathed to touch him. The boy watched his eyes keenly, as if he thought it needful to his own defence, not knowing what he might do next; and Redlaw could see well, that no change came over him.

"Where are they?" he inquired.

"The woman's out."

"I know she is. Where is the old man with the white hair, and his son?"

"The woman's husband, d'ye mean?" inquired the boy.

"Aye. Where are those two?"

"Out. Something's the matter, somewhere. They were fetched out in a hurry, and told me to stop here."

"Come with me," said the Chemist, "and I'll give you money."

"Come where? And how much will you give?"

"I'll give you more shillings than you ever saw, and bring you back soon. Do you know your way to where you came from?"

"You let me go," returned the boy, suddenly twisting out of his grasp. "I'm not a going to take you there. Let me be, or I'll heave some fire at you!"

He was down before it, and ready, with his savage little hand, to pluck the burning coals out.

What the Chemist, had felt, in observing the effect of his charmed influence stealing over those with whom he came in contact, was not nearly equal to the cold vague terror with which he saw this baby-monster put it at defiance. It chilled his blood to look on the immoveable, impenetrable thing, in the likeness of a child, with its sharp malignant face turned up to his, and its almost infant hand, ready at the bars.

"Listen, boy!" he said. "You shall take me where you please, so that you take me where the people are very miserable or very wicked. I want to do them good, and not to harm them. You shall have money, as I have told you, and I will bring you back. Get up! Come quickly!" He made a hasty step toward the door, afraid of her returning.

"Will you let me walk by myself, and never hold me, nor yet touch me?" said the boy, slowly withdrawing the hand with which he threatened, and beginning to get up.

"I will!"

"And let me go before, behind, or anyways I like?"

"I will!"

"Give me some money first then, and I'll go."

The Chemist laid a few shillings, one by one, in his extended hand. To count them was beyond the boy's knowledge, but he said "one," every time, and avariciously looked at each as it was given, and at the donor. He had nowhere to put them, out of his hand, but in his mouth; and he put them there.

Redlaw then wrote with his pencil on a leaf of his pocket-book, that the boy was with him; and laying it on the table, signed to him to follow. Keeping his rags together, as usual, the boy complied, and went out with his bare head and his naked feet into the winter night.

Preferring not to depart by the iron gate by which he had entered, where they were in danger of meeting her whom he anxiously avoided, the Chemist led the way, through some of those passages among which the boy had lost himself, and by that portion of the building where he lived, to a small door of which he had the key. When they got into the street, he stopped to ask his guide—who instantly retreated from him—if he knew where they were.

The savage thing looked here and there, and at length, nodding his head, pointed in the direction he designed to take. Redlaw going on at once, he followed, somewhat less suspiciously; shifting his money from his mouth into his hand, and back again into his mouth, and stealthily rubbing it bright upon his shreds of dress, as he went along.

Three times in their progress, they were side by side. Three times they stopped, being side by side. Three times the Chemist glanced down at his face, and shuddered as it forced upon him one reflection.

The first occasion was when they were crossing an old churchyard, and Redlaw stopped among the graves, utterly at a loss how to connect them with any tender, softening, or consolatory thought.

The second was, when the breaking forth of the moon induced him to look up at the Heavens, where he saw her in her glory, surrounded by a host of stars he still knew by the names and histories which human science had appended to them; but where he saw nothing else he had been wont to see, felt nothing he had been wont to feel, in looking up there, on a bright night.

The third was when he stopped to listen to a plaintive strain of music, but could only hear a tune, made manifest to him by the dry mechanism of the instruments and his own ears, with no address to any mystery within him, without a whisper in it of the past, or of the future, powerless upon him as the sound of last year's running water, or the rushing of last year's wind.

At each of these three times, he saw with horror that, in spite of the vast intellectual distance between them, and their being unlike each other in all physical respects, the expression on the boy's face was the expression on his own.

They journeyed on for some time — now through such crowded places, that he often looked over his shoulder thinking he had lost his guide, but generally finding him within his shadow on his other side; now by ways so quiet, that he could have counted his short, quick, naked footsteps coming on behind—until they arrived at a ruinous collection of houses, and the boy touched him and stopped.

"In there!" he said, pointing out one house where there were scattered lights in the windows, and a dim lantern in the doorway, with "Lodgings for Travelers" painted on it.

Redlaw looked about him; from the houses, to the waste piece of ground on which the houses stood, or rather did not altogether tumble down, unfenced, undrained, unlighted, and bordered by a sluggish ditch; from that, to the sloping line of arches, part of some neighboring viaduct or bridge with which it was surrounded, and which lessened gradually, toward them, until the last but one was a mere kennel for a dog, the last a plundered little heap of bricks; from that, to the child, close to him, cowering and trembling with the cold, and limping on one little foot while he coiled the other round his leg to warm it, yet staring at all these things with that frightful likeness of expression so apparent in his face, that Redlaw started from him.

"In there!" said the boy, pointing out the house again. "I'll wait."

"Will they let me in?" asked Redlaw.

"Say you're a doctor," he answered with a nod. "There's plenty ill here."

Looking back on his way to the house-door, Redlaw saw him trail himself upon the dust and crawl within the shelter of the smallest arch, as if he were a rat. He had no pity for the thing, but he was afraid of it; and when it looked out of its den at him, he hurried to the house as a retreat.

"Sorrow, wrong, and trouble," said the Chemist, with a painful effort at some more distinct remembrance, "at least haunt this place, darkly. He can do no harm, who brings forgetfulness of such things here!"

With these words, he pushed the yielding door, and went in.

There was a woman sitting on the stairs, either asleep or forlorn, whose head was bent down on her hands and knees. As it was not easy to pass without treading on her, and as she was perfectly regardlnss of his near approach, he stopped, and touched her on the shoulder. Looking up, she showed him quite a young face, but one whose bloom and promise were all swept away, as if the haggard winter should unnaturally kill the spring.

With little or no show of concern on his account, she moved nearer to the wall to leave him a wider passage.

"What are you?" said Redlaw, pausing, with his hand upon the broken stair-rail.

"What do you think I am?" she answered, showing him her face again.

He looked upon the ruined Temple of God, so lately made, so soon disfigured; and something, which was not compassion—for the springs in which a true compassion for such miseries has its rise, were dried up in his breast—but which was nearer to it, for the moment, than any feeling that had lately struggled into the darkening, but not yet wholly darkened, night of his mind, mingled a touch of softness with his next words.

"I am come here to give relief, if I can," he said "Are you thinking of any wrong?"

She frowned at him, and then laughed; and then her laugh prolonged itself into a shivering sigh, as she dropped her head again, and hid her fingers in her hair.

"Are you thinking of a wrong?" he asked, once more.

"I am thinking of my life," she said, with a momentary look at him.

He had a perception that she was one of many, and that he saw the type of thousands when he saw her, drooping at his feet.

"What are your parents?" he demanded.

"I had a good home once. My father was a gardener, far away, in the country."

"Is he dead?"

"He's dead to me. All such things are dead to me. You a gentleman, and not know that!" She raised her eyes again, and laughed at him.

"Girl!" said Redlaw, sternly, "before this death, of all such things, was brought about, was there no wrong done to you? In spite of all that you can do, does no remembrance of wrong cleave to you? Are there not times upon times when it is misery to you?"

So little of what was womanly was left in her appearance, that now, when she burst into tears, he stood amazed. But he was more amazed, and much disquieted, to note that in her awakened recollection of this wrong, the first trace of her old humanity and frozen tenderness appeared to show itself.

He drew a little off, and in doing so, observed that her arms were black, her face cut, and her bosom bruised.

"What brutal hand has hurt you so?" he asked.

"My own. I did it myself!" she answered quickly.

"It is impossible."

"I'll swear I did! He didn't touch me. I did it to myself in a passion, and threw myself down here. He wasn't near me. He never laid a hand upon me!"

In the white determination of her face, confronting him with this untruth, he saw enough of the last perversion and distortion of good surviving in that miserable breast, to be stricken with remorse that he had ever come near her.

"Sorrow, wrong, and trouble!" he muttered, turning his fearful gaze away. "All that connects her with the state from which she has fallen, has those roots! In the name of God, let me go by!"

Afraid to look at her again, afraid to touch her, afraid to think of having sundered the last thread by which she held upon the mercy of Heaven, he gathered his cloak about him, and glided swiftly up the stairs.

Opposite to him, on the landing, was a door, which stood partly open, and which, as he ascended, a man, with a candle in his hand, came forward from within to shut. But this man, on seeing him, drew back, with much emotion in his manner, and, as if by a sudden impulse, mentioned his name aloud.

In the surprise of such a recognition there, he stopped, endeavouring to recollect the wan and startled face. He had no time to consider it, for, to his yet greater amazement, old Philip came out of the room, and took him by the hand.

"Mr. Redlaw," said the old man, "this is like you, this is like you, sir! you have heard of it, and have come after us to render any help you can. Ah, too late, too late!"

Redlaw, with a bewildered look, submitted to be led into the room. A man lay there, on a truckle-bed, and William Swidger stood at the bedside.

"Too late!" murmured the old man, looking wistfully into the Chemist's face; and the tears stole down his cheeks.

"That's what I say, father," interposed his son, in a low voice. "That's where it is, exactly. To keep as quiet as ever we can while he's a dozing, is the only thing to do. You're right, father!"

Redlaw paused at the bedside, and looked down on the figure that was stretched upon the mattress. It was that of a man, who should have been in the vigour of his life, but on whom it was not likely that the sun would ever shine again. The vices of his forty or fifty years' career had so branded him, that, in comparison with their effects upon his face, the heavy hand of time upon the old man's face who watched him, had been merciful and beautifying.

"Who is this?" asked the Chemist, looking round.

"My son George, Mr. Redlaw," said the old man, wringing his hands. "My eldest son, George, who was more his mother's pride than all the rest!"

Redlaw's eyes wandered from the old man's grey head, as he laid it down upon the bed, to the person who had recognized him, and who had kept aloof, in the remotest corner of the room. He seemed to be about his own age; and although he knew no such hopelessly decayed and broken man as he appeared to be, there was something in the turn of his figure, as he stood with his back towards him, and now went out at the door, that made him pass his hand uneasily across his brow.

"William," he said in a gloomy whisper, "who is that man?"

"Why you see, sir," returned Mr. William, "that's what I say, myself. Why should a man ever go and gamble, and the like of that, and let himself down inch by inch till he can't let himself down any lower!"

"Has *he* done so?" asked Redlaw, glancing after him with the same uneasy action as before.

"Just exactly that, sir," returned William Swidger, "as I'm told. He knows a little about medicine, sir, it seems; and having been wayfaring towards London with my unhappy brother that you see here," Mr. William passed his coat-sleeve across his eyes, "and being lodging up-stairs for the night—what I say, you see, is that strange companions come together here sometimes—he looked in to attend upon him, and came for us at his request. What a mournful spectacle, sir! But that's where it is. It's enough to kill my father!"

Redlaw looked up at these words, and, recalling where he was and with whom, and the spell he carried with him—which his surprise had obscured—retired a little, hurriedly, debating with himself whether to shun the house that moment, or remain.

Yielding to a certain sullen doggedness,

which it seemed to be a part of his condition to struggle with, he argued for remaining.

"Was it only yesterday," he said, "when I observed the memory of this old man to be a tissue of sorrow and trouble, and shall I be afraid, to-night, to shake it? Are such remembrances as I can drive away, so precious to this dying man that I need fear for *him?* No! I'll stay here."

But he stayed, in fear and trembling none the less for these words; and, shrouded in his black cloak with his face turned from them, stood away from the bedside, listening to what they said, as if he felt himself a demon in the place.

"Father!" murmured the sick man, rallying a little from his stupor.

"My boy! my son George!" said old Philip

"You spoke, just now, of my being mother's favourite, long ago. It's a dreadful thing to think now, of long ago!"

"No, no, no;" returned the old man. "Think of it. Don't say it's dreadful. It's not dreadful to me, my son."

"It cuts you to the heart, father." For the old man's tears were falling on him.

"Yes, yes," said Philip," so it does; but it does me good. It's a heavy sorrow to think of that time, but it does me good, George. Oh, think of it too, think of it too, and your heart will be softened more and more! Where's my son William? William, my boy, your mother loved him dearly to the last, and with her latest breath said, 'Tell him I forgave him, blessed him, and prayed for him.' Those were her words to me. I have never forgotten them, and I'm eighty-seven!"

"Father!" said the man upon the bed, "I am dying, I know. I am so far gone, that I can hardly speak, even of what my mind most runs on. Is there any hope for me, beyond this bed?"

"There is hope," returned the old man, "for all who are softened and penitent. There is hope for all such. Oh!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands and looking up, "I was thankful, only yesterday, that I could remember this unhappy son when he was an innocent child. But what a comfort is it, now, to think that even God himself has that remembrance of him!"

Redlaw spread his hands upon his face, and shrunk, like a murderer.

"Ah!" feebly moaned the man upon the bed. "The waste since then, the waste of life since then!"

"But he was a child once," said the old man. "He played with children. Before he lay down on his bed at night, and fell into his guiltless rest, he said his prayers at his poor mother's knee. I have seen him do it, many a time; and seen her lay his head upon her breast, and kiss him. Sorrowful as it was to her, and me, to think of this, when he went so wrong, and when our hopes and plans for him were all broken, this gave him still a hold upon us, that nothing else could have given. Oh, Father, so much better than the fathers upon earth! Oh, Father, so much more afflicted by the errors of thy children! take this wanderer back! Not as he is, but as he was then, let him cry to thee, as he has so often seemed to cry to us!"

As the old man lifted up his trembling hands, the son, for whom he made the supplication, laid his sinking head against him for support and comfort, as if he indeed were the child of whom he spoke.

When did man ever tremble, as Redlaw trembled, in the silence that ensued! He knew it must come upon them, knew that it was coming fast.

"My time is very short, my breath is shorter," said the sick man, supporting himself on one arm, and with the other groping in the air, "and I remember there is something on my mind concerning the man who was here just now. Father and William—wait!—is there really anything in black, out there?"

"Yes, yes, it is real," said his aged father.

"Is it a man?"

"What I say myself, George," interposed his brother, bending kindly over him. "It's Mr. Redlaw."

"I thought I had dreamed of him. Ask him to come here."

The Chemist, whiter than the dying man, appeared before him. Obedient to the motion of his hand, he sat upon the bed.

"It has been so ripped up, to-night, sir," said the sick man, laying his hand upon his heart, with a look in which the mute, imploring agony of his condition was concentrated, "by the sight of my poor old father, and the thought of all the trouble I have been the cause of, and all the wrong and sorrow lying at my door, that—"

Was it the extremity to which he had come, or was it the dawning of another change, that made him stop?"

"—that what I *can* do right, with my mind running on so much, so fast, I'll try to do. There was another man here. Did you see him?"

Redlaw could not reply by any word; for when he saw that fatal sign he knew so well now, of the wandering hand upon the forehead, his voice died at his lips. But he made some indication of assent.

"He is penniless, hungry, and destitute. He is completely beaten down, and has no resource at all. Look after him! Lose no time! I know he has it in his mind to kill himself."

It was working. It was on his face. His face was changing, hardening, deepening in all its shades, and losing all its sorrow.

"Don't you remember? Don't you know him?" he pursued.

He shut his face out for a moment, with the hand that again wandered over his forehead, and then it lowered on Redlaw, reckless, ruffianly, and callous.

"Why, d—n you!" he said, scowling round, "what have you been doing to me here! I have lived bold, and I mean to die bold. To the Devil with you!"

And so lay down upon his bed, and put his arms up, over his head and ears, as resolute from that time to keep out all access, and to die in his indifference.

If Redlaw had been struck by lightning, it could not have struck him from the bedside with a more tremendous shock. But the old man, who had left the bed while his son was speaking to him, now returning, avoided it quickly likewise, and with abhorrence.

"Where's my boy William?" said the old man hurriedly. "William, come away from here. We'll go home."

"Home, father!" returned William. "Are you going to leave your own son?"

"Where's my own son?" replied the old man.

"Where? why, there!"

"That's no son of mine," said Philip, trembling with resentment. "No such wretch as that, has any claim on me. My children are pleasant to look at, and they wait upon me, and get my meat and drink ready, and are useful to me. I've a right to it! I'm eighty-seven!"

"You are old enough to be no older," muttered William, looking at him grudgingly, with his hands in his pockets. "I don't know what good you are, myself. We could have a deal more pleasure without you."

"*My* son, Mr. Redlaw!" said the old man. "*My* son, too! The boy talking to me of *my* son! Why, what has he ever done to give me any pleasure, I should like to know?"

"I don't know what you have ever done to give *me* any pleasure," said William, sulkily.

"Let me think," said the old man. "For how many Christmas times running, have I sat in my warm place, and never had to come out in the cold night air; and have made good cheer, without being disturbed by any such uncomfortable, wretched sight as him there? Is it twenty, William?"

"Nigher forty, it seems," he muttered. "Why, when I look at my father, sir, and come to think of it," addressing Redlaw, with an impatience and irritation that were quite new, "I'm whipped if I can see anything in him, but a calendar of ever so many years of eating, and drinking, and making himself comfortable, over and over again."

"I—I'm eighty-seven," said the old man, rambling on, childishly and weakly, "and I don't know as I ever was much put about by anything. I'm not a going to begin now, because of what he calls my son. He's not my son. I've had a power of pleasant times. I recollect once—no I don't—no, it's broken off. It was something about a game of cricket and a friend of mine, but it's somehow broken off. I wonder who he was—I suppose I liked him? And I wonder what became of him—I suppose he died? But I don't know. And I don't care, neither; I don't care a bit."

In his drowsy chuckling, and the shaking of his head, he put his hands into his waistcoat pockets. In one of them he found a bit of holly (left there, probably, last night), which he now took out, and looked at.

"Berries, eh?" said the old man. "Ah! It's a pity they're not good to eat. I recollect, when I was a little chap about as high as that, and out a walking with—let me see—who was I out a walking with?—no, I don't remember how that was. I don't remember as I ever walked with any one particular, or cared for any one, or any one for me. Berries, eh? There's good cheer when there's berries. Well; I ought to have my share of it, and to be waited on, and kept warm and comfortable; for I'm eighty-seven, and a poor old man. I'm eigh-ty-seven. Eigh-ty-seven!"

The drivelling, pitiable manner in which, as he repeated this, he nibbled at the leaves, and spat the morsels out; the cold, uninterested eye with which his youngest son (so changed) regarded him; the determined apathy with which his eldest son lay hardened in his sin; impressed themselves no more on Redlaw's observation,—for he broke his way from the spot to which his feet seemed to have been fixed, and ran out of the house.

His guide came crawling forth from his place of refuge, and was ready for him before he reached the arches.

"Back to the woman's?" he inquired.

"Back, quickly!" answered Redlaw. "Stop nowhere on the way!"

For a short distance the boy went on before; but their return was more like a flight than a walk, and it was as much as his bare feet could do, to keep pace with the Chemist's rapid strides. Shrinking from all who passed, shrouded in his cloak, and keeping it drawn closely about him, as though there were mortal contagion in any fluttering touch of his garments, he made no pause until they reached the door by which they had come out. He unlocked it with his key, went in, accompanied by the boy, and hastened through the dark passages to his own chamber.

The boy watched him as he made the door fast, and withdrew behind the table, when he looked round.

"Come!" he said. "Don't you touch me! You've not brought me here to take my money away."

Redlaw threw some more upon the ground. He flung his body on it immediately, as if to hide it from him, lest the sight of it should tempt him to reclaim it; and not until he saw him seated by his lamp, with his face hidden in his hands, began furtively to pick it up. When he had done so, he crept near the fire, and, sitting down in a great chair before it, took from his breast some broken scraps of food, and fell to munching, and to staring at the blaze, and now and then to glancing at his shillings, which he kept clenched up in a bunch, in one hand.

"And this," said Redlaw, gazing on him with increasing repugnance and fear, "is the only one companion I have left on earth!"

How long it was before he was aroused from his contemplation of this creature, whom he dreaded so—whether half an hour, or half the night—he knew not. But the stillness of the room was broken by the boy (whom he had seen listening) starting up, and running towards the door.

"Here's the woman coming!" he exclaimed.

The Chemist stopped him on his way, at the moment when she knocked.

"Let me go to her, will you?" said the boy.

"Not now," returned the Chemist. "Stay here. Nobody must pass in or out of the room, now. Who's that?"

"It's I, sir," cried Milly. "Pray, sir, let me in!"

"No! not for the world!" he said.

"Mr. Redlaw, Mr. Redlaw, pray, sir, let me in."

"What is the matter?" he said, holding the boy.

"The miserable man you saw is worse, and nothing I can say will wake him from his terrible infatuation. William's father has turned childish in a moment. William himself is changed. The shock has been too sudden for him; I cannot understand him; he is not like himself. Oh, Mr. Redlaw, pray advise me, help me!"

"No! no! no!" he answered.

"Mr. Redlaw! Dear sir! George has been muttering, in his doze, about the man you saw there, who, he fears, will kill himself."

"Better he should do it, than come near me!"

"He says, in his wandering, that you know him; that he was your friend once, long ago; that he is the ruined father of a student here—my mind misgives me of the young gentleman who has been ill. What is to be done? How is he to be followed? How is he to be saved? Mr. Redlaw, pray, oh, pray, advise me! Help me!"

All this time he held the boy, who was half-mad to pass him, and let her in.

"Phantoms! Punishers of impious thoughts!" cried Redlaw, gazing round in anguish, "Look upon me! From the darkness of my mind, let the glimmering of contrition that I know is there, shine up, and show my misery! In the material world, as I have long taught, nothing can be spared; no step or atom in the wondrous structure could be lost, without a blank being made in the great universe. I know, now, that it is the same with good and evil, happiness and sorrow, in the memories of men. Pity me! Relieve me!"

There was no response, but her "Help me, help me, let me in!" and the boy's struggling to get to her.

"Shadow of myself! Spirit of my darker hours!" cried Redlaw, in distraction, "Come back, and haunt me day and night, but take this gift away! Or, if it must still rest with me, deprive me of the dreadful power of giving it to others. Undo what I have done. Leave me benighted, but restore the day to those whom I have cursed. As I have spared this woman from the first, and as I never will go forth again, but will die here, with no hand to tend me, save this creature's who is proof against me,—hear me!"

The only reply still was, the boy struggling to get to her, while he held him back; and the cry, increasing in its energy, "Help! let me in. He was your friend once, how shall he be followed, how shall he be saved? They are all changed, there is no one else to help me, pray, pray, let me in!"

CHAPTER III.

THE GIFT REVERSED.

Night was still heavy in the sky. On open plains, from hill-tops, and from the decks of solitary ships at sea, a distant low-lying line, that promised bye and bye to change to light, was visible in the dim horizon; but its promise was remote and doubtful, and the moon was driving with the night-clouds busily.

The shadows upon Redlaw's mind succeeded thick and fast to one another, and obscured its light as the night-clouds hovered between the moon and earth, and kept the latter veiled in darkness. Fitful and uncertain as the shadows which the night-clouds cast, were their concealments from him, and imperfect revelations to him; and, like the night-clouds still, if the clear light broke forth for a moment, it was only that they might sweep over it, and make the darkness deeper than before.

Without, there was a profound and solemn hush upon the ancient pile of building, and its buttresses and angles made dark shapes of mystery upon the ground, which now seemed to retire into the smooth white snow and now seemed to come out of it, as the moon's path was more or less beset. Within, the Chemist's room was indistinct and murky, by the light of the expiring lamp; a ghostly silence had succeeded to the knocking and the voice outside; nothing was audible but, now and then, a low sound among the whitened ashes of the fire, as of its yielding up its last breath. Before it on the ground the boy lay fast asleep. In his chair, the Chemist sat, as he had sat there since the calling at his door had ceased—like a man turned to stone.

At such a time, the Christmas music he had heard before, began to play. He listened to it at first, as he had listened in the churchyard; but presently—it playing still, and being borne towards him on the night air, in a low, sweet, melancholy strain—he arose, and stood stretching his hands about him, as if there were some friend approaching within his reach, on whom his desolate touch might rest, yet do no harm. As he did this, his face became less fixed and wondering; a gentle trembling came upon him; and at last his eyes filled with tears, and he put his hands before them, and bowed down his head.

His memory of sorrow, wrong, and trouble, had not come back to him; he knew that it was not restored; he had no passing belief or hope that it was. But some dumb stir within him made him capable, again, of being moved by what was hidden afar off, in the music. If it were only that it told him sorrowfully the value of what he had lost, he thanked Heaven for it with a fervent gratitude.

As the last chord died upon his ear, he raised his head to listen to its lingering vibration. Beyond the boy, so that his sleeping figure lay at its feet, the Phantom stood, immoveable and silent, with its eyes upon him.

Ghastly it was, as it had ever been, but not so cruel and relentless in its aspect—or he thought or hoped so, as he looked upon it, trembling. It was not alone, but in its shadowy hand it held another hand.

And whose was that? Was the form that stood beside it indeed Milly's, or but her shade and picture? The quiet head was bent a little, as her manner was, and her eyes were looking down, as if in pity, on the sleeping child. A radiant light fell on her face, but did not touch the Phantom; for, though close beside her, it was dark and colourless as ever.

"Spectre!" said the Chemist, newly troubled as he looked, "I have not been stubborn or presumptuous in respect of her. Oh, do not bring her here. Spare me that!"

"This is but a shadow," said the Phantom; 'when the morning shines, seek out the reality whose image I present before you."

"Is it my inexorable doom to do so?" cried the Chemist.

"It is," replied the Phantom.

"To destroy her peace, her goodness; to make her what I am myself, and what I have made of others!"

"I have said 'seek her out,'" returned the Phantom. "I have said no more."

"Oh, tell me," exclaimed Redlaw, catching at the hope which he fancied might lie hidden in the words. "Can I undo what I have done?"

"No," returned the Phantom.

"I do not ask for restoration to myself," said Redlaw. "What I abandoned, I abandoned of my own will, and have justly lost. But for those to whom I have transferred the fatal gift; who never sought it; who unknowingly received a curse of which they had no warning, and which they had no power to shun; can I do nothing?"

"Nothing," said the Phantom.

"If I can not, can any one?"

The Phantom, standing like a statue, kept its gaze upon him for a while; then turned its head suddenly, and looked upon the shadow at its side.

"Ah! Can she?" cried Redlaw, still looking upon the shade.

The Phantom released the hand it had retained till now, and softly raised its own with a gesture of dismissal. Upon that, her shadow, still preserving the same attitude, began to move or melt away.

"Stay," cried Redlaw, with an earnestness to which he could not give enough expression. "For a moment! As an act of mercy! I know that some change fell upon me, when those sounds were in the air just now. Tell me, have I lost the power of harming her? May I go near her without dread? Oh, let her give me any sign of hope?"

The Phantom looked upon the shade as he did—not at him—and gave no answer.

"At least, say this—has she, henceforth, the consciousness of any power to set right what I have done?"

"She has not," the Phantom answered.

"Has she the power bestowed on her without the consciousness?"

The Phantom answered: "Seek her out." And her shadow slowly vanished.

They were face to face again, and looking on each other, as intently and awfully as at the time of the bestowal of the gift, across the boy who still lay on the ground between them, at the Phantom's feet.

"Terrible instructor," said the Chemist, sinking on his knee before it, in an attitude of supplication, "by whom I was renounced, but by whom I am revisited (in which, and in whose milder aspect, I would fain believe I have a gleam of hope), I will obey without inquiry, praying that the cry I have sent up in the anguish of my soul has been, or will be, heard, in behalf of those whom I have injured beyond human reparation. But there is one thing—"

"You speak to me of what is lying here," the Phantom interposed, and pointed with its finger to the boy.

"I do," returned the Chemist. "You know what I would ask. Why has this child alone been proof against my influence, and why, why, have I detected in its thoughts a terrible companionship with mine?"

"This," said the Phantom, pointing to the boy, "is the last, completest illustration of a human creature, utterly bereft of such remembrances as you have yielded up. No softening memory of sorrow, wrong, or trouble enters here, because this wretched mortal from his birth has been abandoned to a worse condition than the beasts, and has, within his knowledge, no one contrast, no humanising touch, to make a grain of such a memory spring up in his hardened breast. All within this desolate creature is barren wilderness. All within the man bereft of what you have resigned, is the same barren wilderness. Woe to such a man! Woe, tenfold, to the nation that shall count its monsters such as this, lying here, by hundreds and by thousands!"

Redlaw shrunk, appalled, from what he heard.

"There is not," said the Phantom, "one of these—not one—but sows a harvest that mankind MUST reap. From every seed of evil in this boy, a field of ruin is grown that shall be gathered in, and garnered up, and sown again in many places in the world, until regions are overspread with wickedness enough to raise the waters of another Deluge. Open and unpunished murder in a city's streets would be less guilty in its daily toleration, than one such spectacle as this."

It seemed to look down upon the boy in his sleep. Redlaw, too, looked down upon him with a new emotion.

"There is not a father," said the Phantom, "by whose side in his daily or his nightly walk, these creatures pass; there is not a mother among all the ranks of loving mothers in this land; there is no one risen from the state of childhood, but shall be responsible in his or her degree for this enormity. There is not a country throughout the earth on which it would not bring a curse. There is no religion upon earth that it would not deny; there is no people upon earth it would not put to shame."

The Chemist clasped his hands, and looked, with trembling fear and pity, from the sleeping boy to the Phantom, standing above him with its finger pointing down.

"Behold, I say," pursued the Spectre, "the perfect type of what it was your choice to be. Your influence is powerless here, because from this child's bosom you can banish nothing. His thoughts have been in 'terrible companionship' with yours, because you have gone down to his unnatural level. He is the growth of man's indifference; you are the growth of man's presumption. The beneficent design of Heaven is, in each case, overthrown, and from the two poles of the immaterial world you come together."

The Chemist stooped upon the ground beside the boy, and, with the same kind of compassion for him that he now felt for himself, covered him as he slept, and no longer shrunk from him with abhorrence or indifference.

Soon, now, the distant line on the horizon brightened, the darkness faded, the sun rose red and glorious, and the chimney stacks and

gables of the ancient building gleamed in the clear air, which turned the smoke and vapour of the city into a cloud of gold. The very sundial in his shady corner, where the wind was used to spin with such un-windy constancy, shook off the finer particles of snow that had accumulated on his dull old face in the night, and looked out at the little white wreaths eddying round and round him. Doubtless some blind groping of the morning made its way down into the forgotten crypt so cold and earthy, where the Norman arches were half buried in the ground, and stirred the dull sap in the lazy vegetation hanging to the walls, and quickened the slow principle of life within the little world of wonderful and delicate creation which existed there, with some faint knowledge that the sun was up.

The Tetterbys were up and doing. Mr. Tetterby took down the shutters of the shop, and, strip by strip, revealed the treasures of the window to the eyes, so proof against their seductions, of Jerusalem Buildings. Adolphus had been out so long already, that he was halfway on to Morning Pepper. Five small Tetterbys, whose ten round eyes were much inflamed by soap and friction, were in the tortures of a cool wash in the back kitchen; Mrs. Tetterby presiding. Johnny, who was pushed and hustled through his toilet with great rapidity when Moloch chanced to be in an exacting frame of mind (which was always the case), staggered up and down with his charge before the shop door, under greater difficulties than usual; the weight of Moloch being much increased by a complication of defences against the cold, composed of knitted worsted-work, and forming a complete suit of chain-armour, with a headpiece and blue gaiters.

It was a peculiarity of this baby to be always cutting teeth. Whether they never came, or whether they came and went away again, is not in evidence; but it had certainly cut enough, on the showing of Mrs. Tetterby, to make a handsome dental provision for the sign of the Bull and Mouth. All sorts of objects were impressed for the rubbing of its gums, notwithstanding that it always carried, dangling at its waist (which was immediately under its chin), a bone ring, large enough to have represented the rosary of a young nun. Knife-handles, umbrella-tops, the heads of walking-sticks selected from the stock, the fingers of the family in general, but especially of Johnny, nutmeg-graters, crusts, the handles of doors, and the cool knobs on the tops of pokers, were among the commonest instruments indiscriminately applied for this baby's relief. The amount of electricity that must have been rubbed out of it in a week is not to be calculated. Still Mrs. Tetterby always said, "it was coming through, and then the child would be herself;" and still it never did come through, and the child continued to be somebody else.

The tempers of the little Tetterbys had sadly changed within a few hours. Mr. and Mrs. Tetterby themselves were not more altered than their offspring. Usually they were an unselfish, good-natured, yielding little race, sharing short-commons when it happened (which was pretty often) contentedly and even generously, and taking a great deal of enjoyment out of a very little meat. But they were fighting now, not only for the soap and water, but even for the breakfast which was yet in perspective. The hand of every little Tetterby was against the other little Tetterbys; and even Johnny's hand—the patient, much enduring, and devoted Johnny—rose against the baby! Yes. Mrs. Tetterby, going to the door by a mere accident, saw him viciously pick out a weak place in the suit of armour where a slap would tell, and slap that blessed child.

Mrs. Tetterby had him into the parlour, by the collar, in that same flash of time, and repaid him the assault with usury thereto.

"You brute, you murdering little boy," said Mrs. Tetterby. "Had you the heart to do it?"

"Why don't her teeth come through, then," retorted Johnny, in a loud, rebellious voice, "instead of bothering me? How would you like it yourself?"

"Like it, sir!" said Mrs. Tetterby, relieving him of his dishonoured load.

"Yes, like it," said Johnny. "How would you? Not at all. If you was me, you'd go for a soldier. I will, too. There an't no babies in the army."

Mr. Tetterby, who had arrived upon the scene of action, rubbed his chin thoughtfully, instead of correcting the rebel, and seemed rather struck by this view of a military life.

"I wish I was in the army myself, if the child's in the right," said Mrs. Tetterby, looking at her husband, "for I have no peace of my life here. I'm a slave—a Virginia slave!" some indistinct association with their weak descent on the tobacco trade perhaps suggested this aggravated expression to Mrs. Tetterby. "I never have a holiday, or any pleasure at all, from year's end to year's end! Why, Lord bless and save the child!" said Mrs. Tetterby, shaking the baby with an irritability hardly suited to so pious an aspiration, "what's the matter with her now?"

Not being able to discover, and not rendering the subject much clearer by shaking it, Mrs. Tetterby put the baby away in a cradle, and, folding her arms, sat rocking it angrily with her foot.

"How you stand there, 'Dolphus," said Mrs. Tetterby to her husband. "Why don't you do something?"

"Because I don't care about doing anything," Mr. Tetterby replied.

"I am sure *I* don't," said Mrs. Tetterby.

"I'll take my oath *I* don't," said Mr. Tetterby.

A diversion arose here among Johnny and his five younger brothers, who, in preparing the family breakfast table, had fallen to skirmishing for the temporary possession of the loaf, and were buffeting one another with great heartiness: the smallest boy of all, with precocious discretion, hovering outside the knot of combatants, and harassing their legs. Into the midst of this fray Mr. and Mrs. Tetterby both precipitated themselves with great ardour, as if such ground were the only ground on which they could now agree; and having, with no visible remains of their late soft-heartedness, laid about them without any lenity, and done much execution, resumed their former relative positions.

"You had better read your paper than do nothing at all," said Mrs. Tetterby.

"What's there to read in a paper?" returned Mr. Tetterby, with excessive discontent.

"What?" said Mrs. Tetterby. "Police."

"It's nothing to me," said Tetterby. "What do I care what people do, or are done to?"

"Suicides," suggested Mrs. Tetterby.

"No business of mine," replied her husband.

"Births, deaths, and marriages, are those nothing to you?" said Mrs. Tetterby.

"If the births were all over for good, and all to-day, and the deaths were all to begin to come off to-morrow, I don't see why it should interest me, till I thought it was a coming to my turn," grumbled Tetterby. "As to marriages, I've done it myself. I know quite enough about *them*."

To judge from the dissatisfied expression of her face and manner, Mrs. Tetterby appeared to entertain the same opinions as her husband; but she opposed him, nevertheless, for the gratification of quarrelling with him.

"Oh, you're a consistent man," said Mrs. Tetterby, "an't you? You, with the screen of your own making there, made of nothing else but bits of newspapers, which you sit and read to the children by the half hour together."

"Say used to, if you please," returned her husband. "You won't find me doing so any more. I'm wiser now."

"Bah! wiser, indeed!" said Mrs. Tetterby. "Are you better?"

The question sounded some discordant note in Mr. Tetterby's breast. He ruminated dejectedly, and passed his hand across and across his forehead.

"Better!" murmured Mr. Tetterby. "I don't know as any of us are better, or happier either. Better, is it?"

He turned to the screen, and traced about it with his finger, until he found a certain paragraph of which he was in quest.

"This used to be one of the family favourites, I recollect," said Tetterby, in a forlorn and stupid way, "and used to draw tears from the children, and make 'em good, if there was any little bickering or discontent among 'em, next to the story of the robin redbreasts in the wood. 'Melancholly case of destitution. Yesterday, a small man, with a baby in his arms, and surrounded by half a dozen ragged little ones, of various ages between ten and two, the whole of whom were evidently in a famishing condition, appeared before the worthy magistrate, and made the following recital:' —Ha! I don't understand it, I'm sure," said Tetterby; "I don't see what it has got to do with us."

"How old and shabby he looks," said Mrs. Tetterby, watching him. "I never saw such a change in a man. Ah! dear me, dear me, dear me, it was a sacrifice!"

"What was a sacrifice?" her husband sourly inquired.

Mrs. Tetterby shook her head; and without replying in words, raised a complete sea-storm about the baby, by her violent agitation of the cradle.

"If you mean your marriage was a sacrifice, my good woman—" said her husband.

"I *do* mean it," said his wife.

"Why, then I mean to say," pursued Mr. Tetterby, as sulkily and surlily as she, "that there are two sides to that affair; and that *I* was the sacrifice; and that I wish the sacrifice hadn't been accepted."

"I wish it hadn't, Tetterby, with all my heart and soul, I do assure you," said his wife. "You can't wish it more than I do, Tetterby."

"I don't know what I saw in her," muttered the newsman, "I'm sure; certainly, if I saw anything, it's not there now. I was thinking so, last night, after supper, by the fire. She's fat, she's ageing, she won't bear comparison with most other women."

"He's common-looking, he has no air with him, he's small, he's beginning to stoop, and he's getting bald," muttered Mrs. Tetterby.

"I must have been half out of my mind when I did it," muttered Mr. Tetterby.

"My senses must have forsook me, That's the only way in which I can explain it to myself," said Mrs. Tetterby, with elaboration.

In this mood they sat down to breakfast. The little Tetterbys were not habituated to regard that meal in the light of a sedentary occupation, but discussed it as a dance or trot; rather resembling a savage ceremony, in the occasional shrill whoops, and brandishings of bread and butter, with which it was accompanied, as well as in the intricate filings off into the street and back again, and the hoppings up and down the door steps, which were incidental to the performance. In the present instance, the contentions between these Tetterby children for the milk-and-water jug, common to all, which stood upon the table, presented so lamentable an instance of angry passions risen very high indeed, that it was an outrage on the memory of Doctor Watts. It was not until Mr. Tetterby had driven the whole herd out at the front door, that a moment's peace was secured; and even that was broken by the discovery that Johnny had surreptitiously come back, and was at that instant choking in the jug like a ventriloquist, in his indecent and rapacious haste.

"These children will be the death of me at last!" said Mrs. Tetterby, after banishing the culprit. "And the sooner the better, I think."

"Poor people," said Mr. Tetterby, "ought not to have children at all. They give *us* no pleasure."

He was at that moment taking up the cup which Mrs. Tetterby had rudely pushed toward him, and Mrs. Tetterby was lifting her own cup to her lips, when they both stopped, as if they were transfixed.

"Here! Mother! Father!" cried Johnny, running into the room. "Here's Mrs. William coming down the street!"

And if ever, since the world began, a young boy took a baby from a cradle with the care of an old nurse, and hushed and soothed it tenderly, and tottered away with it cheerfully, Johnny was that boy, and Moloch was that baby, as they went out together!

Mr. Tetterby put down his cup; Mrs. Tetterby put down her cup. Mr. Tetterby rubbed his forehead; Mrs. Tetterby rubbed hers. Mr. Tetterby's face began to smooth and brighten; Mrs. Tetterby's began to smooth and brighten.

"Why, Lord forgive me," said Mr. Tetterby

to himself, "what evil tempers have I been giving way to? What has been the matter here!"

"How could I ever treat him ill again, after all I have said and felt last night!" sobbed Mrs. Tetterby with her apron to her eyes.

"Am I a brute," said Mr. Tetterby, "or is there any good in me at all? Sophia! My little woman!"

"'Dolphus dear," returned his wife.

"I—I've been in a state of mind," said Mr. Tetterby, "that I can't abear to think of, Sophy."

"Oh! It's nothing to what I've been in, Dolf," cried his wife, in a great burst of grief.

"My Sophia," said Mr. Tetterby, "don't take on. I never shall forgive myself. I must have nearly broke your heart, I know."

"No, Dolf, no. It was me! Me!" cried Mrs. Tetterby.

"My little woman," said her husband, "don't. You make me reproach myself dreadful, when you show such a noble spirit. Sophia, my dear, you don't know what I thought. I showed it bad enough, no doubt; but what I thought, my little woman!"

"Oh, dear Dolf, don't! Don't!" cried his wife.

"Sophia," said Mr. Tetterby, "I must reveal it. I couldn't rest in my conscience unless I mentioned it. My little woman—"

"Mrs. William's very nearly here!" screamed Johnny at the door.

"My little woman, I wondered how," gasped Mr. Tetterby, supporting himself by his chair, "I wondered how I had ever admired you—I forgot the precious children you have brought about me, and thought you didn't look as slim as I could wish. I—I never gave a recollection," said Mr. Tetterby, with severe self-accusation, "to the cares you've had as my wife, and along of me and mine, when you might have had hardly any with another man, who got on better and was luckier than me (anybody might have found such a man easily I am sure); and I quarrelled with you for having aged a little in the rough years you've lightened for me. Can you believe it, my little woman? I hardly can myself."

Mrs. Tetterby, in a whirlwind of laughing and crying, caught his face within her hands, and held it there.

"Oh, Dolf!" she cried. "I am so happy that you thought so; I am so grateful that you thought so! For I thought that you were common-looking, Dolf; and so you are, my dear, and may you be the commonest of all sights in my eyes, till you close them with your own good hands. I thought that you were small; and so you are, and I'll make much of you because you are, and more of you because I love my husband. I thought that you began to stoop; and so you do, and you shall lean on me, and I'll do all I can to keep you up. I thought there was no air about you; but there is, and it's the air of home, and that's the purest and the best there is, and God bless home once more, and all belonging to it, Dolf!"

"Hurrah! Here's Mrs. William!" cried Johnny.

So she was, and all the children with her; and as she came in, they kissed her, and kissed one another, and kissed the baby, and kissed their father and mother, and then ran back and flocked and danced about her, trooping on with her in triumph.

Mr. and Mrs. Tetterby were not a bit behindhand in the warmth of their reception. They were as much attracted to her as the children were; they ran towards her, kissed her hands, pressed round her, could not receive her ardently or enthusiastically enough. She came among them like the spirit of all goodness, affection, gentle consideration, love, and domesticity.

"What! are *you* all so glad to see me, too, this bright Christmas morning!" said Milly, clapping her hands in a pleasant wonder. "Oh dear, how delightful this is!"

More shouting from the children, more kissing, more trooping round her, more happiness, more love, more joy, more honour, on all sides, than she could bear.

"Oh dear!" said Milly, "what delicious tears you make me shed. How can I ever have deserved this! What have I done to be so loved!"

"Who can help it!" cried Mr. Tetterby.

"Who can help it!" cried Mrs. Tetterby.

"Who can help it!" echoed the children, in a joyful chorus. And they danced and trooped about her again, and clung to her, and laid their rosy faces against her dress, and kissed and fondled it, and could not fondle it, or her, enough.

"I never was so moved," said Milly, drying her eyes, "as I have been this morning. I must tell you, as soon as I can speak.—Mr. Redlaw came to me at sunrise, and with a tenderness in his manner, more as if I had been his darling daughter than myself, implored me to go with him to where William's brother George is lying ill. We went together, and all the way along he was so kind, and so subdued, and seemed to put such trust and hope in me, that I could not help crying with pleasure. When we got to the house, we met a woman at the door (somebody had bruised and hurt her, I am afraid) who caught me by the hand, and blessed me as I passed."

"She was right!" said Mr. Tetterby. Mrs. Tetterby said she was right. All the children cried out she was right.

"Ah, but there's more than that," said Milly. "When we got up stairs, into the room, the sick man, who had lain for hours in a state from which no effort could rouse him, rose up in his bed, and, bursting into tears, stretched out his arms to me, and said that he had led a misspent life, but that he was truly repentant now, in his sorrow for the past, which was all as plain to him as a great prospect, from which a dense black cloud had cleared away, and that he entreated me to ask his poor old father for his pardon and his blessing, and to say a prayer beside his bed. And when I did so, Mr. Redlaw joined in it so fervently, and then so thanked and thanked me, and thanked Heaven, that my heart quite overflowed, and I could have done nothing but sob and cry, if the sick man had not begged me to sit down by him,—which made me quiet of course. As I sat there, he held my hand in his until he sunk in a doze; and even then, when I withdrew my hand to leave him to come here (which Mr. Redlaw was very earnest indeed in wishing me to do), his hand felt for mine, so that some one else was obliged to take my place and make believe to give him my hand back. Oh dear, oh dear," said Milly, sobbing.

"How thankful and how happy I should feel, and do feel, for all this!"

While she was speaking, Redlaw had come in, and, after pausing for a moment to observe the group of which she was the centre, had silently ascended the stairs. Upon those stairs he now appeared again; remaining there, while the young student passed him and came running down.

"Kind nurse, gentlest, best of creatures," he said, falling on his knee to her, and catching at her hand, "forgive my cruel ingratitude!"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" cried Milly innocently, "here's another of them! Oh dear, here's somebody else who likes me. What shall I ever do!"

The guileless, simple way in which she said it, and in which she put her hands before her eyes and wept for very happiness, was as touching as it was delightful.

"I was not myself," he said. "I don't know what it was—it was some consequence of my disorder perhaps—I was mad. But I am so no longer. Almost as I speak, I am restored. I heard the children crying out your name, and the shade passed from me at the very sound of it. Oh don't weep! Dear Milly, if you could read my heart, and only know with what affection and what grateful homage it is glowing, you would not let me see you weep. It is such deep reproach."

"No, no," said Milly, "it's not that. It's not, indeed. It's joy. It's wonder that you should think it necessary to ask me to forgive so little, and yet it's a pleasure that you do."

"And will you come again? and will you finish the little curtain?"

"No," said Milly, drying her eyes, and shaking her head. "You won't care for *my* needlework now."

"Is it forgiving me, to say that?"

She beckoned him aside, and whispered in his ear.

"There is news from your home, Mr. Edmund"

"News? How?"

"Either your not writing when you were very ill, or the change in your handwriting when you began to be better, created some suspicion of the truth; however that is—but you're sure you'll not be the worse for any news, if it's not bad news?"

"Sure."

"Then there's some one come!" said Milly.

"My mother?" asked the student, glancing round involuntarily towards Redlaw, who had come down from the stairs.

"Hush! No," said Milly.

"It can be no one else."

"Indeed?" said Milly, "are you sure?"

"It is not—" Before he could say more, she put her hand upon his mouth.

"Yes it is!" said Milly. "The young lady (she is very like the miniature, Mr. Edmund, but she is prettier) was too unhappy to rest without satisfying her doubts, and came up, last night, with a little servant-maid. As you always dated your letters from the college, she came there; and before I saw Mr. Redlaw this morning, I saw her. *She* likes me too!" said Milly. "Oh dear, that's another!"

"This morning! Where is she now?"

"Why, she is now," said Milly, advancing her lips to his ear, "in my little parlor in the Lodge, and waiting to see you."

He pressed her hand, and was darting off, but she detained him.

"Mr. Redlaw is much altered, and has told me this morning that his memory is impaired. Be very considerate to him, Mr. Edmund; he needs that from us all."

The young man assured her, by a look, that her caution was not ill-bestowed; and as he passed the Chemist on his way out, bent respectfully and with an obvious interest before him.

Redlaw returned the salutation courteously and even humbly, and looked after him as he passed on. He drooped his head upon his hand too, as trying to re-awaken something he had lost. But it was gone.

The abiding change that had come upon him since the influence of the music, and the Phantom's reappearance, was, that now he truly felt how much he had lost, and could compassionate his own condition, and contrast it, clearly, with the natural state of those around him. In this, an interest in those who were around him was revived, and a meek, submissive sense of his calamity was bred, resembling that which sometimes obtains in age, when its mental powers are weakened, without insensibility or sullenness being added to the list of its infirmities.

He was conscious, that, as he redeemed, through Milly, more and more of the evil he had done, and as he was more and more with her, this change ripened itself within him. Therefore, and because of the attachment she inspired him with (but without other hope), he felt that he was quite dependent on her, and that she was his staff in his affliction.

So, when she asked him whether they should go home now, to where the old man and her husband were, and he readily replied "yes"—being anxious in that regard—he put his arm through hers, and walked beside her; not as if he were the wise and learned man to whom the wonders of nature were an open book, and hers were the uninstructed mind, but as if their two positions were reversed, and he knew nothing, and she all.

He saw the children throng about her, and caress her, as he and she went away together thus, out of the house; he heard the ringing of their laughter, and their merry voices; he saw their bright faces, clustering round him like flowers; he witnessed the renewed contentment and affection of their parents; he breathed the simple air of their poor home, restored to its tranquillity; he thought of the unwholesome blight he had shed upon it, and might, but for her, have been diffusing then; and perhaps it is no wonder that he walked submissively beside her, and drew her gentle bosom nearer to his own.

When they arrived at the Lodge, the old man was sitting in his chair in the chimney-corner, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his son was leaning against the opposite side of the fire-place, looking at him. As she came in at the door, both started, and turned round towards her, and a radiant change came upon their faces.

"Oh dear, dear, dear, they are pleased to see me like the rest!" cried Milly, clapping her hands in an ecstasy, and stopping short. "Here are two more!"

Pleased to see her! Pleasure was no word for it. She ran into her husband's arms, thrown wide open to receive her, and he would have been glad to have her there, with her head lying on his shoulder, through the short winter's day. But the old man couldn't spare her. He had arms for her too, and he locked her in them.

"Why, where has my quiet Mouse been all this time?" said the old man. "She has been a long while away. I find that it's impossible for me to get on without Mouse. I—where's my son William?—I fancy I have been dreaming, William."

"That's what I say myself, father," returned his son. "*I* have been in an ugly sort of dream, I think. How are you, father? Are you pretty well?"

"Strong and brave, my boy," returned the old man.

It was quite a sight to see Mr. William shaking hands with his father, and patting him on the back, and rubbing him gently down with his hand, as if he could not possibly do enough to show an interest in him.

"What a wonderful man you are, father! How are you, father? Are you really pretty hearty, though?" said William, shaking hands with him again, and patting him again, and rubbing him gently down again.

"I never was fresher or stouter in my life, my boy."

"What a wonderful man you are father! But that's exactly where it is," said Mr. William, with enthusiasm. "When I think of all that my father's gone through, and all the chances and changes, and sorrows and troubles, that have happened to him in the course of his long life, and under which his head has grown grey, and years upon years have gathered on it, I feel as if we couldn't do enough to honour the old gentleman, and make his old age easy. How are you, father? Are you really pretty well, though?"

Mr. William might never have left off repeating this inquiry, and shaking hands with him again, and patting him again, and rubbing him down again, if the old man had not espied the Chemist, whom until now he had not seen.

"I ask your pardon, Mr. Redlaw," said Philip, "but didn't know you were here, sir, or should have made less free. It reminds me, Mr. Redlaw, seeing you here on a Christmas morning, of the time when you was a student yourself, and worked so hard that you was backwards and forwards in our Library even at Christmas time. Ha! ha! I'm old enough to remember that; and I remember it right well, I do, though I'm eighty-seven. It was after you left here that my poor wife died. You remember my poor wife, Mr. Redlaw!"

The Chemist answered yes.

"Yes," said the old man. "She was a dear creetur. I recollect you come here one Christmas morning with a young lady—I ask your pardon, Mr. Redlaw, but I think it was a sister you was very much attached to?"

The Chemist looked at him, and shook his head. "I had a sister," he said vacantly. He knew no more.

"One Christmas morning," pursued the old man, "that you came here with her—and it began to snow, and my wife invited the young lady to walk in, and sit by the fire that is always a burning on Christmas day in what used to be, before our ten poor gentlemen commuted, our great Dinner Hall. I was there; and I recollect, as I was stirring up the blaze for the young lady to warm her pretty feet by, she read the scroll out loud, that is underneath that picter. 'Lord, keep my memory green!' She and my poor wife fell a talking about it; and it's a strange thing to think of, now, that they both said (both being so unlike to die) that it was a good prayer, and that it was one they would put up very earnestly, if they were called away young, with reference to those who were dearest to them. 'My brother,' says the young lady—'My husband,' says my poor wife. 'Lord, keep his memory of me, green, and do not let me be forgotten!'"

Tears more painful, and more bitter than he had ever shed in all his life, coursed down Redlaw's face. Philip, fully occupied in recalling his story, had not observed him until now, nor Milly's anxiety that he should not proceed.

"Philip!" said Redlaw, laying his hand upon his arm, "I am a stricken man, on whom the hand of Providence has fallen heavily, although deservedly. You speak to me, my friend, of what I cannot follow; my memory is gone."

"Merciful Power!" cried the old man.

"I have lost my memory of sorrow, wrong, and trouble," said the Chemist; "and with that I have lost all, man would remember!"

To see old Philip's pity for him, to see him wheel his own great chair for him to rest in, and look down upon him with a solemn sense of his bereavement, was to know, in some degree, how precious to old age such recollections are.

The boy came running in, and ran to Milly.

"Here's the man," he said, "in the other room. I don't want *him*."

"What man does he mean?" asked Mr. William.

"Hush!" said Milly.

Obedient to a sign from her, he and his old father softly withdrew. As they went out, unnoticed, Redlaw beckoned to the boy to come him.

"I like the woman best," he answered, holding to her skirts.

"You are right," said Redlaw, with a faint smile. "But you needn't fear to come to me. I am gentler than I was. Of all the world, to you, poor child!"

The boy still held back at first; but yielding little by little to her urging, he consented to approach, and even to sit down at her feet. As Redlaw laid his hand upon the shoulder of the child, looking on him with compassion and a fellow-feeling, he put out his other hand to Milly. She stooped down on that side of him, so that she could look into his face, and after silence, said:

"Mr. Redlaw, may I speak to you?"

"Yes," he answered, fixing his eyes upon her. "Your voice and music are the same to me."

"May I ask you something?"

"What you will."

"Do you remember what I said, when I knocked at your door last night? About one who was your friend once, and who stood on the verge of destruction?"

"Yes. I remember," he said, with some hesitation.

"Do you understand it?"

He smoothed the boy's hair—looking at her fixedly the while—and shook his head.

"This person," said Milly, in her clear, soft voice, which her mild eyes, looking at him, made clearer and softer, "I found soon afterwards. I went back to the house, and, with Heaven's help, traced him. I was not too soon. A very little, and I should have been too late."

He took his hand from the boy, and laying it on the back of that hand of hers, whose timid and yet earnest touch addressed him no less appealingly than her voice and eyes, looked more intently on her.

"He *is* the father of Mr. Edmund, the young gentleman we saw just now. His real name is Longford. You recollect the name?"

"I recollect the name."

"And the man?"

"No, not the man. Did he ever wrong me?"

"Yes!"

"Ah! Then it's hopeless—hopeless."

He shook his head, and softly beat upon the hand he held, as though mutely asking her commiseration.

"I did not go to Mr. Edmund last night," said Milly. "You will listen to me just the same as if you did remember all?"

"To every syllable you say."

"Both, because I did not know, then, that this really was his father, and because I was fearful of the effect of such intelligence upon him, after his illness, if it should be. Since I have known who this person is, I have not gone either; but that is for another reason. He has long been separated from his wife and son—has been a stranger to his home almost from this son's infancy, I learn from him—and has abandoned and deserted what he should have held most dear. In all that time he has been falling from the state of a gentleman more and more, until—" she rose up hastily, and going out for a moment, returned, accompanied by the wreck that Redlaw had beheld last night.

"Do you know me?" asked the Chemist.

"I should be glad," returned the other, "and that is an unwonted word for me to use, if I could answer no."

The Chemist looked at the man, standing in self-abasement and degradation before him, and would have looked longer, in an ineffectual struggle for enlightenment, but that Milly resumed her late position by his side, and attracted his attentive gaze to her own face.

"See how low he is sunk, how lost he is!" she whispered, stretching out her arm towards him, without looking from the Chemist's face. "If you could remember all that is connected with him, do you not think it would move your pity to reflect that one you ever loved (do not let us mind how long ago, or in what belief that he has forfeited) should come to this?"

"I hope it would," he answered. "I believe I would."

His eyes wandered to the figure standing near the door, but came back speedily to her, on whom he gazed intently, as if he strove to learn some lesson from every tone of her voice and every beam of her eyes.

"I have no learning, and you have much," said Milly; "I am not used to think, and you are always thinking. May I tell you why it seems to me a good thing for us to remember wrong that has been done us?"

"Yes."

"That we may forgive it"

"Pardon me, great Heaven!" said Redlaw, lifting up his eyes, "for having thrown away thine own high attribute!"

"And if," said Milly, "if your memory should one day be restored, as we will hope and pray it may be, would it not be a blessing to you to recall at once a wrong and its forgiveness?"

He looked at the figure by the door, and fastened his attentive eyes on her again; a ray of clearer light appeared to him to shine into his mind from her bright face.

"He cannot go to his abandoned home. He does not seek to go there. He knows that he could only carry shame and trouble to those he has so cruelly neglected; and that the best reparation he can make them now is to avoid them. A very little money carefully bestowed would remove him to some distant place, where he might live and do no wrong, and make such atonement as is left within his power for the wrong he has done. To the unfortunate lady who is his wife, and to his son, this would be the best and kindest boon that their best friend could give them—one too that they need never know of, and to him, shattered in reputation, mind, and body, it might be salvation."

He took her head between his hands and kissed it, and said: "It shall be done. I trust to you to do it for me, now and secretly; and to tell him that I would forgive him if I were so happy as to know for what."

As she rose, and turned her beaming face towards the fallen man, implying that her mediation had been successful, he advanced a step, and, without raising his eyes, addressed himself to Redlaw.

"You are so generous," he said "—you ever were—that you will try to banish your rising sense of retribution in the spectacle that is before you. I do not try to banish it from myself, Redlaw. If you can, believe me."

The Chemist entreated Milly, by a gesture, to come nearer to him; and, as he listened, looked in her face, as if to find in it the clue to what he heard.

"I am too decayed a wretch to make professions; I recollect my own career too well, to array any such before you. But from the day on which I made my first step downward, in dealing falsely by you, I have gone down with a certain, steady, doomed progression. That, I say."

Redlaw, keeping her close at his side, turned his face towards the speaker, and there was sorrow in it. Something like mournful recognition too.

"I might have been another man, my life might have been another life, if I had avoided that first fatal step. I don't know that it would have been. I claim nothing for the possibility.

Your sister is at rest, and better than she could have been with me, if I had continued even what you thought me: even what I once supposed myself to be."

Redlaw made a hasty motion with his hand, as if he would have put that subject on one side.

"I speak," the other went on, "like a man taken from the grave. I should have made my own grave, last night, had it not been for this blessed hand."

"Oh dear, he likes me too!" sobbed Milly, under her breath. "That's another!"

"I could not have put myself in your way, last night, even for bread. But, to-day, my recollection of what has been between us is so strongly stirred, and is presented to me, I don't know how, so vividly, that I have dared to come at her suggestion, and to take your bounty, and to thank you for it, and to beg you, Redlaw, in your dying hour, to be as merciful to me in your thoughts as you are in your deeds."

He turned towards the door, and stopped a moment on his way forth.

"I hope my son may interest you, for his mother's sake. I hope he may deserve to do so. Unless my life should be preserved a long time, and I should know that I have not misused your aid, I shall never look upon him more."

Going out, he raised his eyes to Redlaw for the first time. Redlaw, whose steadfast gaze was fixed upon him, dreamily held out his hand. He returned and touched it—little more—with both his own; and bending down his head, went slowly out.

In the few moments that elapsed, while Milly silently took him to the gate, the Chemist dropped into his chair, and covered his face with his hands. Seeing him thus, when she came back, accompanied by her husband and his father (who were both greatly concerned for him), she avoided disturbing him, or permitting him to be disturbed; and kneeled down near the chair to put some warm clothing on the boy.

"That's exactly where it is. That's what I always say, father!" exclaimed her admiring husband. "There's a motherly feeling in Mrs. William's breast that must and will have went!"

"Ay, ay," said the old man; "you're right. My son William's right!"

"It happens all for the best, Milly dear, no doubt," said Mr. William, tenderly, "that we have no children of our own; and yet I sometimes wish you had one to love and cherish. Our little dead child that you built such hopes upon, and that never breathed the breath of life—it has made you quiet-like, Milly."

"I am very happy in the recollection of it, William dear," she answered. "I think of it every day."

"I was afraid you thought of it a good deal."

"Don't say, afraid; it is a comfort to me; it speaks to me in so many ways. The innocent thing that never lived on earth, is like an angel to me, William."

"You are like an angel to father and me," said Mr. William, softly. "I know that."

"When I think of all those hopes I built upon it, and the many times I sat and pictured to myself the little smiling face upon my bosom that never lay there, and the sweet eyes turned up to mine that never opened to the light," said Milly, "I can feel a greater tenderness, I think, for all the disappointed hopes in which there is no harm. When I see a beautiful child in its fond mother's arms, I love it all the better, thinking that my child might have been like that, and might have made my heart as proud and happy."

Redlaw raised his head, and looked towards her.

"All through life, it seems by me," she continued, "to tell me something. For poor neglected children, my little child pleads as if it were alive, and had a voice I knew with which to speak to me. When I hear of youth in suffering or shame, I think that my child might have come to that, perhaps, and that God took it from me in his mercy. Even in age and grey hair, such as father's, it is present: saying that it too might have lived to be old, long and long after you and I were gone, and to have needed the respect and love of younger people."

Her quiet voice was quieter than ever, as she took her husband's arm, and laid her head against it.

"Children love me so, that sometimes I half fancy—it's a silly fancy, William—they have some way I don't know of, of feeling for my little child, and me, and understanding why their love is precious to me. If I have been quiet since, I have been more happy, William, in a hundred ways. Not least happy, dear, in this—that even when my little child was born and dead but a few days, and I was weak and sorrowful, and could not help grieving a little, the thought arose, that if I tried to lead a good life, I should meet in Heaven a bright creature who would call me Mother!"

Redlaw fell upon his knees with a loud cry.

"O Thou," he said, "who, through the teaching of pure love, hast graciously restored me to the memory which was the memory of Christ upon the cross, and of all the good who perished in his cause, receive my thanks, and bless her!"

Then he folded her to his heart; and Milly, sobbing more than ever, cried, as she laughed, "He is come back to himself! He likes me very much indeed, too! Oh, dear, dear, dear me, here's another!"

Then the student entered, leading by the hand a lovely girl who was afraid to come. And Redlaw, so changed towards him, seeing in him and in his youthful choice the softened shadow of that chastening passage in his own life, to which, as to a shady tree, the dove so long imprisoned in his solitary ark might fly for rest and company, fell upon his neck, entreating them to be his children.

Then, as Christmas is a time in which, of all times in the year, the memory of every remediable sorrow, wrong, and trouble in the world around us should be active with us, not less than our own experiences, for all good, he laid his hand upon the boy, and, silently calling Him to witness who laid His hand on children in old time, rebuking, in the majesty of his prophetic knowledge, those who kept them from him, vowed to protect him, teach him, and reclaim him.

Then he gave his right hand cheerily to Philip, and said that they would that day hold a Christmas dinner in what used to be, before the ten poor gentlemen commuted, their great

Dinner Hall; and that they would bid to it as many of that Swidger family, who, his son had told him, were so numerous that they might join hands and make a ring round England, as could be brought together on so short a notice.

And it was that day done. There were so many Swidgers there, grown up and children, that an attempt to state them in round numbers might engender doubts, in the distrustful, of the veracity of this history. Therefore the attempt shall not be made. But there they were, by dozens and scores—and there was good news and good hope there, ready for them, of George, who had been visited again by his father and brother, and by Milly, and again left in a quiet sleep. There, present at the dinner, too, were the Tetterbys, including young Adolphus, who arrived in his prismatic comforter, in good time for the beef. Johnny and the baby were too late, of course, and came in all on one side, the one exhausted, the other in a supposed state of double-tooth; but that was customary, and not alarming.

It was sad to see the child who had no name or lineage, watching the other children as they played, not knowing how to talk with them, or sport with them, and more strange to the ways of childhood than a rough dog. It was sad, though in a different way, to see what an instinctive knowledge the youngest children there had of his being different from all the rest, and how they made timid approaches to him with soft words and touches, and with little presents, that he might not be unhappy. But he kept by Milly, and began to love her—that was another, as she said! and, as they all liked her dearly, they were glad of that, and when they saw him peeping at them from behind her chair, they were pleased that he was so close to it.

All this the Chemist, sitting with the student and his bride that was to be, and Philip, and the rest, saw.

Some people have said since that he only thought what has been herein set down; others, that he read it in the fire, one winter night about the twilight time; others, that the Ghost was but the representation of his gloomy thoughts, and Milly the embodiment of his better wisdom. *I* say nothing.

—Except this. That as they were assembled in the old Hall, by no other light than that of a great fire (having dined early), the shadows once more stole out of their hiding-places, and danced about the room, showing the children marvellous shapes and faces on the walls, and gradually changing what was real and familiar there, to what was wild and magical. But that there was one thing in the Hall to which the eyes of Redlaw, and of Milly and her husband, and of the old man, and of the student, and his bride that was to be, were often turned, which the shadows did not obscure or change. Deepened in its gravity by the firelight, and gazing from the darkness of the panneled wall like life, the sedate face in the portrait, with the beard and ruff, looked down at them from under its verdant wreath of holly, as they looked up at it; and, clear and plain below, as if a voice had uttered them, were the words,

Lord, keep my memory green.

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AN

HISTORICAL ROMANCE

OF

THE COURT OF RUSSIA.

BY MRS. HOFLAND.

"Verily,
I swear, 'tis better to be lowly born,
And range with humble livers in content,
Than to be perk'd up in a glittering grief,
And wear a golden sorrow."

SHAKSPEARE.

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1843.

THE CZARINA.

CHAPTER I.

The court of Catherine the First, in the year 1736, recovered somewhat of the gayety which had been diminished by the death of Peter the Great the preceding year; for, although this enlightened but eccentric monarch despised the routine of splendid frivolity and magnificent fopperies generally attached to the circles of royalty, he regularly encouraged them by every other medium than his presence. His widow, who succeeded him, and sought most conscientiously to carry out his views, well knew that the rich man's luxuries give the poor man bread; that the gorgeous trappings of the great furnish necessaries to the mechanic's cottage; that the inventions of Genius, in adorning palaces and ornamenting the possessors of rank, at once add refinement to wealth, and give reward to merit: though devoid of education and scant of knowledge, the benevolence of her heart sufficed to furnish the deficiencies of her mind, wherever the welfare of her subjects became the object of her attention.

With these views of the subject, she had peculiar pleasure in celebrating a victory by giving a magnificent ball in honour of a young soldier, who, serving under one of Peter's old generals, had found the opportunity of distinguishing himself in the most remarkable manner on the confines of Persia. His conquest of the Prince of Dagesthan secured simultaneously the honours of war and the blessings of peace, and stamped him alike a hero and a patriot.

Of course the female nobility were impatient to see one who had appeared among them as a brilliant comet, for he was not more glorious than new, although of the highest and most ancient order of Russian nobility. Prince Theodore Dolgourouki was the heir to the illustrious house of that name, being the only son of Prince Lubitsch Dolgourouki. He was younger by three or four years than Count Ivan, who was the son of Baziltch Dolgourouki, and was already well known at the court of Petersburgh as a man of decided abilities, quiet, but determined ambition, and talents for intrigue likely to make their way during the reign of a female sovereign. The head of the Dolgourouki was the aged but still active Field-marshal Prince Baziltch; and, as he had never married, and was possessed of immense wealth and that power which fine understanding and spotless reputation bestow, he was naturally looked up to by the fathers and their sons as an object of veneration and affection.

At his suggestion, both these young men had been educated abroad, all learning being at a low ebb in Russia during that period when the monarch who sought with unwearied energy to improve it had been compelled, sword in hand, to fight for the country he desired to benefit. Ivan was placed in a convent of Jesuits in Genoa at an early age; and, being associated with many young Italian noblemen, who superadded the graces of personal accomplishment to the learning of the cloister, he returned to his own country what was termed "an accomplished gentleman," capable of winning fame and enjoying it, and blending, in a singular manner, the prejudices of high birth, the nourished enmities of a cunning and revengeful spirit, with the apparent devotion of a loyal and devoted heart.

Theodore Dolgourouki spent *his* boyhood with a tender mother, who devoted all the powers of a capacious and cultivated mind to the formation of his. When, in his fifteenth year, he had the misfortune to lose her, he was removed from home, less for instruction than that change of scene which might relieve his sorrow, to the house of a German Baron, who in due time placed him with his own son in the University of Leyden, where the following years of his minority were passed with equal improvement and happiness. Circumstances, on his return, had favoured his joining the army, the result of which had placed him in the way of the highest preferment with his sovereign, and given him that celebrity which is always dazzling and frequently dangerous, both to the possessor and his admirers, who are more frequently the fair and young of the softer sex, than the sage and aspiring of his own.

Strange to say, Theodore was neither vain nor ambitious; the noble simplicity, the acquired philosophy, of his mind rendered him incapable of the first; and the early lessons, the maturer studies, of his life taught him to renounce the second on principle. In joining the army, in achieving conquest (which was alike the result of great personal courage and of mental energy), he knew that he had attained the position of a man among men, free to think and to act for himself on all the material points which affect character and happiness. The warmth of his heart, the acuteness of his feelings, his habitual obedience in childhood, and the high qualities with which love and distance had invested his only parent, rendered it likely that he should tread in the steps of his father, or we might say his family; but as he was aware of their tendency, had weighed them well and rejected them determinately, it now remained to be seen how far so young a man was capable of maintaining the dignity of his nature by the consistency of his conduct.

These points were matters of little consideration with the mothers and daughters, now looking eagerly to the hour which should introduce them to the handsome and gallant youth who had won "golden opinions" from all; who was already in possession of a fine property in right of his mother, would most probably be the heir of his great uncle, Prince Baziltch, and was likely, from his rumoured abilities not less than his high birth, fine person, and superior acquirements, to supersede, perhaps to humble, the man who now ruled Russia in the name of the empress, and monopolized its honours not less

than its power; to whom every eye looked for preference, yet mingled scorn with supplication; to whom some were grateful and many submissive, but who was far more envied than admired, and at once surrounded by parasites and enemies.

Alexander Menzikoff, the prime minister of Catherine (who had been placed on the throne by his well-directed and well-merited efforts) was at this time in his forty-fifth year; his person was athletic, but by no means inelegant, and his bearing was that of a military man of high rank and long service; of one who had travelled much, had the power of accommodating himself to various courts and countries, yet retained, in the exercise of courtesy, an air of habitual command. Every one knew that he had sprung from humble life, but no one could point out, in his language or manner, a vestige of his origin. Those who were most angry with his exaltation, while they spoke of him as an upstart, and adverted to his birth and occupation in childhood, yet failed to establish any proof of the *parvenu* in his education and conduct. On the contrary, the most sagacious persons about the court admitted that the Czar never gave a more decisive proof of that discernment, which was one of his peculiar characteristics, than in calling into action the powers of this extraordinary man.

It was undoubtedly his beauty in boyhood, and the singular sweetness of his voice, which first drew the royal favour. Menzikoff, the pastry-cook's apprentice, cried his *pâtés* in the vicinity of the Kremlin; and Peter the Great, who in after-life was fascinated by the musical voice rather than the beauty of Catherine, yielded to the charm of the poor youth's cadences. When he had seen and questioned him, perceiving that nature had been not less bountiful to his mind than his person, he at once released him from his servitude, and commanded that he should become an inmate of his palace, and receive the benefits of education.

Menzikoff could already read and write—endowments far beyond his station, and which had been communicated to him by a young friend some years older than himself, of a superior grade in society, and who became tenderly attached to him in consequence of their being alike orphans. The little knowledge he had thus obtained made him eager for more; and, conscious of his own capabilities, he eagerly seized on the opportunities given him for improvement, and in the next three or four years had become a proficient in all modern languages, well read in history, and conversant in the *belles lettres*; but, as he had the wit to see that, in the present state of his country, and the situation of its brave but unfortunate sovereign, the sword, and not the pen, was the way to preferment, he held himself ready to adopt it so soon as he should be able to perform the duties of a soldier.

We have called Peter unfortunate, because he was at this time hunted like a stag by the implacable enmity of Charles XII. of Sweden, considered to be the hero of his age, and whom no extent of conquest could satisfy short of the destruction of the sovereign and the country, against whom his ferocious courage, aided by experience, was enlisted. Peter found that he must learn the art of war before he could reap the rewards of bravery; therefore, military knowledge and indomitable courage soon became absolutely necessary to all who sought the favour of the sovereign, or desired the safety of their native country. At seventeen, Menzikoff entered on service, and, grateful, brave, and enterprising, soon proved that he richly deserved the favours already received, and would, ere long, have a right to preferment. Accustomed to labour and privation, he endured the extreme distresses of his royal master with cheerfulness; and, blessed with the buoyant spirits of youth, where others sank beneath the multiplied evils which surrounded them, he only foresaw the glory which must arise from overcoming their misfortunes.

The honour of the first victory over Charles was due to Menzikoff, who, at nineteen, was major-general; and, in Pultava, that well-fought but most terrible battle, which freed Russia from the most skilful and vindictive enemy she had ever encountered, the skilful manœuvres and effective valour of Menzikoff (who appeared endowed with the concentred gifts of experience, observation, perseverance, and unwearied courage in the bloom of youth) gave the crown of conquest to his bleeding country and his long harassed sovereign, who made him henceforth Prince of Ingria, and showered on him riches and honours with an unsparing hand.

Other wars succeeded, and Menzikoff was always successful as a general, but was probably held of more value to the Czar for carrying into effect the formation of Cronstadt as a seaport, and St. Petersburgh as the future metropolis of his mighty empire. Indeed, at this period of Russian improvement, in which a resistless spirit and gigantic hand sought, with more of zeal than humanity, more of genius than wisdom, to civilize a barbarous but intelligent people, and carry the arts and resources of southern Europe into the "frozen regions of the north," we need not inquire where was Menzikoff!—for where was he not!—he was the right hand of his great master, who, in return, filled that hand with wealth, and strengthened it with power.

Once, and once only, did a shade pass over the brow of Peter, who, unquestionably, loved the plant he had distinguished and cultivated so happily. Deceived by others, the accumulation of his own gifts rendered him suspicious even of Menzikoff, whose style of living was so profuse, that it appeared to the Czar incompatible with even his splendid income, and he imposed on him an enormous fine, at the same time depriving him of the principality of Plescoff. A few days sufficed to convince the royal examiner that the enemies of Menzikoff had misled him, that the habits of the prince had been contracted in consequence of his acting as ambassador in foreign courts, where he sought to impress strangers with the wealth, importance, and elegance of Russia, and that he was not less unimpeachable in his integrity than superior in his taste and talents. Of course, his fine was remitted, his places restored, and his utility not less than his power increased to the end of Peter's life. Was a rebellious province to be reduced, Menzikoff was appointed the general—was a banquet or ball to be given, Menzikoff presided, receiving royalty and nobility with the grace of a courtier and the frankness of a soldier, while the mighty sovereign he represented dined in a distant apartment on the

plainest fare, glad to escape a scene which he held to be useful though irksome, and rejoiced to lay his burden on the shoulders of one so distinguished for his magnificence and suavity, versatility and self-possession.

CHAPTER II.

Menzikoff married a woman of rank and great personal beauty, superior education, and excellent disposition; and in their dwelling the sovereign spent his happiest hours, for he found there not only the society of superior minds, but that love and gratitude which every human being, however high his station, desires for his happiness. Here, too, he met that fair and unpretending girl, who stepped from the lowliest grade and the most perfect poverty to the throne of one whose dominions nearly circled the globe. Catherine, maintained by charity in her infancy, and deprived by death of her parents and protector, even in childhood earned her own bread in servitude, and, in the house of a Lutheran minister of piety and benevolence named Gluck, gained so much instruction as to become a kind of nursery-governess to his children, although she never attained the art of writing beyond that of signing her name.

Marienbourgh, where she lived, was besieged and taken on the day when, although scarcely fifteen, she had married a young man, who was slain in defending the city. The wretched girl was drawn by the soldiery out of an oven, into which she had fled for shelter; and General Bauer, struck by her youth, beauty, and extreme distress, caused her to be conveyed to his own quarters; but, shortly afterward, with a prudence and generosity most honourable to his character, and which was worthy to stamp his memory as the Russian Scipio, he procured for her the friendship of the Princess Menzikoff, then newly married. With this excellent lady she lived as a companion—for the benevolence of the young is rarely stinted—and her singular misfortunes, her simplicity, youth, and loveliness, gave the widowed maid an interest in every bosom. Here she was frequently seen by the Czar, who found that her sweet and gentle voice could calm his anger, sooth his sorrow, and excite his cheerfulness. At this period he had been in love with a merchant's daughter, who, considering his views dishonourable, and fearing to awaken his resentment by her rejection, uniting the romance of youth with the decision of virtue, had clandestinely fled from home to the distant dwelling of her nurse, and having literally adopted the most perfect seclusion, was at this time believed, both by her friends and her lover, to be dead. The novelty and beauty of Catherine, in time, not only consoled the Czar for her loss, but awoke a more active flame. Two years, however, passed before Peter the Great obtained his own consent for his marriage with Catherine, during which time, unquestionably, she became the object of his sincere esteem, not less than his affection. Never could any woman render exaltation more beneficial to others and amiable in herself than Catherine. She had a sound understanding and a tender heart—she was never more happy than when enriching and rewarding the friends of her infancy; but she carefully avoided employing them in state affairs, or in any way interfering with the politics of the country. Frankness of manners and simplicity of mind were her most striking qualities; but, yet, considering that her high station demanded dignity of deportment, she assumed it gracefully, and Peter himself frequently exulted in the splendour and propriety of her dress, and the majesty of her carriage.

It must be supposed that the empress was fondly attached to the Menzikoff family; and, as it was understood by all that the prince and the army he commanded had placed her on the throne, notwithstanding the grandson of Peter was evidently the true heir, it may be supposed at this time she felt towards her prime minister not less gratitude than affection. That the emperor had made a will in her favour was undoubted; but, as the testament remained unsigned, room was given to suspect a change in the royal intention, on which it became the nobility and ministers to deliberate; but the eagerness and eloquence of Menzikoff, the distress of the weeping and agitated widow, who appeared loth to accept the honours he offered her, and declared that her life should be devoted to the welfare of the young prince, the *true* heir—the memory of her benevolence, humility, and consistency, conspired to overcome the doubts, or awaken the hopes, of those around; and she became empress by acclamation. Menzikoff, her most highly-endowed subject, her active minister, the *protégé* of her illustrious husband, and the friend of her own helpless youth, combined, of course, all possible claims on her abiding friendship, and was, in fact, as necessary to *her* government as she could be to *his* aggrandizement.

On the night when our tale commences, Menzikoff, by the welcome command of his sovereign, first presented his eldest daughter in public to the empress, who had known and loved her from her birth. If there were many eyes eager to gaze on young Dolgourouki, so were there many eager to examine the daughter of one who held wealth and honours in his gift, and whose wife was alike lovely and beloved by all. The question ran, "Will she have her father's pride, or her mother's gentleness? Will her beauty be that of nature or art?"

Ivan Dolgourouki wore the sneer of contempt on his lip when he spoke of the "pastry-cook's puff;" but Theodore held his judgment in abeyance—though so long resident among the Germans, he did not believe a man's merit or a woman's beauty exactly dependant on heraldic distinctions, and he honoured the late Czar for those noble exertions on behalf of his country, which belonged to the bettering of our common humanity rather than its privileged classes.

All the company had assembled, and many of the principal nobility were pressing round Theodore and the Field Marshal, when the Princess Menzikoff appeared, leaning on Count Sapicha, the most favoured friend of her husband, who, with his beautiful daughter on his arm, immediately proceeded to the canopied seat of the empress, who received her most affectionately, kissing her cheek, and seating her among the princesses of her family.

All those little groups who were collected in various places for the purposes of conversation immediately divided, and permitted the star of the evening to be seen: well might Mary Men-

zikoff be styled such, for she was literally blazing with jewels. Parental fondness, on the one part, had sought to embellish the beauty of its object; and a desire to outshine all competitors, and duly honour her introduction on the other, had rendered the sweet girl rather an exhibition than a charm, and, in the excess of her brilliance, her beauty was diminished. Still, it must be acknowledged by all who approached her, that, although her form was scarcely developed, its graceful lightness and commanding height were evident, and her countenance was as admirable in expression as faultless in feature, while the dazzling fairness of her complexion seemed allied to more than earthly beauty, and revealed every emotion of her heart, whether suggested by grateful affection or gratified self-love, with that blushing simplicity so interesting in early life, and so rare in courtly circles.

"You will have to dance with our young queen of diamonds, Theodore," said Ivan; "take care she does not set your heart in a blaze, for I question if even a prince of the strong hand* can be accepted for such a moving El Dorado as that."

"I am not likely to offer it—a parterre of flowers is more to my taste than a jeweller's cabinet; but she is very lovely, Ivan, and, remember, she did not dress herself. Besides, who can wonder that her parents loaded with finery one of whom they must be very proud? We should make allowance for their feelings."

"Allowance for Menzikoff! allowance for the insolent upstart, who perks his flaming minx amid the royal sisters, bedizzened with the wealth of kingdoms! Allowance for—"

The exclamations of Ivan were cut short by the fulfilment of his own predictions, for, by the command of the empress, Theodore became the partner of the blushing and almost trembling Mary. A short time, however, served to restore her to self-possession, since, although she had never appeared in so large a circle before, and was for the first time dressed as a woman, and decorated with brilliants, she had been taught to consider the royal family as her personal friends, and to see in her father's house all who could be considered great or distinguished. She was, therefore, soon capable of conversing in the intervals of the dance with that ease which the habit of society alone bestows, and that quiet elegance of distinction which proves an acquaintance with books, and a constant intercourse with the best company. Simplicity and good sense might be termed the characteristics of her mind; but it was not difficult to perceive that, when more familiar, the spell thrown by a poetic imagination would also embellish the flow of familiar intercourse.

The slight prejudice excited by her gorgeous appearance, or the vituperation of his cousin Ivan, had disappeared, and Theodore felt disposed to bask in the light of those mild eyes which contrasted with the gems above them, when a lady hurriedly addressed Mary, saying, the Princess Menzikoff had fainted, and was carried into the adjoining apartment.

"My mother, my dear mother!" cried the fair girl, catching the eye of her informer as it glanced towards the place thus specified, towards which she flew, followed by Theodore.

* The meaning of Dolgourouki is "the strong, or sovereign hand," in the ancient Russ.

They found the princess supported by the empress, and surrounded by many ladies, eager to offer assistance, but evidently injuring her they sought to serve. Mary in the crowd saw only her beloved and suffering parent, and remembered only that which love and duty dictated. Gently but firmly she prevailed on all to leave the room save the empress and another friend; and, by her skill not less than her tenderness, soon succeeded in recalling life to the pallid cheek of the patient, on whom her eyes were fixed with such an intense expression of inquiry, as proved to Theodore (who was standing near the door of the apartment, earnestly gazing on both) that the causes assigned for her mother's indisposition did not suffice to the alarmed daughter. He read, in the mournful expression which succeeded to that of painful surprise, that the fair girl, whose path seemed strewed with roses, had tasted sorrow for another's wo, that her sensibility was as acute as her affections were warm, and that no love of conquest, consciousness of beauty, or even care for appearance, actuated for a moment that pure bosom, now moved by the most holy anxieties and sympathies which can reach a daughter's heart.

While Mary had been attending to her mother by bathing her temples, and releasing her from her necklace, she had relieved her own head from the burden of her costly tiara, and her curling tresses fell in beautiful profusion round her face and upon her shoulders, shading the pale but still beautiful face of her mother, as it now reclined in partial revival on her breast. A few whispered words awoke agitation which dispelled the remaining faintness, for tears now rose to the eyes of the princess, and rolled slowly down her cheek, while answering drops were seen in those of the tender daughter, though she used her utmost efforts to repress them. Theodore felt that he had never seen so beautiful and interesting a picture—never been so sensible of the power of sympathy to attract and endear by virtuous emotion those who were calculated by similar virtues, tastes, and disposition to be the world to each other. He had heard of love, he had read of its emotions, and he could have fancied that even now he experienced them; that a tie of affection, profound in its intense depth, sublime in its unselfish purity, was forming in his heart, uniting him to that fair daughter, and through her to that excellent mother, which would henceforth govern his existence.

Whatever might be the visions of that momentous time, they were rudely banished by the arrival of Menzikoff, who, with an air at once haughty and alarmed, entered to inquire after his lady, and see her safely into the carriage. The empress had returned to her company some minutes before, and he suggested that, if possible, the princess should pay most gratefully the parting compliments of the evening, adding, "Indeed you must do so, for my gracious sovereign has just presented me with the palace of Oranienbaum—the most magnificent gift ever bestowed on a subject."

"Oh! it is too—too much, Alexander."

As the princess spoke, she relapsed into the state from which she had so lately recovered, and it was found necessary to carry her into the air, from whence she was removed to her carriage, and, accompanied by her daughter, proceeded home. When the prince returned to

the apartments, Theodore remarked to him that the Princess Mary had left her tiara on the table.

"That is just like a woman," said he, pettishly; "they are never right without these bawbles, yet utterly neglectful of them when ensured."

"The Princess Mary increased her beauty when she relinquished her jewels," said Theodore, in the tone of a man who is merely soliloquizing; but a thought, thus carelessly expressed, was a compliment from a Dolgourouki. Another courtier, whose ideas were elicited by the words, exclaimed, "And how extremely like your highness the princess looked when her hair was unbound."

Lucky mortal! the day following, his eldest son was made a colonel of dragoons.

But, perhaps, Theodore Dolgourouki was the more fortunate, for he found a small gold chain on the floor, which had fastened the neglected tiara, and which gave him a full right to present himself at the mansion of Menzikoff the day following. The Dolgourouki not unfrequently visited the minister, but it was always by command or request of the empress, a circumstance every branch of the family insisted upon as the means of self-justification. Theodore stood in no need of either: as a gentleman he must return what he had found.

With this resolve and consolation in his mind, he sallied forth, careless whither his footsteps led him, until he arrived on the banks of the Neva, where, like many other persons under strong mental excitement, he found somewhat tranquillizing to his spirit from contemplating the calm surface of the river, and calling up, as if from its placid depths, the images which had so lately occupied and entranced his spirit. He recalled, step by step, his observations on the person, the speech, and the conduct of Mary Menzikoff, and with his ideas of the daughter no recollections of the father were mingled. Every remembrance, whether of looks, words, or actions, showed him only improving yet perfect beauty, highly-cultivated mind, veiled by modest timidity and graceful retiredness, with filial tenderness of the most absorbing and unselfish character. It was evident that she had become not less the friend of her mother's heart, than the child of her affections. Of course a wise man might be proud of his attachment to one so virtuous and enlightened. "Her personal attractions were only secondary in his eyes:" all lovers have this idea of their own discernment. Theodore was full of all good qualities and noble sentiments, but he was only twenty-two—who shall arraign his prudence, or question his right to deceive himself? Has not "Love's young dream" been life's best gift, whatever misery might attend the awakening?

The chain was restored—Mary was beheld in the simplicity of elegant morning costume, and those employments which bespeak mental activity and superior accomplishment. Her singing and music, her knowledge of Italian and German, her taste for drawing, more especially as connected with architecture, towards which her father had particularly directed her attention, were all so many sources of sympathy in their mutual pursuits and mutual admiration of each other's acquirements. Theodore had an estate at Pozeck, which he earnestly desired to improve for the benefit of his serfs; and, as the Princess Menzikoff had been long employed in the same benevolent pursuit, having planted manufactories, extended agricultural knowledge, and been the munificent mother of a grateful people, on a scale of government less important but far more efficient than her husband's, it was but right that he should frequently consult with her on such subjects, and offer all possible plans to her inspection and Mary's observations.

At this time, Menzikoff was too much engaged with his new and magnificent acquisition, to think much on any other subject, when the hours devoted to state affairs were disposed of. That these were well employed no one ever denied, for, being in high health, habituated to business of every description, well read in the designs of men, and not only ambitious of power, but proud of talent, and most happy in the exertion of energy, this remarkable man resembled, in his unfailing industry and comprehensive faculties, the extraordinary prince now seated on the throne of Russia. He was not only the *heart* of all business, but, in his power of attending to details and penetrating affairs, reigned in the *veins* and *arteries* also: while he grasped the highest concerns of the empire with ease, he neglected not the lowest, either from that haughtiness which was his most striking fault, or that self-indulgence which might have become an excusable weakness in one who had already done so much.

It will, however, be evident that such a man spent little time in his wife's boudoir, and that, however proud he might be of his beautiful daughter, he knew, in fact, but little of her character so far as it could be considered to be unfolded. He was blessed at this time with another fair girl, named Ulrica, who was scarcely one year younger than Mary, and an only son of the same age with the Grand Duke Peter. It might have been supposed that this youth would become an object of especial care, and the most lively interest to a father so ambitious; but the fact was, Menzikoff was much too busy a man to take care of his own family, and he well knew the high qualities and devoted attentions of their admirable mother were equal to the task imposed on her, and, although her delicate state of health frequently compelled her to reside at a considerable distance, he was always willing that she should be accompanied by her children, towards whom, however, he never showed any deficiency of affection when they came in his way, and always heard them praised with evident pleasure.

The princess, who in mind and heart was wholly wife and mother, although, in the beginning of her married life, she had been content to accept the glories for the pleasures of existence, yet looked fondly but vainly forward to that period when the husband she still idolized would be somewhat of a domestic companion to herself and her children. She had borne with painful heroism his absences with the army, had rejoiced to partake his cares, and share the grandeur she loved not in foreign countries, but her heart still pined after the tranquil comforts which had so long eluded her, and the present increase of honours and employments—the gift of the palace (which included the fatigues of company, and the cares of hospitality) threw her hopes of domestic happiness and the endearments of connubial and family affection still

farther from her. Hope sickened, and health declined, with the attached wife, in proportion as the fame and fortunes of her ambitious partner were extended; and that state of restless anxiety, of weakness, which is yet strong to suffer, of numerous yet indefinite ailments, which have since then been termed "nervous," became the painful state of her existence.

After this had continued till the round cheek became pale and shrunken, the once brilliant eye dim, and occasionally sightless, a more active enemy seized on the unhappy princess: she believed (and perhaps too truly) that her beloved Alexander had ceased to hold her dear, that ambition swayed his whole heart, and, having long induced neglect, had at length effected indifference. From this belief it was but a step to jealousy; the empress was of her own age, and, therefore, considerably younger than her husband; he had been for twenty years her confidential friend, in youth a generous brother, in more mature life a wise adviser, and at the present moment an unequalled minister. It was by his advice she obtained her husband's rescue at the battle of Pruth, in consequence of which Peter the Great crowned her with his own hands, and dictated the will which gave her the crown she wore. *He* had stood between her and the anger of the Czar when guilty of the folly of meeting the chamberlain on money matters, which cost the wretched man his life, and sent to Siberia the lady who accompanied her. At this very time, by remitting the capitation tax, he had rendered her person adored, and her throne established, and the names of Catherine and Menzikoff resounded together through every cottage in all the Russias. Who should say that a softer sentiment might not spring from gratitude, and the habitual reliance of an amiable nature, rather gentle than firm? And for Menzikoff!—the ambitious and aspiring Menzikoff—how natural was it for him to seek at once a loveable woman and a mighty throne?

"I only (a frail and sinking being) am in the way, and, therefore, am I avoided, perhaps hated," said the stricken one. "Catherine, that Catherine who once hung on my looks, and worshipped the ground I trod on—she, whom I loved so kindly, whose interests I espoused so warmly, receives him daily as an empress, the very character to win a heart so constituted. She knows her own ignorance and insufficiency, and leans on him as a helpless woman. Thus he is seduced alike by the error and the generosity of his nature, and I am abandoned by the friend I loved, and the husband I have blameably adored. Nay, I am murdered—but slowly, alas! very slowly."

Had the agony inflicted by such thoughts been unrelieved by the cares and pleasures of maternity, and uncontrolled by religious submission, probably the end would have been nearer than the sufferer augured; but these unhappy anxieties were blended with others, which, though in themselves painful, ameliorated those which were more acute, and which can only be estimated truly by the wretched wife, who knows *her person scorned, her affections trampled on, and her death desired.* The princess only suspected this misfortune; and, when a few kind words, or a somewhat protracted visit at home reassured her, she then imputed his estrangement to his enlarged cares, the increased number of his enemies, and trembled for the continuance of his prosperity, which included that of his helpless family. Thus she veered from one source of solicitude to another, and in all poor Mary necessarily partook, for she waited upon her as her shadow, and thus obtained a premature maturity of mind, an acuteness of feeling, combined with an exercise of the reflective faculties, which was at once her charm and her misfortune.

Theodore was taught by his own feelings when he saw the gay and the great (more especially gallant foreigners) paying court to Mary, to discover the principal cause of the Princess Menzikoff's uneasiness and consequent weakness; and, believing her doubts to be wholly without foundation, as far as the empress was concerned, and arising partly from her own exceeding modesty, which mistrusted attraction in herself and her husband's ambition and pride, which left room for no other passion or occupation, he sought, by every means he could devise, to restore her confidence in one party, and her friendship for the other. His success made Mary happy, and added positive gratitude to increasing predilection. So delicate had been his applications "to a mind diseased," that she trusted, as did the princess herself, he had not discovered her sufferings, nor suspected her of suspicion; but yet she felt that from him alone she had regained happiness in the point where it had been most shaken, and she spoke of him to Mary as the most amiable and generous of human beings.

The family of Menzikoff had now removed to Oranienbaum, that most magnificent of all the Russian palaces, and it was, of course, less easy to intrude at an early hour into the dressing-room, where the princess and her daughters breakfasted. But a young man on a good horse easily traverses fifteen versts, and Theodore's visits were likely to have continued very frequent, if Prince Baziltch had not taken effectual steps to check the motions of his son.

Every branch of the Dolgourouki heard with scorn and anger of the attention paid by Theodore to Menzikoff's wife and daughter. High as the minister stood, immense as was his wealth, and unbounded as was his influence, to them he was only the ennobled pastry-cook, whom fortune might depress with the same rapidity she had exalted, and to fortune and favour it was their pleasure to attribute his rise: if we except the good field-marshal, who always allowed his merits as a soldier. Hoping, therefore, some day to rejoice in his fall, nothing could be more distasteful to their views than the idea of their future representative stooping to a connexion with his daughter, although the personal merit of that fair girl, and her descent on her mother's side, scarcely could justify her rejection. It might be, indeed, said of the prince, as of a much more lowly parent:

> "Long had he seen their mutual flame,
> And seen it long unmoved,
> But with a father's frown at last
> He sternly disapproved."

It was, however, by no means his policy to assume a high tone on this occasion, important as it was, since a word from the empress, in favour of the minister's daughter, might have decided the matter despite of all the Dolgourouki, to say nothing of Theodore's independence. Happy were they, therefore, to learn that Persia had declared war, and Prince Baziltch was appointed by the empress to conduct the ensuing

campaign, and leave given to appoint his principal officers from his own family.

When this was communicated to Theodore, he was informed "that his own commission was made out, his necessaries provided, and it was desirable that in two hours he should depart with the first detachment of cavalry."

The surprise, the pain, fell on his heart like the stroke of an assassin, and he might be said to reel beneath the blow; but a short time sufficed to show him the true cause of his selection, and also the state of his own heart, which he now found to be irretrievably bound to Mary. He sought earnestly to rally his spirits, and summon to his aid the reason and resolution which ought to govern him in the eyes of others, whatever was its real influence.

"You speak not, Theodore, but, undoubtedly, you rejoice in the occasion given you for distinguishing yourself, though it has come upon you suddenly."

"I grieve, my dear father, that it has come at all, since I certainly shall not accept it. I have no desire for distinction; I prefer being a Russian nobleman, without farther title to carrying a Russian *bâton*, even if given me by the hand of Peter the Great."

"Degenerate boy! do you shrink from your duty to your sovereign? Do you mean to insult her by refusing her favours, and assist the reptiles who surround her in their enmity to your family?"

"I mean no insult to my sovereign, for I honour her virtues, and love her conduct. I will repair immediately to the Presence, and beseech her to transfer her honoured commission to my cousin Ivan, whose situation in life will render it valuable to him; for myself it is not needed; I have won my spurs, and have the means to maintain them."

"Is it possible," cried the prince, impetuously, "that a Dolgourouki should think a single act of courage sufficient for a life? How came it, miserable coward, that for once you dared to be brave? Whence came the fire that could animate you to a solitary proof of manhood? You are silent, sir—have I not a right to question you?—nay, more, a right to command you?"

"I was silent only because I feared trusting myself with an answer, under an accusation so galling as to be generally resented, even where resentment is a crime. I mean no disrespect towards you, sir; neither do I mean to show so much towards myself, as to relinquish a line of conduct which my venerable uncle himself has approved. He bade me avoid the paths of ambition—my principles and my taste declare against it. Why should I do that to which I am disinclined, in order to attain that which I cannot enjoy? Ivan, on the contrary, aspires to it; let him possess it."

"He shall possess more; it is well that my brother has a son, and that I have a nephew. While he is earning fame and fortune, pray how means your philosophical highness to employ your time? Will you raise *pâtés*, or cry them? I should say cry for them, for know, foolish, as recreant boy, the Prince of Ingria will never bestow any child of his on a Dolgourouki—he will not favour whom he fears?"

"I shall go to my property at Pozeck, where I am greatly wanted—it is high time my serfs knew their master."

"Is this your final answer? Am I to understand that you renounce the duties and privileges of a son?"

"I renounce neither; my life, my fortune, my affections, and cares are all devoted to my father, but I cannot enter as a *man* on a career my conscience disapproves, and such would be the course you point out. Once bound to the oar, I should never obtain my freedom; were I successful, you would urge me to pursue good fortune; if the contrary, my misfortunes would induce me to endeavour to retrieve them. I have earned my freedom, and I desire to enjoy it."

"You forget the empress—she may say something to your freedom."*

"The empress may send me to Siberia, but she cannot send me to Persia. She may disgrace herself by banishing a faithful and useful subject, but she shall not disgrace me by imposing a task I decline. I am too true a son of the 'strong hand,' to be compelled to that I disapprove."

"You are right, Theodore," said the old field-marshal; "nevertheless, I marvel that you have the power to persist in your resolution: some additional motive must be influencing you besides preference for a tranquil life, for when did youth desire tranquillity, or despise glory?—but, perhaps, I had better not inquire too curiously; at all events, it is right you should go to Pozeck."

Theodore was glad to retire, for his heart throbbed tumultuously, and he desired to control his emotions, and even to examine his desires in retirement. But why should he doubt the true cause of his late decision? Did not Mary fill every avenue of his heart?—was not her image ever present to his mind?—had not the dread of parting with her been the source of a resolution, which he ascribed to settled sentiments, and long-formed systems? Every fibre in his bosom answered "Yes!"

Yet Theodore had as much objection to being refused by Menzikoff, as the proudest of his family could desire; and, fully believing that his father had good reason for the words he had uttered, he determined not to risk his present happy position with Mary, by a declaration that might place him in the light of a dismissed lover; and his fears of every kind being awakened, he saw that it might be desirable that he should remove into the country, lest the empress should desire to bestow on him some bride, it would be painful to refuse, but impossible to accept. The very pride of Menzikoff would, as he thought, be the preservation of his daughter to *him*, since he knew that within his own short acquaintance two unexceptionable lovers had been dismissed without hesitation by the father, without reference to Mary's wishes, though evidently to her satisfaction. His high respect for the Princess Menzikoff, his sympathy with her feelings, and ardent desire for her felicity, made him determined to abide by her decision in all that related to the prince, her husband; but he could not persuade himself to renounce the presence of Mary till he had ascertained her sentiments respecting himself and his love. Scarcely could he doubt; for her integrity, not less than her open, ingenuous nature, had told him to hope, and she was incapable of deception or caprice; but who could deny himself the bliss of hearing he was beloved from such a girl as Mary?

* Theodore did not understand the laws of his country, which oblige every noble to serve at the will of the crown.

CHAPTER III.

Deep and troubled thought fell like a veil over the countenance of the princess, when the fond lover revealed to her his wishes and his fears, and with few omissions related the conversation which had taken place with his father. She had long read the state of these young hearts, which were an open page to the eye of experience and love; and, at one time, had feared evil consequences might arise from their attachment; but yet it had appeared to her so desirable a union in itself, so well calculated to consolidate power to all parties concerned, to heal all differences, and increase all solid benefits, that she could not bear to resign the hopes it had awakened.

Menzikoff's apparent inattention to the subject had led her to suppose he had no objection to a visitant whom he might be said tacitly to encourage, especially when successive suiters were dismissed; but she ought to have remembered that he had been, of late, incessantly engaged; that he had no idea of any one opposing his wishes, or even harbouring an inclination unsanctioned by his permission. She had heard him repeatedly say he wished his son to resemble Theodore Dolgourouki; and since he had seen the handsome stranger frequently speaking to Alexander of subjects connected with his own travels or the youth's studies, apprehended that his approbation extended to desiring connexion of the strongest kind with one so amiable, although he was a Dolgourouki.

Seeing that the old leaven of hatred was not extinguished on one side, she now feared that it remained in full force on the other; and, dreading the consequences, now it was too late, she would have persuaded Theodore to bury his feelings in silence for the present; and in his retirement so to chasten his hopes and subdue his wishes, that he should conquer his passion, trusting that, by prudent management, she might effect the same consequence to her daughter, whose extreme youth and situation, as one surrounded by splendour and gayety, were likely to aid her wishes.

To this scheme the lover could not be brought to consent for a moment; he promised to be guided by her counsel for the future, but the present must throw him at the feet of Mary, to whom he devoted himself with the tenderness of a lover, and the zeal of a martyr; having a sense of being environed with difficulties, it would take many years and many sacrifices to remove, but which, he doubted not, would yield to energy and patience, to courage and endurance.

Mary, rejoicing yet trembling, in the full satisfaction of a confiding heart, and the modest dignity of a noble and gentle nature, blushingly confessed her love, and would have promised constancy till death, and even through eternity, had not the anxious mother checked her by appealing even to Theodore himself on the subject of a daughter's obedience. "Whoever," said she, "heard that a Russian noble's daughter resisted the will of her father, the commands of her sovereign? Should both be exerted (and, alas! there is a great probability both may), what would become of Mary?"

"Mother!" cried the gentle girl, clasping her hands, and raising her beautiful eyes to heaven, "mother! your Mary could die."

"No, Mary, you could not; neither by open suicide, nor by slow, wasting grief, and determinate sorrow (the self-destruction of dastard spirits), could you, the well-instructed daughter of a Christian mother, dare to quit the field of duty; *your* religion is not that of forms and fasts, of gaudy vestments and idle ceremonies; it is that of the Bible, and the faith it teaches."

"That of the Lutheran Church, my own blessed faith!" cried Theodore, eagerly.

"Even so, my son," said the princess; "you undoubtedly gained it in Germany, its glorious cradle. I have been instructed by Brukenthal, a Lutheran minister, pious and enlightened—the friend, and often the reprover, of my husband. If, indeed, you are of our church, Theodore, what is the command it lays upon your heart at this awful and eventful moment?"

"To give Mary, my beloved, my affianced Mary, the liberty of which I deprive myself, for she may be bound as I cannot be: like you, I declare, in case of the worst, it is her duty to suffer, but not die; and so entire is my faith in her love and her virtue, that I protest, before high Heaven, I can repose on her honour and affection, rejoice in the entirety of her love and the purity of her heart, even if (which may God in mercy forbid!) she is consigned, by her unrelenting father, to the arms of another."

"My father, my dear, *dear* father, is not of an unrelenting nature; he may be proud and exacting; he may compel obedience in trifling matters, but he will never break my heart, never force me to the falsity of perjury; and, dear Theodore, I will now swear—awful as it is—I will swear that—"

"Never, *never* will I hear you swear; for I know your heart, my Mary, as I share your faith; it is the most sacred, the most endearing bond between us; and, happily, our good empress secretly partakes it. The precepts of Gluck are still the ruling laws of her existence, though she shares in the forms of the national establishment. No, my beloved, I will burden you with no promise; for what end could it answer? Woman, in no country a free agent, in Russia is a fettered slave—bound by custom and riveted by law to implicit obedience, and forbidden even the asylum of a convent, until that period of life when the grave promises a surer."

As Theodore spoke his voice became husky, his cheek pallid, and tears were in his eyes: he appeared to labour, not only under the pain of parting, for the present, but with sad anticipations for the future; nevertheless, when he had arranged a plan of correspondence, both the young lovers grasped the pleasures it offered as a source of consolation, to which was also added to Theodore the power of visiting a mansion in the neighbourhood of his own, where the governess of Mary still resided, and her portrait adorned the walls; where she was remembered in every cottage, and might be talked of by every serf, circumstances of infinite importance to a lover so situated.

When Theodore had bade them adieu under these circumstances, both mother and daughter were too conscious of their interest in him to speak as they were wont of his casual visit to Menzikoff; and their first notice of his actual removal was given from the prince, observing, to his friend Count Sapicha:

"So it is really true that Prince Theodore is going to exhibit the rare character of a patriotic sovereign on a small scale, and has had the

courage to renounce the ambitious views of his family for him. He has actually set out for Pozeck, determined to improve his castle, cultivate his estates, educate his peasantry—some say eventually free them; it is a noble scheme, but the philosopher is very young. I have a notion he will spend more time at Moscow than Pozeck."

"To render this scheme effective for good purposes, he should have taken a wife with him. Women see farther into the politics of cottages than men; how much was effected by the princess when you were far away!"

Mary felt that she blushed to very pain as old Sapicha said this; but how was that confusion and distress increased, when she saw that her father's eyes were upon her, though he replied to the observation.

"Theodore is a romantic young man, of course; and, as a Dolgourouki, he must inevitably be a proud one; it may not be easy to reconcile sentiments opposing each other. With all his love of the country, and his pity for the poor, depend upon it, he will not give his title to a rustic beauty."

"That I grant, for he would require knowledge and taste in a wife, and could undoubtedly procure them. There is not a father in all the Russias—and you may throw Poland and Germany into the bargain—who would refuse his daughter to the young conqueror of Dagesthan; at least, I know not one."

"But *I* do," said Menzikoff, dryly.

The princess, grieved for Mary, hastily taking her arm, left the room: when alone, they alike felt certain that their wishes were read, their secret penetrated, and that Menzikoff, though evidently free from personal objection, and apparently not moved by anger, would, from the pure desire of mortifying and insulting the Dolgourouki, refuse their relation as a son-in-law; and most sincerely did they alike hope that no such circumstance should take place to the offence and enmity of that powerful family, who, in their constant support of each other, had generally proved successful rivals, sooner or later, to all who opposed them.

That this spirit of union still subsisted, has been lately evinced by the honourable conduct of Ivan towards his cousin Theodore. When Prince Baziltch found that his son persisted in refusing to accompany him, he not only declared Ivan his heir, but would have made certain legal dispositions of his property to that effect, if the young man had not, with great generosity of character, absolutely refused to accept them.

In doing this, Ivan proved "there is a soul of goodness in things evil;" for he was alike covetous of wealth and power, but he loved the noble boy who had reposed on him in infancy as an elder brother; and, by forbearing to mingle in the strife for honours, had bound him to his breast forever. Ivan could not believe that one so young and gifted could be otherwise than enterprising and ambitious. He believed that, in his affection for him, Theodore left the field open, in which he rejoiced the more, because he knew himself unscrupulous, cunning, and vindictive; whereas Theodore was none of these, therefore less likely to aggrandize his family, with whose present station he felt perfectly satisfied.

Mary was, at length, happy in receiving a letter from Theodore: what an epoch in the early life of woman! Who among us does not remember every circumstance, almost every sensation, which belonged to that eventful boon—the first letter of the first beloved one? Mary, much as each revolving day increased her fears for the future, and told her their parting must be final, received this messenger of love with transport, and felt, for a time, as if it had given her present happiness and future promise. She read an account of Theodore's visit to Madame de Rocales; his delight in conversing with one who knew and loved her; the interest with which Roneburg inspired him, and his determination to examine every path where *she* had walked, every tree *she* had gazed at, and be good to all whom *she* had valued or pitied. As with glowing cheek and eager eye she pursued the lines his hand had formed, she became sensible to the thoughts which had actuated his bosom. While he thus addressed her, she felt as if they had been already irrevocably united, as if it were not in fate to divide two persons with one soul; and such appeared the actual state of herself and her lover.

When this dear missive had been submitted to her mother, this sense of union rather increased than diminished; for the words "poor creatures! they were formed for each other," passed the lips of the princess unconsciously; and, although she afterward deprecated the tone of fond flattery in which, she said, Theodore, like all young lovers, indulged, she could not eradicate the impression she had assisted in giving. "It may be long before we are united; perhaps we may never be married, but neither shall we ever be essentially parted; our union has taken place—it will be eternal."

Such was the language of poor Mary's heart, and she replied in the way such sentiments inspired. Free from guile, and conscious of innocence, she prattled with the freedom of girlhood, and the ability of matured observation; for every circumstance of her life, more especially that of her attachment, tended to the development of her character and her faculties. She learned to foresee difficulties, to combine probabilities, to penetrate character, and reason on circumstances; yet beheld them under that silvery veil which innate benevolence throws over the actions of all.

Mary loved her father, though she feared him also, and knew that pride was his besetting sin; yet she held it to be his only fault, and felt sure that he was free from cruelty; therefore, could never be insensible to the happiness of his daughter; but to this view of Menzikoff Theodore could never agree, much as he was willing to accede to Mary's love of her father; and he candidly owned that he durst allow himself no hope of the future, so far as he was concerned.

"If," said he, "a change in his affairs should take place; if he lost the confidence of the empress, fell under suspicion as to the ministration of affairs, or the success of the war, he might be humbled, and listen to reason; but, so long as he is in prosperity and boundless power, he will be regardless of domestic happiness and filial ties, and would subject *you* to misery for the pleasure of trampling on *me*."

Mary could not believe this, but she had seen her mother weep too often for the exercise of his power over others, and negligence of herself, to be able to clear him from the charge of cruelty. She well knew that, although he was

capable of generosity and magnanimity, he was vindictive to fury, and capable of revenge for petty injury. Though he had gladly assisted the wishes of the empress in recalling many from banishment, who had been condemned by the ferocity of Peter, in his perverse moods, to that *living death*, he had also induced her to punish others in the same terrible manner, for having dared to ridicule his ostentation. She knew that her mother had frequently lamented the fate of Telstoi, of whose death she continually expected to hear, and for whom she had in vain besought recall; it was, therefore, but too probable that Theodore was right, and she might, one day, be sacrificed less to her father's ambition than to some baser passion; yet how these passions could be awakened she knew not.

As Mary thought on these things, day after day, her cheek grew pale, her lips were parched, tears frequently started to her eyes, and her health was evidently declining. New to these sensations, she believed herself to be verging to decline, and became impatient to see Theodore again, if but to bid him an eternal adieu; and, in one of those melting moods, to which all lovers are prone, she revealed her wishes and her fears.

Scarcely had the courier delivered this epistle, when Theodore was on his way to Petersburgh, where he arrived with only a single attendant. As soon as it was possible, but, fearful of occasioning any increase of disorder to Mary, he contented himself with despatching news of his arrival to the princess, and entreating her to contrive for him a private interview. On that very evening, the prince dined with his family at Oranienbaum, and, when the servants had withdrawn, thus addressed his lady:

"I have remarked, for some time, that Mary has looked very poorly, but apprehended that anxiety for you was the sole occasion. I now begin to fear Oranienbaum does not suit her health, as being too near the sea, and I wish her to try the air of Roneburg."

For a moment her eyes sparkled with delight, for the name of Roneburg was dear to her; but the recollection of Theodore's present situation as instantly checked her, and she felt unable to speak; the princess, however, readily replied that, "in a week or two, if Mary was no better, it would be desirable to change the air."

"She shall go to-morrow morning early," was the reply; "I shall order her carriage and her attendants; Madame de Rocales will soon restore her—she is a true friend and a skilful nurse."

"Mary is very valuable to me in my present situation, Alexander," said the princess, in a pleading voice—for the circumstance of her being at this time pregnant, after an interval of many years, had caused her husband to evince more of tenderness towards her than he had exhibited for a long time—he now, however, answered in a determined tone,

"There is the more occasion that she should go, as, perhaps, you may unintentionally be injurious to her; and Ulrica is of an age to be a companion, and supply her place to you. Mary must be taken care of; her health and her beauty are necessary to her father."

What the latter part of this mysterious speech implied was not known to his auditors; but they all knew that his will must be obeyed; and that which had lately been uneasiness in the breast of Mary now became wretchedness, since it was impossible to inform Theodore of her removal, or mitigate the misery he was at this time experiencing. So short was the time given for her preparations, that she found it impossible to obtain even a *téte-ä-téte* with that dear mother, whose fears were awakened more than ever for her health, because she thought the prince would not have shown so much anxiety, if Mary had not been worse than she apprehended.

Theodore, however, soon became apprized of her flight, and from a quarter which Menzikoff could not suspect. He had learned, from his great uncle, that, by the laws* of Russia, the sovereign could compel all noblemen to serve in the wars, and that his own had been an idle boast, when he said "the empress might send him to Siberia, but she should not send him to Persia." His long residence in a free country had made him lose sight of this and many other peculiarities in the situation of his native land, but, feeling due respect for her laws a duty, and, also, that his own situation was peculiar, in having adopted independence and disclaimed servility, he determined immediately to pay his respects to the empress, and trust to her former feelings of kindness towards him for procuring an audience.

Count Betschikeff was the only person in attendance on the empress, and he was in the confidence of Ivan Dolgourouki, and ever ready to forward the welfare of the family. Theodore was, therefore, received immediately, and welcomed so cordially, that, if error had been charged upon him, he could not doubt that it was forgiven; but it now struck him that the empress had never desired that he should accompany his father in any particular manner; which was, indeed, the case.

"I thought," said Catherine, with her usual benignant smile, "you would not stay long enough on your estate to do the good which the count here tells me you intended; like most other young men, you find plans much easier to make than to carry into effect. Is not your mansion near Roneburg, where Prince Menzikoff has a pretty place?"

"It is within a little distance; and the great good done by the princess during her times of occasional residence there, animates me with the desire of making my estate resemble Roneburg."

"I wish you success with all my heart. I think it is the very best thing you can do. Mary Menzikoff is on her way this very morning to that place for the benefit of the air. Have you then, indeed, the resolution to live in the country?—to build manufactories?—to help my poor serfs?"

"With your majesty's permission, I hope soon to prove that I am capable of fulfilling my own intentions of contributing an individual's share to the benefit of the community; my business in the metropolis will not detain me long from my duties."

"Go when or where you may, Prince Theodore, you will have our good wishes; and should you be tempted again to travel for the beneficial purposes you pursue, you have no less our full permission. Count Betschikeff will see all necessary forms for this purpose complied with."

* In the reign of Catherine II. this law was abolished, as also that which compelled a nobleman to ask of his sovereign permission to travel.

It will be readily supposed that Theodore lost little time in retracing his footsteps, and that Menzikoff, though, like monarchs, he had long arms and far-seeing eyes, had failed in securing his daughter from her anxious lover. That lover, the most ingenuous of human beings, at once flew after his beloved with the ardour of joy and the shame of self-reproach, for he felt conscious of having, to a certain degree, equivocated, and conveyed a false conception of his wishes and intentions. Love! imperious love excused all, justified all; wherever its empire, its paramount though generous emotions may be felt and acted upon, yet self will, on the whole, predominate.

If ever man had an excuse for thus pursuing that "course of love which never did run smooth," it was Theodore Dolgourouki; he was, to say the least, Mary Menzikoff's equal in rank and fortune, since there was in his station a permanency which could scarcely be allowed to hers. His private character was spotless, his personal qualities extraordinary; he enjoyed, like her, the favour of his sovereign, and he had already seen many admirers dismissed, which proved that the prince was in no hurry to marry his daughter, and was unconscious of her having any predilection. Reason could not justify the prince's refusal; and most men in high station affect to be ruled by her dictates, and, in proportion as their actions come before mankind, are jealous of their characters; but pride may rise to a point where it scorns all interference, and tramples on all opinion. No one was more likely than Menzikoff to affect this mode of resembling his great master.

All present sorrows and future fears were forgotten when, in the avenues surrounding Roneburg, Mary saw Theodore bounding towards her, and heard her own name pronounced in that tone of deep and thrilling delight peculiar to the lover's tongue. It appeared, indeed, as if health itself was in his gift, for soon was her eye relumed, her step elastic; her cheek glowed with the tints of the wild rose, and she could walk untired beside him, while the good governess panted far behind, or, seated on a garden-chair, was contented to keep her eye upon their devious movements, without joining in their conversation.

When the first congratulations on their meeting were past, and the fond fears of the lover reassured, Theodore related to Mary all that he had done and meant to do respecting his people, eager to obtain her approbation and her opinion also, since she knew more of the habits and the abilities of the people of the country than he could do after living so long with the Germans.

It may be supposed that Mary, who, as a child, had sat many an hour on the knee of Peter the Great, as he talked over affairs of the utmost importance with her father, neither frightened by the convulsive contortions of his countenance, nor wearied by his plans and conjectures, though often distressed by his denunciations, could listen with great interest to the benevolent schemes with which his mind was filled, and recall for his guidance the conduct of her mother on many an important occasion, where forbearance and patience were necessary, in order to make charity capable of effecting its object. Every advice, every anecdote she related, proved not only the tenderness of her heart, the comprehensive beneficence of her desires, but the soundness of her judgment, and its habitual exercise on subjects of importance and utility; and, despite of his prejudices, Theodore confessed that Menzikoff had given his daughter many a lesson that might be valuable in the life of a woman born to greatness.

CHAPTER IV.

It was happy for the Russian lovers that they were four hundred versts from St. Petersburgh —that they were the only people of rank in the neighbourhood of each other; and, above all, that there were neither telltale newspapers, mailcoaches, steamers, nor railways concerned with those. No elegantly-turned paragraph, with apparent charity and real malignity, informed the prime minister that "the short summer of Russia was every day smiling on his fair daughter and an unknown but gallant cavalier, and that every day found them more loth to part."

The time came, however, and, as it appeared, with rapid and ill-omened approach, when Mary was informed by a courier that she must return the beginning of the following week; for, as it had been faithfully told that "her health had recovered rapidly," in order to render her dear mother easy, both parents alike desired to see her before the approach of winter should subject her to delay, or injure her by cold. To wait until the winter set in, although, in fact, the best time for travelling, was in her case out of the question.

When Theodore heard this mandate, he appeared so struck by a petrifying sense of misery, that Mary was not only grieved but terrified, and she led him by the hand, as one paralyzed by age, to the alcove, where Madame de Rocales awaited them. Her tears recalled Theodore to himself, and he instantly began to speak, though for the first time, on a subject which had, in fact, occupied all his waking hours since his return to Pozeck.

"Mary, permit me to say our love is mutual: your sense of it may be less ardent and overwhelming than that which agitates my breast, because your mother justly divides you with me, but it is as sincere, as tender, as my own. You can no more be happy without me (gratefully and proudly I thank you for this predilection), than I can cease to be miserable without you."

"I grant it, dear Theodore; but why enhance the pangs of parting by depicting that attachment, which is at once so dear and so afflictive?"

"That we may avoid the suffering before us —a suffering neither of us can sustain. For myself—it is madness and death but to think of it!—to you, it will be the return of every evil symptom. In short, we are doomed to the conduct we must pursue, which is, to fly hence—to be married at the first place where we take shelter—to live in happy obscurity until all differences have subsided between our fathers, and—"

"Theodore," said Mary, mournfully, "this is not fulfilling your promise to my mother—it is not waiting till better times."

"For us there are no better times in prospect, and worse times daily menace us. I have letters as well as you; my friend tells me 'a reigning German prince is domiciled with the Prince of Ingria at Oranienbaum, and no one knows

his errand to Russia.' Alas! I know it too well—he is about to give this petty monarch his daughter's hand; he sent you here to renew your health, that you might be strong to suffer; to increase your beauty, that you might be irresistible in your charms. Unhappy lamb! thou art fattened for the slaughter!"

Overpowered with the dreadful images awakened in his mind, poor Theodore flung himself on a seat, and hid his face with his hands, while Mary stood before him the image of despair. Madame de Rocales was dissolved in tears; she could only sob forth, "My children! my poor children!"

This grief, on her part, gave Mary the idea that she also had heard of this prince, and believed in the truth of Theodore's assertion from some positive information on the subject. Were she indeed about to be thus sacrificed, she felt determined to fly that very night, being assured that her mother would suffer less from her elopement, than from witnessing her marriage with a stranger whom she must eternally loathe, as the destroyer of her happiness. Yet, even in this case, a terrible repugnance arose in her mind to a scheme so wild and unmaidenly, and hastily turning to her governess, she exclaimed:

"Tell me, dear, dear madame, all you know, all you have heard respecting this hateful man, this German prince!"

"I have heard nothing, I know nothing, save what you know also. I weep not on his account, but because of your sad situation in parting with this amiable prince; it brings back the sorrows of my youth."

"Enough! my father will not, shall not, sacrifice me to any man, and it is my duty to go to my mother."

"You know not of what he is capable, where ambition is his object," cried Theodore, starting to his feet; "every circumstance combines to favour the idea of his intending you for the wife of a sovereign; for this purpose he refused you to the son of his friend Count Saphica; a fact I know from the young count, who is my friend, and told me he had also refused the son of the Chancellor Rosamouzky. He has educated you to assist the counsels of a sovereign."

"Would that he were content with a *sovereign* hand!" said Mary, musing.

"That hand he abhors; despise it he cannot," said Theodore, proudly: "and surely he must think a Prince of Dolgourouki equal to a petty ruler in a narrow province."

"I doubt not that he does, Theodore; and I am certain he will not, at this time, compel me to anything that by wounding me might be injurious to my dear mother."

"He is not wont to be too careful of her, Mary."

"Then I am the more called upon for watchful tenderness. You know not her situation, Theodore; she is again likely to become a mother; she suffers much, and is subject to temporary loss of sight. Oh! how could I, even for a moment, think of leaving so good a mother at such a time as this!"

Theodore started, and became pale as ashes while Mary spoke; then, taking both her hands in his, he cried, with great emotion,

"Forgive me, dearest Mary! I see clearly you cannot, ought not to comply with my wishes. I love and honour your mother more than words can express, and should never know peace again if I were the cause of injury to her: nor do I doubt that your father will indeed, at this time, listen to your pleadings. Prince Menzikoff is a man, not a monster."

"Oh! a good man, a great man—one who loves his children, and must love his angel-wife," cried madame; "think not hardly of him, Prince Theodore, for he has many virtues."

"*Hardly!* Madame de Rocales, you little know how I could love and honour him, if he would allow me. With what zeal I could follow out his patriotic views, with what goodwill oppose his enemies!—how gently I could seek to wean him from the ambition which will consume him, and lead him to permanent happiness, true friendship, and solid virtues!—why will he spurn me?"

"He does not do that; he has not refused you his daughter."

"Think you he would not do it?" cried Theodore, eagerly: "speak, dear lady; you know him well. Think you he would give me Mary? I would beg for her, even on my knees, if I might hope."

"I must not deceive you; I dare not encourage you. Be well informed as to his inclinations ere you inflict such a wound on your own love and the pride of your family, as to receive a refusal from one you all have looked on with most blameable contempt."

"It is ever thus," said Theodore, after a long pause; "and, though I resign all claim on you now, dear Mary, I foresee there will be only one medium by which I can ever hope to be united. The present circumstances of your family are my consolation; but my patience shall not relax my vigilance in preparing for the future. Much as I love my people, and seek their happiness; decidedly as I prefer my native land to all others, for that it is my native land, the land that gave birth to my mother and you, my Mary, still I can fly with you to the ends of the earth, and shall place all my affairs in train for that purpose."

"I thank your love," said Mary, with a deep sigh; "and fain would I hope for better things than the dire necessity of flying my country, abjuring my situation, my father's house, and my fair fame: let not our last moments be darkened by anything so dreadful! My father's pride must not be humbled by his daughter's weakness; my mother's child should be an example to her sister."

Theodore would have soothed the weeping girl by exclaiming against all thought of such degradation, if any alternative remained, and by insisting that a mother who so well performed all the duties of a wife, and so justly appreciated the value of connubial affection, would greatly prefer knowing her the wife of the man she loved, even in a state of exile, to witnessing her misery with another. To this Mary gave a full consent, and she owned likewise her power of braving all difficulties, and enduring even to be evil spoken of with Theodore, rather than wholly renouncing him, which seemed a thing altogether impossible. In proportion to the happiness she had lately enjoyed, was the misery she now experienced; and Theodore found himself obliged to abandon all claims, all complaints to the stricken and sinking girl, who believed herself, at this time, the most wretched and forlorn of human beings.

How often, in after life, did she look back upon the very sorrow of this parting scene with envy. The *beloved* are never the entirely miserable; to have a sure resting-place in one good heart is a cordial that will sustain us through many sufferings.

CHAPTER V.

The first day of Mary's journey homeward was consoled by the company of Madame de Rocales, after which she had no other companion than the maid who had accompanied her, and who, being ignorant of her cause for sorrow, offered a reason for concealing or restraining it. She was convinced, though no words had passed on the subject, that she was under the protection of Theodore; and that, like a guardian spirit, he hovered near her, to obviate all difficulties and secure her from all injuries; and this sense of his vicinity, at times, afforded her the sweetest reliance on his love, the most decided pleasure in his virtue, and approbation of his prudence; but there were others, in which an intolerable desire to see him once more, if but for an hour, a minute, to speak one word, to exchange one look only, was afflictive to her, and she felt willing to brave every danger to obtain this pleasure, transitory as it must be.

When she arrived within fifty versts of the metropolis, and every circumstance combined to render the remainder of her journey easy, a letter was put into her hands, at one of the post-houses, which had the appearance of a petition, but which she instantly knew to be the farewell of her invisible guardian. Though mournful, it was yet consolatory, not less than dear, and was a cordial to her heart for the rest of her journey, although the writer declared "that such was his sense of overwhelming sorrow, he thought it not improbable that in a short time he should set out for Germany, in order to divert his mind, and also to free them both from any suspicion the Prince Menzikoff might feel, or hereafter be inspired with; and he besought her to write to him under cover to Madame de Rocales, and give him her opinion and wishes on the subject."

On nearly reaching home, Mary once more felt that she was yet a daughter and a sister; and with feelings of mingled shame and sorrow, inwardly inveighed against herself, for having been so long and so completely absorbed by her love for Theodore, that she had comparatively forgotten the duty, the gratitude, and tenderness, due to a mother so excellent, and, hitherto, so inexpressibly dear. Anxiously and penitently did she lift up her heart to God, and pray that she might be enabled, by increased attention and self-control, to fulfil her own ideas of the care due to her mother, the submission and obedience her father had a right to exact, but she did not the less fondly cling to Theodore as the very life of her life, the source from whence all her happiness must spring.

It is unnecessary to say with what joy she was received by the princess, whom she found seated with her brother and sister only, for the German prince had departed before she had heard his name, and it now appeared that he was a young married man, neither likely to ask her for himself nor another, so that all apprehension on this account was speedily banished, and she trusted that, by this time, young Sapicha was sufficiently informed to relieve the mind of Theodore.

When she first saw her father, Mary blushed excessively, and he received her with many encomiums on her appearance; but, as her colour declined, appeared dissatisfied, until the princess said "that she was convinced that the journey had been of essential use to her on the whole, though she now suffered from fatigue, and might be some days before she recovered the effects of travel."

"It is of consequence she should not only be well, but look well," was the father's reply, uttered not with the feelings of a parent so much as the solicitude of a diplomatist, negotiating some scheme of policy; and the alarm which had subsided again returned to disturb the placidity Mary was endeavouring to establish in her bosom, despite of those sweet memories which were now painfully regretted.

"Mary," said her mother, when they were alone, "you have been in company with Theodore; I read it in your blushes when addressing your father."

"Never, but when dear Madame Rocales was present."

"And you love him more than ever?"

"I confess it fully, my mother. Nay, I cannot be happy till I have told you that Theodore, hurried away by his fears for the future, and his belief that my father will dispose of my hand without regard for my inclinations, wished me to fly with him. Mother! look not at me so strangely—I am here at your feet."

"Whither could you have flown? what was his plan?"

"He wished my good governess to go with me to Poland, where he could meet us, and after our marriage proceed with me to the Tyrol, where we could dwell in security among a simple people, ignorant of our rank, and to whom the degree of wealth he could extract from his estates would be valuable. He planned a life of virtue and happiness for us, which you would have approved, and of which you might have been informed after a season."

"Virtue and happiness! words fascinating and false. There is no virtue, Mary, in following the dictates of a selfish passion, no happiness in abandoning the duties of life; and more especially would Theodore Dolgourouki have found reason to regret such a weakness, because he has a proper sense of his situation as a Russian noble and an accountable being. Alas! I grieve to think how much he had forgotten himself and his situation, when he thus thought of deserting his own duties, to say nothing of yours."

"Forgive him, dear mother—on my knees I beseech you to forgive him—you have said, and you have taught me to know, that every human being is weak and fallible; that all need a Redeemer for the past, and a Divine assistant for the present. If Theodore tempted your Mary (and that she felt herself tempted she humbly confesses and deplores), yet the moment, yes! the moment he knew your situation, he not only desisted from his suit, but declared it was my duty to consider you and you alone—nay, he resigned me willingly, saying, that for the present I was safe, as Prince Menzikoff would not press anything in his family which could possibly

grieve and annoy the princess, at such a time as this."

"Poor Theodore! would to God he were thy husband, my child, for never yet have I known that man not make a good one who had a high sense of the duties of a mother, and deep tenderness for the sufferings and anxieties attached to the situation. Dear Theodore, I thank you for restoring me my child, but it is certain I should have forgiven you, if—but no! it is far better, far wiser, that you should remain and struggle with your fate—both are young, and a long life is before you; the union that closes suffering is much more desirable than that which begins it."

The princess muttered rather than spoke these words to herself, but Mary caught enough of them to see that although her mother thought it right to speak against clandestine marriage, and probably saw much disgrace and misery in its probable issue, yet in her own secret soul she could have rejoiced in Mary's escape with one she loved and confided in like Theodore. Still it was evident they had done right to renounce the temptation lately offered, for any surprise might have been fatal to one so delicate; and neither love nor fortune, in after life, could have atoned to Mary for the agonizing recollections that must have attended any injury given to such a mother.

The true cause of the young princess's recall had been a desire that she should appear in the place of her mother, on the occasion of a solemn ceremony, which was intended to take place on the anniversary of Peter the Great's decease, in the ensuing January, at which time the Princess Menzikoff would be unable to attend, or be liable to feel more than a person so circumstanced ought to do. It was also thought, by Menzikoff, desirable that his daughter should be frequently with the empress, for he now knew that he had many enemies, though he could not specify them in those who surrounded her, and he had some of a higher grade, who were at this time openly blaming him, more especially the Duchess of Courland.

This great personage accused him of having disposed of certain estates in Lithuania, to which she laid claim, and had induced Count Devrier (who had married the sister of Menzikoff) to espouse her cause, and bring it before the Czarina in such a manner as to prejudice so simple and upright-minded a judge especially against him. As it was well known that Menzikoff hated Devrier (and only gave him his sister at the positive command of the late emperor), no doubt was entertained by many that a man who had often quailed before a relation that never forgave him would so represent the matter as to tell much against Menzikoff, and might go hard to rob him of much power and considerable wealth, since restitution would undoubtedly follow condemnation. Some prophesied that the day which mourned the death of the master would see the downfall of his favourite; that the empress was too just to admit of the escape of an eminent peculator, having herself been nearly a victim through the wiles of Mons,* who was beheaded for his crime, and although it was not likely punishment should go to such an extent where a constant friend and most vigilant minister was the party, degradation (the death-warrant of the proud and the great) might be reckoned on.

Menzikoff knew perfectly well that he had never applied a single rood of these estates to his own benefit; but that, considering them the property of the country, he had used them either as rewards to meritorious valour, or caused them to be cultivated as the means of subsistence to resident serfs, who were unclaimed by any lord at the time. Of course the value of the land and the population was greatly increased, and the future owner of this portion must be indebted to the government for its improvement, whereas, this circumstance had been the very reason the eyes of desire had been thrown upon it, with an intention of rendering Menzikoff a personal debtor for the income it had produced during the years it had been unclaimed.

When the time arrived that the matter, in all its bearings, came before the empress, who exceedingly disliked all business, but could not, on this occasion, make Menzikoff a judge in his own cause, to the great surprise of Count Devrier, with the simplicity of good sense, she acceded to the claims of the duchess for the land, saying, "she must herself find an equivalent for those who might suffer from the removal;" and added, "the duchess should have the waste also, if she paid the expenses upon it. Great thanks were due to Prince Menzikoff for rendering a barren tract productive, let who might be the owner. As the money had gone out of her treasury to cultivate the lands of the duchess, so it must return thither, and enable her to help her own subjects."

It is said that "justice satisfies every one," and those who were not concerned saw clearly that the empress had done right, and that Menzikoff had only acted with his usual vigilance on behalf of his royal mistress in improving land which remained unclaimed so long as it was unproductive. No one (about court, at least) said anything respecting the starving families thus rescued from destruction (among whom artificers of great merit had arisen, by whom important manufactories had been introduced), an omission Mary thought so strange, and, in fact, unfair to her father, that she could not help noticing it to the empress when she was one day patriotically, rather than generously, hoping "that the duchess would never raise the money necessary for the purpose of reuniting this disputed slip of ground to the duchy of Courland.

"It would be strange anywhere else, I dare say, Mary," she replied, "but here it is quite natural, because they believe the serfs were created for their pleasure and emolument, and ought to live or die, pine or prosper, just as far, but no farther, than may suit their pleasure and convenience. I don't believe it ever entered their heads that God made them, much less that Christ died for them; and that they are to stand by their own sides for equal judgment

* Mons confessed to corruption on being threatened with torture. He was beheaded; his sister, Madame Balke, received five strokes of the knout, and was banished to Siberia. On the day subsequent to the execution of the sentence, Peter conveyed Catherine in an open carriage under the gallows to which was nailed the head of Mons. The empress, without changing colour at this dreadful sight, exclaimed, "What a pity it is that there is so much corruption among courtiers!" After reading this, who can suppose that she could be herself confederate with the chancellor for nefarious purposes? She was only the tool of one who became a victim to his own vices.

at the great day. These are the very points I wish them so much to know, as I have told Czar Peter a thousand times. A dozen Theodore Dolgouroukis would do more good to Russia than the finest army and navy in the world: we want good laws and good men, more than everything besides."

To hear Theodore thus named was music to Mary's ears; and though she turned her head aside, fearful that her involuntary blushes might be seen, never had she felt so high an opinion of the empress's discernment before; and many a time, in after life, did she regret not having thrown herself at her feet, and besought her intercession with her father, but this, at the time, she had no power to do; to subdue the throbbings of her heart, and seek to hide her heightened colour, seemed all of which she was capable.

About this time, as she had been much with the empress, who always spoke to her with confidence, and a reliance on her judgment, not often given to one so young, Menzikoff fully persuaded himself that she had been of great use to him, and not only preserved by her presence his memory and services in the eyes of the empress, but actually induced her to speak and act in the manner she had done. He was, of course, satisfied with the royal decision, and soon resumed his patronising smile and triumphant gait; but his exceeding anger and contempt against Count Devrier (who had adopted the cause of the duchess, merely from hatred to him, and in order to embarrass his ministerial politics) rendered him wretched, from the insatiate desire of vengeance.

So soon as he could give himself time for such a purpose, he sought to instil the same feelings into Mary, trusting that she could influence the empress in such a manner as would lead to the destruction of his enemy. For himself, it would appear too palpable an act of revenge to speak of at this time, and he had always found the empress not only loth to talk of Siberia, but jealous of his desire to send any one there—she was ever ready to recall, but never to sentence; and when the errors of any party were descanted on with a view to that end, she would lay her little, fat, white hand on Menzikoff's arm and say, "Don't talk so like Peter, my good friend—you men can never be offended, but punishment is the first thing—we will be patient; we will threaten and persuade, and mend people if we can. Siberia is an extreme case, which we cannot bear to think of—say no more on the subject."

Fearing a repetition of these sentiments, Menzikoff hoped that Mary's suggestion of punishment, as coming from a daughter jealous of her father's honour, and in herself benevolent and merciful, might be attended to; but, to his extreme mortification, she was as obtuse in her perception of his wishes, as, when explained, she became opposed to his execution of them; declaring that, if the empress was about to banish Count Devrier, she would fall at her feet and sue for his forgiveness. "Do you not remember, father," said she, in great agitation, "that your only sister, the playmate of your infancy, the sharer of your mother's milk, is the count's wife? If she became so contrary to your wishes, it was with her own full consent. She is now the mother of his children, the friend of his advanced age; to separate them would be death to both; and what would the world say, if Prince Menzikoff sent his own innocent and only sister to Siberia?"

"You do not feel as you ought to do for your injured and insulted father, girl—you prefer his enemies, and would protect them."

"No, dear father; I would, on the contrary, pursue every possible means for disproving their accusations; and, by clearing your character, prove their assertions are calumnies. All this has been done in the count's case, and to pursue it farther is unworthy, and will be worse than useless, as showing a revengeful spirit, rarely, if ever, found combined with true greatness."

"The greatest man Europe ever knew pursued it."

"He did, more the pity, and threw a cloud on many of his actions; but remember how frequently he practised a contrary quality, and was as magnanimous as became him."

"You are mighty wise for so young a legislator, and are certainly possessed of a longer memory than any Russian, though your years are fewer."

Menzikoff spoke these words very bitterly, but Mary had learned from her mother's example that "a soft answer turneth away wrath," and she answered gently and half playfully,

"I know only what you have told me, and it would ill become me to forget the words of my father, when he spoke of my sovereign—when he was a workman, as Michaeloff, he took by mistake the tools of another man, who, in his rage, struck him a blow; for which the master, who was alone privy to his rank, reproved the poor fellow severely, and would have punished him, but the emperor could not bear this injustice; he instantly acknowledged that he was in fault, and gave the man money to make up the quarrel. Did he not behave nobly to Renchild, the Swedish general? and what could be more generous than his conduct to the Swedish prisoners after the battle of Pultava? You saved their lives, dear father, which will ever be the brightest jewel in your coronet, and he rendered those lives happy. Oh! you have told me many, many proofs of his nature being generous, though his temper was at times terrific."

The mention of Pultava, to a certain degree, put Menzikoff by his purpose; he felt the value of an act of mercy, as regards the performer, and he suffered himself to be soothed, and, to some extent, acquiescent; but he was not pleased with Mary for the turn she had given to his feelings, since he was unconvinced, though subdued temporarily; he was content, however, for the present, to speak contemptuously of her, as of a sex incapable of reasoning as of governing, and said, in a very pointed manner, "You will make a pretty kind of wife to a sovereign prince, if he acts by your advice and never punishes, one half of his subjects will eat up the other, and finish by swallowing him."

As Menzikoff left the room, Mary said to her mother, who had entered while she had been speaking,

"What can my father mean? He has of late more than once talked several times of what I shall do, or ought to do, when I marry a sovereign. Surely none will take me, or desire to do so—may God forbid!"

"I trust none will, my dear, but I do believe that from your birth he desired it; for, about that time, much was told respecting a king of

England who was expatriated, and made a vain attempt to recover his crown; on which your father said, 'If that child had been old enough, and he would have married her, he should have been seated on his throne safe enough, and my daughter have kept her place there, as far as it was distant.' I thought, at the moment, how happy it was my infant was so little; but, to tell the truth, I do think, almost from that day to this, he has wished to see you on a throne. When we were in Germany, I felt continual fear lest he should make some contract with a margrave or an archduke, or any man who reigned; but, whenever I ventured to inquire, the answer was given in a short, authoritative, and somewhat mysterious manner, 'I have higher views for my daughter.' What they were, and are, I cannot conceive—in Russia, no higher can arise than a Dolgourouki—from France there can be no hope, on account of the religion—Sweden is out of the question—Poland has a married sovereign, so has England—he must be looking to Germany, but certainly not to its head."

"No, the Pope (I thank him) will reject me; what think you, mother, if I am made a present of to the Grand Turk, as the first Christian princess who ever lighted a pipe for the Brother of the Sun, and adorned the seraglio by the moon-face of a daughter of Russia, clad in the spoils of frozen deserts? I wonder how many provinces my father would ask him to give for such a peerless maiden! Poor man, he would find a dear bargain, for the bird would be mute in her golden cage."

"Have no fear on that head, Mary; for, however great the slave-seller might be, he could never persuade the sultan to admit such a thin damsel as you to enter his 'garden of delights.' You must not hope for a two hundred and seventieth share of his royal affections. Besides, what is the use of your having talents of government if you were placed where they were not allowed to be exercised?"

"There can be no such government, mother, on the face of the earth. No! Woman, either in her early days as a wife, or her later as a mother, takes her place in Turkey as well as elsewhere. Indeed, from what I can learn, women are far more esteemed than with us, for they neither beat daughters nor wives. I have heard the Czar himself say they were polished gentlemen with whom he conversed at Pruth."

"They had more politeness than honesty, certainly, when they took his bribes instead of himself—but we are talking idly, my dear child, when I want to know the cause of your father's earnest address to you."

"Alas! I chattered wildly that you might forget to inquire—he hates my Uncle Devrier, resents his late misconduct, and wishes the empress to banish him to Siberia."

"I feared as much, and therefore questioned you—Mary, let no consideration, not even that ever on your heart, induce you to lend a hand to such a dreadful end. Count Devrier is a foolish and, in some things, a wicked man; but he does not merit punishment like that, and his wife is our beloved relation, her children young and innocent. Your father was instrumental in sending Count Tolstei to Siberia. What has that error not cost me?—days of sorrow, and nights of sleepless anguish, which he also has shared, ever since we heard of the victim's miserable death."

Mary willingly, warmly promised; nevertheless, when she thought of the reward it was possible her father might offer, she felt how great a trial it might be, and inwardly resolved to look for strength to resist temptation from on high. This was spared her; but, from day to day, certain hints respecting her future situation tended to alarm her, although her father, cold and distant in his manners, still affected to think that she had no honour for his person, no regard to his wishes, thereby giving her that pain which is felt most acutely by a generous and devoted daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE court of Russia was busy throughout all its grades in preparing for the celebration of that awful ceremony of which we spoke; and Menzikoff, not more the conductor of an army or an embassy than the arranger of a procession and master of ceremonies at a ball, was engaged in daily consultation with the dignitaries of the Greek Church and the managers of the grand concert, now establishing for the first time in Russia. Knowing his daughter's taste, and that her reading necessarily went far beyond his own, he could not forbear to consult her on many points, wherein feeling and grandeur might be alike displayed; and he became so satisfied with her recommendations, and not unfrequently delighted by her acuteness and tact, that he forgot even his cherished malignity in his present gratification; and the palace of Oranienbaum became, of course, more comfortable than it had been since the time of the Duchess of Courland's appearance among the nobility of Russia.

Most unfortunately for our lovers, Princess Menzikoff had been forbidden to read or write by her physician, and, of course, there was no pretext for sending couriers to Pozeck, the prince himself having undertaken to give Madame de Rocales all necessary information, through channels connected with public affairs. Mary had contrived, through Count Sapicha, to acquaint Theodore with this fact, and she, therefore, did not doubt that he would come to Petersburgh as soon as the winter had set in, since, even if he avoided Oranienbaum, he would be able to hear of her health and that of her mother, and see her, at least, in public. More she could not wish him to risk, being aware that the late triumph of her father would render him liable to assume that pride of manner and sternness of decision likely to part them as effectually as even her marriage with another might do; to temporize was, therefore, to cherish that hope which, however deceitful, was present help and consolation. At all events, Theodore would surely appear at the Cathedral, as the representative of his family, seeing his father and cousin were far distant, and the good old prince, his great uncle, not equal to any exertion.

On the morning of the 28th January, 1726, every bell in St. Petersburgh tolled at intervals, as if for a funeral; long lines of priests and people, clothed in black, alone traced the snow-clad streets; the business and action of life seemed suspended; and in the general stillness, only broken by mournful sounds, the human forms, gliding slowly onward to one or other of the churches and convents, appeared rather the spec-

tres which might be supposed to emanate from the grave as retainers in the court of the King of Terrors, than portions of a living population.

When these precursors had performed accustomed rites at different parts of the city, they all assembled at the Winter Palace, from whence, in a short time, issued a cavalcade mournfully magnificent, consisting of all the officers of the crown, the foreign ambassadors, boyars from far-distant provinces, and all the dignitaries of the Church. Mournful music was heard at intervals, resembling the sounds of lamenting voices, and forming a unison with the tolling bells, a species of funereal dirge almost appalling in its thrilling vibrations. Arrived at the Cathedral, the spacious edifice was found completely lined with draperies of black cloth, and dimly lighted, save at the altar, which blazed with effulgent lamps, placed in such a manner as to show a full length picture of the late emperor to great advantage. The empress, dressed in the deepest possible mourning, was supported on either side by her eldest daughter, the Princess Elizabeth, and Mary Menzikoff, who were of the same height, and nearly the same age, both very beautiful, and looking, in their mourning habiliments, like angels who had descended to witness earthly sorrows. The daughters of Ivan (the brother of Peter the Great) sat on a raised throne at a little distance, accompanied by his youngest daughter, but his grandson, the heir of the throne, stood immediately before the empress, and could be distinctly seen by all the audience, on whom he looked with less of childish curiosity than of sullen weariness.

All the ladies present wore crape veils, which enveloped their whole persons, but during the performance of mass, were so far thrown back as to display their faces, which were universally pale, and not unfrequently even ghastly, and the picture of the dead appeared more like life than the living. The requiem, now sung, combined the most melancholy and touching pathos, with that grave and martial music adapted to the celebration of a warrior's obsequies, and which, from time to time, burst on the astonished ear like the pæans of victory, but was followed, ever and anon, with the sweet, full, piercing voice of a female, who sang "He is fallen! he is fallen! weep, daughters of Russia, weep! for your father is fallen!"

She who thus arrested, as it were, the song of triumph, and crushed the tones of exultation, was a young Roman lady of extraordinary beauty, tall in stature, and of commanding mien. Her long dark hair floated over her shoulders, and her white full arms were held up in the attitude of supplication, but as she spoke dropped down prostrated by sorrow. Every one who gazed on her, as the thrilling words poured from her lips, partook her emotion; women were dissolved in sorrow, which men for the moment shared; many a gallant veteran wept at the sounds which recalled to his memory the scenes of danger he had shared with his sovereign, and young men envied them the proud recollection.

Mary, deeply affected, weeping, trembling, and almost on the point of fainting, threw her veil farther from her, and, at the moment, caught the figure of Theodore, who was standing just below the picture of the Czar, supporting the aged field-marshal, the oldest officer of that great prince, and the father of his army. Never had manly beauty, as portrayed by youth and age, been more strikingly exhibited and contrasted; for at this moment the good old prince, affected beyond his power to endure with firmness, had sunk into the arms of Theodore, and his white silvery locks floated on the black mantle of the arm that tenderly enfolded him.

Theodore appeared to Mary as a protecting angel; and all those points in his character which had won her to love, and led her to believe that it was virtue to admire and honour him, seemed as if imbodied before her. She felt as if she had never seen him in a light so endearing; and, in her contemplation of his character and person, became utterly oblivious to everything around her, even to the proud part she sustained in the ceremonial, as friend of the empress, and the high-swelling grief which music had so lately awakened in her bosom.

No wonder that bosom beat beneath her veil with a pulsation most difficult to hide and impossible to control, for Theodore's eye detected her from the motion of her hand, and became lighted up by a sense of joyful suprise which obliterated every other emotion. It yet did not render him unmindful of the precious charge he supported; and though sensible that the prince would prevent him from joining Mary, even in the crowd, and exchanging one speaking look, no vexatious anger moved his temper towards an unoffending cause. He even increased his attention towards his venerable relation, but he could not take his eyes from Mary, seated thus close to the throne, and filling the same place with the royal daughters. "Surely," said he, "that proud man is now satisfied: having attained this situation for his daughter on so public an occasion, he will desire no more."

His eye was drawn to Menzikoff as he spoke: it was certain little satisfaction was visible in his countenance, for he was extremely pale, and his eyelids swollen and drooping. Of quick rather than lasting feelings, and peculiarly alive to the power of music, he had suffered emotions of sorrow far more deeply than any person in the congregation, not even excepting the empress; and, as even the high situation in which he now stood seemed to him the gift of the sovereign he bewailed, and on whose portrait he gazed, his gratitude overpowered him, and he could have thrown himself prostrate before it. Under his present oppressive sensations, he earnestly desired the means of retirement, and the empress, with considerate kindness, excused him from returning to the palace, and proposed that, on leaving the church, he should take Mary with him, and repair to the princess, who was now at his palace in town.

Released from the trammels of ceremony, and leaning on her father's arm, Mary could not forbear to cast many a glance around in hopes of seeing Theodore, and she was so far fortunate as to perceive him enter a carriage with the field-marshal, a circumstance that closed all farther expectation for the present. When he was gone, she was again in the world around her, and became sensible to many whispers as to the withdrawal of her father from the procession, though the general conjecture seemed to be his evident illness, arising from recent agitation.

Mary looked at him earnestly; and while pained with his apparent suffering, she yet felt proud of his sensibility and gratitude, especially as contrasted with the conduct of many around them, who, wearied with the length of the service, or charmed with the singing of the beautiful actress, were freely, and often loudly, praising, or blaming, the whole performance. Compared to these, many of whom owed all they enjoyed to Peter I., how noble, how worthy, appeared her father in the fond eyes of Mary, who,

cheered by the sight of Theodore, had recovered her spirits and complacency!

As they approached the doors of the Cathedral, they observed two ladies, both of whom were tall and graceful figures, but closely wrapped in the general mourning veil; they had fixed themselves in a kind of recess, and seemed waiting to watch the court go by; just as they reached them, one stepped forward, and, putting out her hand, seized that of Menzikoff, which she pressed to her lips and her heart, saying, in a voice broken by sobbings,

"Dear, dear prince! accept my thanks—my blessings. I know that to you—yes, to you alone—I owe my recall; for though the empress is kind, she is forgetful and inactive; but *you* remembered me."

"I am truly glad to see you, Madame Balke; but be careful how you speak—we are in a crowd. When did you arrive?"

"This very day; and here I have stood waiting to see and thank you. Be assured no one hears me; I have learned the value of prudence at a very effective school, though a very cruel one."

"Who is your companion?" said Menzikoff, in an apprehensive tone.

"An old friend," replied the lady, unveiling, and thereby revealing a face which, though no longer young, was singularly handsome. The prince shook hands with her heartily, but the empress and her *cortège* were now pouring to the door. The prince darted forward to secure his carriage, and, of course, they were separated; the ladies, also, hastening away in another direction.

"How delighted your mother will be to hear poor Madame Balke is returned!" said Menzikoff, in a tone so indicative of self-gratulation, that Mary saw at once the health of his mind was restored, and that this incident had effected for him all her heart had so lately panted to obtain; and she readily answered,

"She will be glad—all the world will be glad, dear father. Oh! how different a sensation must pervade the mind on recalling, or on banishing, an unhappy fellow-creature! Nothing on earth could be more delightful than receiving the heartfelt thanks Madame Balke has just tendered you. Dear father, I envy your sensations."

"They were delightful, certainly, but not more so, probably, than I should feel in sending Count Devrier to the—"

"Dear father, I cannot hear you say so; you wrong yourself in supposing it. It may be necessary, therefore right, to punish, but it never can be so to have pleasure in the infliction; to delight in torturing is not the error of a man, but the vice of a demon, and one that places the punisher far below the punished in the scale of humanity. Even as a child, I have loathed and abhorred the Czar as he talked of such things, and felt as if my little hands could grasp a dagger to destroy him."

"A very proper person to give a lesson of morality, truly! Yet my feelings were natural; one wicked passion awakens another. The ruler who steps beyond justice is a wizard who raises evil spirits; the wise and merciful, the exorcist who banishes and destroys them."

Mary's last words were scarcely spoken when they reached home, to the surprise and pleasure of the princess, who, on hearing the safe return of Madame Balke, burst into tears of joy, flung herself into the arms of her husband, and called him "the deliverer of the oppressed." His younger children, especially his son, seemed inspired with joy and pride in his father, listening afterward to his details of the late ceremony with the feelings natural to an intelligent boy in his thirteenth year. But he forbore farther questioning; when Mary said, "Pray, father, who was the handsome lady who accompanied Madame Balke?—you appeared to know her well."

"I have long known her; she is the wife of a brother officer, and the daughter of a respectable merchant, and has perhaps as little reason to love the memory of Peter the Great as Madame Balke herself; nevertheless, he showed in her case some of the magnanimity for which you, Mary, are fond of giving him credit. He fell in love with her when a girl, and would, I doubt not, have married her, though she concluded that his views were dishonourable, from the prodigious difference in their rank. She also disliked and feared him, and had got in her head the foolish idea of *love* being necessary for happiness."

"And is it not, papa?" cried Ulrica. "I thought it was one's duty to love one's husband; and I have often wondered how some women could love theirs."

Menzikoff laughed heartily at this *naïve* question, but answered with an impressive air, "It is, my dear girl, a duty in every woman to love her husband after she is married, but by no means necessary to do it before. Well! this poor girl was not of this opinion; and from her fear, or dislike, of the greatest monarch alive, she actually left her father's house, one moonlight night, and set out to walk a distance of almost two hundred versts, and actually accomplished it, generally walking in the night-time, and hiding herself in some hut during the day. She at length reached the dwelling of her nurse's family, on the skirts of a forest; and, giving them her purse, entreated from them protection and safety. The poor people were kind, but they feared being brought into trouble if she were found with them; so the good man knocked her up a shed in the wood, placed in it a very humble bed, and every night the nurse or her daughter (who was, of course, her foster sister) went to sleep with her, and take her necessary food."

"How long could she possibly remain?" was the question of all.

"She stayed there for a whole year, and, during that time, was lamented as dead by her family, who, in the first place, experienced the anger of the emperor, as he thought they had concealed her purposely; when he was convinced of the sincerity of their grief, and found that her clothes were all left (for she had taken only a change of linen), he pitied them, and concluded, as they did, that she was murdered; and during the time of her absence, being our frequent visitant, became attached to the empress, whom he eventually married."

"But when was the lady discovered, papa? and by whom?"

"She was discovered, my dear, by a sagacious and hungry greyhound, who scented her victuals, and drew his master (who was hunting) to her hut. On opening the door of this secluded dwelling, he saw a pretty young woman, in the habit of a serf, who instantly fell on her knees, and besought him not to reveal the existence of her habitation, whom, on his questioning, he found to be the lady whose disappearance had excited so much sorrow. When he told her that the emperor had found one to whom his heart was devoted, he obtained her permission to inform her parents of her safety, and lost no time

in revealing the wonderful news. The father immediately repaired to the palace, saw the emperor, who was sitting with her whom he now and forever preferred, and who listened to his story with great satisfaction. 'Poor thing! she has suffered much,' said he; 'tell me, Catherine, what I ought to do with her now?'

"'Give the young captain who found her a dowry with her, worthy of yourself; most probably she will love the man who acted so delicately and feelingly towards her.'

"The emperor took this advice, was present at the wedding, and gave the bride away, saying, 'Take her and cherish her, for she is truly virtuous.' Since then her husband has got rapidly forward; she has a fine family, and is, I believe, a happy woman."

"But how much greater she might have been!" said Ulrica; "how often she must reflect on her folly!"

Menzikoff fixed his eyes on his younger daughter with a long and scrutinizing gaze; at length he said, "You would like to marry an emperor, Ulrica? Perhaps you would like to reign yourself?"

"Oh yes! papa; I should like it, indeed! I think of it every day."

"And pray, my little queenly lady, how would you employ yourself?"

"I would have concerts every morning, and balls every evening. In the summer I would have reviews, and in the winter plenty of sledging and ice-hills of the most elegant construction. My millinery should come from France, my dresses from Genoa, my furs from Siberia, my cambric from Holland, my diamonds from—"

"Spare me more of your wardrobe," said Menzikoff, shaking his head, "for I find you just the sovereign I suspected; nevertheless, you would look the character well, and that is something."

"Something! everything, papa, when one is young, and has ministers to do the business, as you do."

"I have a notion Mary will give us a somewhat different account of her time in such a case. Elizabeth of England, Isabella of Castile, Christina of Sweden, found reigning a different thing to dancing; they had *duties* to perform, and they did perform them."

"Pardon me, papa; the last found duties burdensome, so she resigned them and her crown together. I should not do so strange a thing, because I would not do anything so disagreeable as to disgust me with a high and glorious station."

All laughed at Ulrica, for cheerfulness was the order of the evening, and, for the first time for many years, they had no company (the solemnity having rendered it etiquette to be alone), yet Menzikoff wanted none. His heart had received a salutary excitement in Madame Balke's address, which had at once soothed its agitations and preserved its sensibilities, opening to it a source of pleasure in domestic intercourse and the contemplation of his lovely family—a source of pleasure he too seldom allowed himself to feel, deeming it necessary to appear an austere father, expecting implicit obedience, in order that he might find them ready to follow the path his ambition or interest might dictate. In his own mind he had often condemned the character of Peter the Great's conduct towards his son, because he knew the young man to be weak and easily misled, and concluded that kindness would have drawn him as much as severity detached him; but, knowing that his own children had excellent natural abilities, which were improved by education, he concluded that, without constantly assuming the despot, he could not hold them in check; and, since his power was universally acknowledged without his mansion, it ought certainly to be observed within. Notwithstanding the laws thus prescribed to himself, his original feeling would in some unguarded and delicious moments break forth, despite of the pride which disfigured, and the cares which oppressed him; and this enjoyment he at present permitted to himself, by which the princess, for the time, was happy as the happiest.

"Was my father always thus," thought Mary, "he could not fail to love Theodore, from the congeniality of their natures; and he would, in a short time, rejoice in a connexion which realized all he could desire in talent to aid his designs, and that honour and integrity necessary to true greatness." As she thus suffered her thoughts to wander, imagination placed her beloved in a chair near her mother, whose hand he held, listening delightedly to her father, who related past events of interest, or detailed plans of utility calculated to assist the poor and foster the meritorious. Mary could forget herself, her hopes and wishes, in the contemplation of benevolence or the activity of charity and pity, not less than love, which, when aided by fancy, gave her many a lovely vision, in which her father and Theodore appeared born to act together for their own happiness and the advantage of mankind. She fondly looked into the face of her mother, and saw, or thought she saw, that Theodore was the object of her ruminations also; and the sweet complacency of her features led Mary to believe that their visions of the future resembled each other.

Alas! alas! they were indeed only the illusions of love—the unbased hopes which continually charm and delude the young—yet, who can say it would be wisdom to refuse their benignant influence, and thus rob existence of its shortest-lived, yet frequently its sweetest pleasures?

CHAPTER VII.

Not thus had the day closed in peace to Theodore Dolgourouki, who, having seen his venerable kinsman safe home, returned into the crowd, in the hope that some happy chance might enable him to approach Mary—perhaps speak to her, or at least touch her garments in passing. She had looked (shrouded as he had seen her) so pale and death-like, he had no doubt whatever that her father had removed with her before the empress, expressly on account of her health. "Ah! when," said he, "shall I be the protector to whom she must look for assistance in the hour of weakness? when shall I listen to her dear requests, and fly to obey them? How different would be the fond solicitude of love to the cold compliance with necessity, yielded by the stately Menzikoff!"

Everywhere the tall form and courteous bearing of Theodore procured him the power of piercing the crowd; but never did he catch a view of the lofty head and dark tresses of Menzikoff, much less obtain a glance of the slight form of his daughter. In vain he traversed in every direction, pressed towards every carriage, and anathematized that universal similarity of

dress, which had led him to innumerable false conclusions: he returned to the house of the Field-marshal, baffled and disappointed, to ruminate on all possible evil, utterly unfit for society, yet incapable of bearing solitude.

He found two officers, who had waited on Prince Baziltch to know if he had any commands for his nephew or Count Ivan, as they were about to set forward with a re-enforcement for the army, now in winter-quarters. They apologized for giving so short a notice of their intention, but said it arose from the circumstance of Prince Menzikoff having found, the night before, that the ground was in the precise state for travelling, on which he had given immediate notice to every individual concerned; had arranged all the *materiel*, paid the necessary moneys into proper hands, forwarded supplies, or the persons necessary to procure them, through the whole route, such persons being now eighteen hours in advance; and therefore it would not become them, by any delay, to retard intentions of great importance to the general in command, and, of course, to his success.

"And this man," said the field-marshal, "has been the very spirit, the commanding genius of this solemn day; nay, more—I firmly believe that, like myself, he felt as he ought. He honoured the mighty dead; he felt, in the very depths of his heart, the gratitude due to the hand which raised him and placed him on high, not only for his own sake, but that of the people, among whom he dwelt, and for whom he laboured. Yes! our long-headed minister, our diplomatic warrior, our arranger of solemn observances, and gorgeous feasts, has this day felt as a man and a subject, even though burdened with the many cares, as a minister, he had so well discharged."

"Please your highness," said the officer, timidly, "he ought to feel kindly every day, for surely he is the happiest of fathers! I was close beside him as he led out the young princess, who appeared, in my eyes, a kind of veiled angel; and her voice seemed sweeter than all the music, as she said, 'Oh! how happy it will make dear mamma to see us return to her, instead of going to the palace.'"

Theodore, harassed as his spirits had been, looked up to the speaker with a smile, and, in a very cordial manner, desired him to present his duty to his father immediately on his arrival at the camp. The officer took his leave, much impressed with the urbanity of the speaker, who, so soon as the door was closed on him, relapsed into that air of melancholy his eulogium on Mary had momentarily interrupted. He was not one of those young men who think an aged relative of little importance, and leave him to his own painful reflections or observations unnoticed; this the good old officer well knew, and truly sympathizing with one he loved so affectionately, after a short space, in which Theodore vainly tried to rally, he thus addressed him:

"You have been struck to-day with the solemnity we have witnessed, my dear Theodore; more especially, probably, with the emotion evinced by gray-headed warriors like myself; beyond this your feelings could not be touched, since you can have little personal recollection of the emperor, and even that little would not be favourable. I, therefore, impute your present suffering to the recollection of your father, who is more especially brought before your mind's eye by the visit of young Chichikoff. I cannot be surprised at your uneasiness, for your affections are ardent, and must naturally rest on your only parent; though, I confess, he has never been to you all he ought since you lost your mother. Your independence, as to money matters, awoke his jealousy. Russian fathers (perhaps all fathers) desire to retain their sons in bondage."

"If my father desired from me only the obedience of reverence and affection, dear uncle, most gladly would I devote my time and my estate to his service; but the very circumstance of my being his son, and born to represent the Dolgourouki, compels me to act decidedly. That path of ambition which he prescribes to me as ensuring greatness, I deem too narrow for any noble spirit to walk in by choice; therefore I will not tread in it, since God has given me the means of refusing it. It may be Ivan's policy, perhaps his duty, to sacrifice his best days to the duties of the battle-field, and render his fine talents subservient to gaining a purpose or a place; he and many others may be compelled to yoke themselves to that state-carriage, which to-day draws a benefactor, to-morrow a tyrant; now scatters plenty, now spreads destruction; but to which, when once harnessed, he must continue attached, distributing the evil he loathes, and, finally, sinking under the obloquy he has only half merited."

"Generally speaking, my own views are much the same with yours, and I consider your intentions excellent; but, so strangely are we constituted, so impossible is it that we should stand alone, or act alone, that I must own your scheme for future life appears more calculated for virtue than happiness—for the good of others than yourself: and, dear Theodore, you cannot wonder that I desire to see you in that state of felicity you deserve. If your heart pines after your father, and the glory he is seeking, I would have you join him, after all; anything rather than see you, my brave boy, thus bowed down by causeless sorrow."

The tender tones in which the good old prince accosted him, the mistake under which he evidently laboured, and the natural ingenuousness of Theodore's nature, combined to melt his heart, and enable him at once to throw its every feeling and desire open to the views of the venerable man. He had heard him speak highly of Menzikoff, and observed a smile of calm approbation sit on his countenance when Mary's eulogium was pronounced: and he now poured into the ears of fourscore the fond encomiums, the treasured griefs, of a lover at three-and-twenty. Forgetting alike the prejudices of his age, the pride of his family, the utter improbability that his fears or his devotion could be properly estimated, or even comprehended, by the hoary listener, he eagerly related, not only every incident which had occurred between Mary and himself since the hour when he first beheld her, but every emotion of his heart arising from her looks and words. The sluices of his soul were opened; his eloquence was overpowering; and it fell not on the frozen earth, or the sandy desert. They are only read in one portion of human nature, who think that age destroys the sensibility or impairs the philanthropy of a good and pious heart: there is many a glowing affection beneath a snowy brow, and the energy of kindness may be read in a wrinkled mien.

Of course, the fears of Theodore were mingled with his confessions, and he touched upon the character of Menzikoff with less of complacency than his aged relative had done before him, protesting, at the same time, that the father of

Mary had a right to expect for her the highest destiny. Prince Bazilteh thought no higher could be expected for any daughter of Eve than the beloved youth before him; but he did not the less conclude that Menzikoff would refuse him, if only to revenge the perpetual aspersions with which every other member of their family, save themselves, had for years cast on his conduct and his person; and, in reply, he drew so vivid a picture of the probable consequences to Mary of Theodore's offer of his hand, that the young man started up, and declared a resolution "to set out directly for the army, and adventure freely a life no longer worth preserving for himself, but which should never be rendered the medium of misfortune to Mary."

"Fy, fy, Theodore! your impetuosity will cause her more suffering than her father's disposal of her hand to another. Do not break the heart of her you desire to bless. Know I trust you will marry her; and since the whole world must see the justice of your claims, Menzikoff will accede forgiveness, though he would deny consent."

"Forgiveness! then you would have me persuade Mary to fly with me to another country?"

"I see no other way, though it seems strange advice at fourscore, and Mary would say it was that of a dotard; but, indeed, Theodore, it is the result of close observation, made by a man who, unblessed by marriage ties, and feeling in himself the power to enjoy them, has been accustomed to mark the effect of such ties on others, while he mourned the want of them himself. Men in Russia, generally speaking, marry the woman whose beauty, for the present, they prefer; but, having little refinement, and no idea of the worth of woman's heart, they seldom, after marriage, take the trouble to win it, and very rarely is it theirs at the time when the law has given them the person, because the father is the only individual with whom the affair is arranged. Women, therefore, of sweet disposition and high intellect, who deserve to fill the happiest stations in society, may be seen, on every side, suffering from a thraldom destructive to their happiness, and frequently to their morals. I would avert from the sweet girl whom you love this fate, for which it is evident her father decrees her. *You* would, in time, get the better of your early disappointment, but—"

"Oh, no, dear sir! I never should. I have loved only Mary, and I can love no other."

"You believe so, undoubtedly, and I grant you will never love another so well; but do not persuade yourself to insist on this point, for it is an error, as my history might prove; but to this I shall not refer you, for it is impossible to persuade any young man that an old ruin like me ever resembled himself, either in person or passion; let that pass. You must not go to the army now, for the war halts in a manner somewhat embarrassing. If victory followed your appearance, as at Dagesthan, your father, though a brave and skilful general, would be reflected on. If the present dilemma continued, the whole race of Dolgourouki would be condemned as incompetent."

"What then shall I do? Remain in Petersburgh, meet Mary at court, and only there, where every glance might be observed, every word repeated; where the very beatings of a heart so full as mine might be counted?"

"No, Theodore; this is placing yourself on the wheel, and giving every fool the power to stretch you. Take my advice. The empress has given you leave to travel; you have left your estate in good hands; why not spend a few months with your friends in Germany? by which means curious eyes and idle talkers will be diverted from you and your affairs; and, above all things, Menzikoff, saved from suspicion, will be in no hurry to dispose of a daughter so young as Mary. Time is everything, in your case; gain that, and you gain all it may bring. Believe me, the impatience of youth is as much its error as the caution of age."

"That is true, sir; and, could I see my reward, I could wait with Jacob's perseverance; but when a look, a line, is invaluable, how can I renounce them?"

"Pshaw! be not a boy; forego the shadow, and you may gain the substance. I will watch Mary for your sake—grow young, and attend balls and breakfasts. I can dictate my letters in French, which my secretary does not understand, but makes a shift to write; the labour of deciphering his spelling will do you good. Anything is better than the inertness of despair, or the fever of anxiety. I must have you better, dear Theodore, indeed I must. But I will say no more now; I must go to bed."

"To bed! dear, noble, generous old man! Long may the hour be averted which will make thy bed in the dust! And thou wilt watch, nay, wilt court my Mary for me! Into whose hands can I commit her with so much safety as thine! for how often has she spoken of thee with affection. Well, then, it shall be so. I will go, and Menzikoff shall know that I am gone. Poor Mary! surely this is hard on her."

The field-marshal had vanished before Theodore began thus to soliloquize, and it was found that the various excitements of the day had been so prejudicial to him, that several days followed in which Theodore would not leave him; but his retirement enabled him to arrange every circumstance connected with his future journey, which was generally spoken of as one of duration. Count Sapicha, observing how pale and abstracted his young friend appeared, urged him to set out, fully believing it was necessary for his health, and undertaking to break the matter to Mary, which he could not do for the present, as she was in close attendance on her mother, whose confinement was expected in the following month.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Princess Menzikoff, constantly subject to that anxiety which deranges the health of even the strongest, in due time gave her husband another daughter; but this proved so terrible a trial to her strength, that she was left for many weeks in a state of imminent, though not immediate danger. All the daughter was at this time so completely awakened in Mary's bosom, that the sorrow she had suffered, under the idea of Theodore's removal to a distant country, was in a manner forgotten; and, great as her comfort would have been in receiving from him those dear, invaluable letters, which might have soothed her inquietude, she yet had a consolation in knowing that all her energies and her solicitude were directed to one object and one end; and she fondly hoped her mother would be granted to her prayers, firmly believing that, but for the renunciation of each other, alike practised by herself and Theodore, her fragile tenure on life must have given way at this eventful period.

But to her cares for her mother's health were

soon added fears for her father's welfare, and sufferings from his temper. He had ventured to remain at home the first ten days of his wife's confinement, considering himself to be more than ever confirmed in the good graces of his sovereign, and believing that even his most virulent enemies would take his part, and comment on the wisdom of the empress in her late decision, by that means becoming eulogists of the man she defended. What, then, was his surprise and mortification, to find Count Devrier actually in the palace, and to learn from the attendants that he had been there very frequently during his absence!

The truth was, that Countess Devrier loved her husband and her brother also. She had no other relation, save Menzikoff, in the world, and she was the mother of two fine boys, whom he might raise to distinction or endow with fortune; and she sought, by every possible medium, to effect a reconciliation between two persons so necessary to her happiness and the welfare of her family. She thought the present a good time for her purpose (though many would have been of a contrary opinion). "My husband," said she, "has had it in his power to alarm the prince; therefore, he will perceive that such an enemy may be valuable when converted into a friend; and, as he has not therefore actually injured him, no bar remains to prevent their union."

The empress's motto on all occasions was "peace and good-will," and she yielded to these pleaded reasons because she loved the speaker, and remembered the time when Peter the Great had favoured the suit of her husband. When, therefore, Menzikoff was announced, she prepared to enter on her task of conciliation with all the kindness of her nature, but with less penetration than she frequently displayed.

Contempt, bitter, unmitigated contempt, was the passion called into action by this overture, and which even the presence of his sovereign was not able to control. "What!" said he; "can Count Devrier, who has, for year after year, never failed to deride my counsels and thwart my measures, and who has crowned a long course of injury by a base accusation, does *he* condescend to ally himself with the man he sought to ruin! or is this a new *ruse*, to effect by stratagem that which more open wickedness could not perform! Your majesty must pardon me if I decline farther acquaintance with one it is my misfortune to know already too well."

"I had hoped, Prince Menzikoff, your sister might have prevailed, even if your sovereign—"

"Pardon me, madam, there is only one woman living to whom I owe allegiance, and I trust she will not doom her servant to the society of unpunished felons. Will your majesty permit me to retire? my wife is yet a sufferer."

"Pray go; I grieve for her sickness sincerely. I am ill myself—no one knows how ill."

With his blood still boiling in his veins, and every moment threatening to overleap all forms, long as he had been in that habit of self-control which is the virtue of courts, Menzikoff answered with little sympathy and less ceremony, and left the Presence in a rude and hasty manner. In his present mood, every eye he met wore a glance of defiance or of pity: one seemed to regard him with looks of covert malignity, another with ill-concealed exultation or palpable contempt. The passions raging in his own heart he concluded to be actuating those of others, and directed as much against himself as he was against Devrier. He hesitated as to whether he should return home or not, being assured that, in his present state of perturbation, he could not be the companion of his wife's solitude: and yet, who else could sooth his sorrows and mollify his resentment?

"I can tell Mary what has happened. I can prepare her for what is to follow," passed through his mind, and "home" was the word to his attendants.

Mary was extremely sorry to perceive her father suffering from contending passions, and became horror-struck when the labouring tempest that shook him poured forth, like a volcano, in words of burning hatred on all whom he had seen at the palace, not excepting the empress, whom he termed "ungrateful and imbecile—a reed that every knave might play upon—a worthless woman—"

"Stay, stay, dear father! your anger must not make you unjust to our dear kind friend, the empress, who may have been wrong, perhaps very wrong, in seeking to bring you and my uncle—I mean Count Devrier—together; but she meant it for the best, undoubtedly. Do not let her mistake make your misery. She often says 'Forget and Forgive,' and was trying to make you act upon her maxim towards him. If that is impossible, at least show it towards herself; for you are certain she meant well, as she always does."

"You talk like a child; you know nothing of courts nor their rulers—those gilded puppets, moved by hidden strings, which the most worthless can draw when they are acquainted with the humours of their royal automatons. Let Count Devrier become domiciled at Peterhoff, and my ruin—ay, utter and irretrievable ruin—will follow as a thing of course—*malgré* all I have done for the country and Catherine. Nay, there are more surprising things than that I should be banished to Siberia; and then, perhaps, even you, in spite of your romantic taste for mercy, may think which of the two it had been better to preserve—your father, or the husband of your whimpering aunt."

Mary had seen enough of her father's temper to know it were well it should have vent in his own house and on his own daughter (however unoffending), therefore she was willing to endure the torrent, though desirous to turn it aside, if possible. As she did not think it in the slightest degree probable that the empress could ever forsake her father, and the allusion to his sister instantly communicated the idea that Countess Devrier had been the sole cause of restoring her husband to the good opinion of the empress, she answered, with a kind of playful gravity,

"Dear papa, your daughter is not quite so romantic as to fancy anything so utterly improbable can arise as your projected journey. Our sex are proverbial for fickleness, but it is quite beyond my faith in changes to expect Peter the Great's widow will send his favourite and her own best friend to Tobolsk, especially within a month of her proclaiming his integrity to the world, and taking upon herself the expenses attending what might be termed his mistake. I will not believe, however bounded the judgment of woman may be, that she will prefer the man she has openly termed 'malignant in his designs, and frivolous in his arguments,' to him whom she has owned for her best friend, as maid, wife, and widow."

"Then why admit the serpent to wind through the halls, and bask in her presence?"

"Because she has the power of forgiveness, and thought you had it."

"She is mistaken; whom I hate I avoid seeing—for I would forget both them and their errors if I could; but I have no notion of succumbing to old saws any more than to canting priests. Had you done your duty—had you seconded my wishes while the empress was justly angry at this man, by influencing her mind, he would have been removed before this time far enough. I should neither have seen him rear his crest to insult me, nor have dreaded the venom which at this very moment is poisoning my reputation, perhaps endangering my life. Think you it was for nothing I sent the Dolgourouki so far from me?"

The "quick and eloquent blood" of Mary rushed to her cheek; her powers of speech were arrested, and she could only say, in a low voice, "The Dolgourouki?"

"Yes; the proud, the ancient, the ambitious Dolgourouki, the 'lords of the sovereign hand!' Did I not send Baziltch and Ivan to Persia—not merely because I know they foil my measures, but that I felt they would be a blight to my eyes? The elder is a slave to forms, and will only fight as his father fought before him; so the war went to sleep comfortably in his hands, till the year went by which placed the empress on the throne. I have now sent re-enforcements which will rouse it. Ivan I was very glad to get rid of in the same way, for he has the prejudices of his family and not their principles: he is wily, patient, and persevering—a perfect Jesuit in his heart, and a French courtier in his manners; handsome enough, and aspiring enough, to seek a royal bride; but he will find himself checked if he looks to Elizabeth—the 'strong hand' will not seize that golden apple, I can assure him."

Mary at once hoped and feared her father would pounce on Theodore; but, being utterly unable to pronounce his name, she could only say, "I know nothing of his father."

"I know only that he would send me the bowstring to-morrow if he could. The *old* prince is an honest man, of noble sentiments and most virtuous conduct. Dolgourouki, as he is, I honour him; and the young Theodore, notwithstanding his German notions of retirement and philosophy, is a very worthy fellow—by-the-way, he has set off again to ramble, which is as well, for I wish not to be his enemy, and could not be his friend, of course."

Mary faltered out, "Why not, dear father?"

"What a question! Does he not belong to the brood I hate, and who hate me? Did he not pay you somewhat of those attentions girls are often misled by (and which I could not, at that juncture, repel, being overwhelmed with negotiations), and then fly off to his mother's estate, to build factories and civilize serfs? 'Twas well he did, for I want no farther quarrel with the magnates of that mighty house—my daughter's destination is fixed."

The last words were spoken in a tone which completely silenced Mary; at the same time, they convinced her that many which he had uttered indicative (as she thought at the time) of suspicion respecting Theodore, had been without any meaning but that which her own conscience had assigned them. For the present, she rejoiced that her father, though moody and anxious, had talked away his rage, and, therefore, her mother was likely to escape an infliction which must have been injurious to her at a time when perfect tranquillity was necessary to her restoration.

Though Mary had affected to think lightly of the enmity of Count Devrier, because she trembled at her father's rage in the first place, and was grieved by his forebodings afterward, yet, during the whole of the ensuing night, she pressed a sleepless pillow, fearing that his temper had been so far exhibited as to have given his enemies an advantage over him that might be turned to account. Though she shrunk with horror from the punishment her father would have drawn on Devrier, yet he was a man she both disliked and dreaded, and knew that for so many years he had openly avowed enmity against her father, it was little likely his late concession could have arisen from penitence for the past, or pure intention for the future. If he meant evil, might she not avert it? The empress was evidently attached to her, and the Princess Elizabeth, her daughter, loved her, as girls at their season often love, with unbounded confidence and warm affection.

The following morning she, therefore, proposed waiting on the empress, which her mother was glad to learn, as she thought she had been confined too closely with her; and her father approved, for he had occasion to see the empress on business, which had been blameably postponed the previous day. "I will take you to the palace," said he, "and then go forward to the chancellor's; and I trust you will find means for me to see the empress, without encountering that basilisk, who yesterday made me play the fool very blameably. Should you find the empress angry with me, Mary, perhaps you can sooth her; but if she insists on my receiving Devrier, desire her to give me an audience in private, and I will then give her such reasons—at all events, I will not see or submit to receive that man—no! not for—for—"

"Not for the sake of me and of your children, dear Menzikoff?" said the princess, lifting her pale cheek from the pillow as he was standing near her couch.

"No!" cried Menzikoff, in a voice of thunder, which made both Mary and her mother start in horror; but he quickly added,

"Why will you ask a question which compels such answer? As I love, so I hate—*impetuously, constantly*. As I never forget a benefit, so do I remember an injury, and he has given me a legion."

Mary kissed her mother, and set out full of solicitude, and almost wondering how her father had so long retained his power in the palace, and sensible that, after all, his footing must be precarious. As he remained silent during their drive, which was not a long one (as they were for the present resident in St. Petersburgh), it was evident that he was correcting his temper, and assuming the habitual complacency of his countenance; and Mary could not help thinking how much wiser and happier the path in life which Theodore had chosen must be than that in which her father had so long trodden; and, "very likely," she added, "it will be, eventually, more useful. The bow that has been compelled to bend may, in a moment, break its bond, and revert to its old position; but the progress of improvement, gradually given in kindness, enlightens the mind while it employs the hands, and enriches the cottage, and man increases in intelligence as he grows in stature, without even knowing how he received the impetus which gave him importance and utility."

Poor Mary's reflections (which never failed to introduce Theodore) were cut short by her arrival at the palace, where she was not sorry, in the first place, to be received by the Princess Elizabeth, as she doubted not that she should

soon learn from her how her father really stood in the eyes of the empress. The royal young lady, however, had her own sorrows to relate in the first place; and they were of so serious a nature, that it was not likely she could think of court intrigues or ministerial quarrels, for her beloved and amiable mother was the object of her extreme solicitude.

"You know," said she, "the empress has long been unwell, and the increase in her size portends sickness that may be fatal; nay, the physicians declare it must be so, unless she entirely alters her mode of living, which we cannot persuade her to do. They wish her to live on animal food, plainly cooked, whereas she will touch nothing but confectionary and sweetmeats; they prescribe a small quantity of cordial wine, and she drinks a great deal of Tokay, because it is sweet, and she is consequently thirsty. When the summer is come in, we fear she will again sleep out of doors, as she did last year, because the emperor was not here to make her do right. I wish, with all my heart, *your* father could make her take proper care of herself, as *my* father did."

"My dear princess, he has no right to urge the empress; indeed, I fear much he gave her offence yesterday."

"No, he did not; but your uncle did! for, after the prince was gone, he said so many wicked things, that the Czarina was more angry than I ever knew her, for she commanded him to quit her presence, and await her commands in his own house. When he was gone, she said he had proved himself a wretch, and Menzikoff was quite right to have nothing to say to him; therefore, I do hope, now, while he is more than commonly in favour, he will press upon her due care for her health. You, dear Mary, must do the same—for what would either you or I do without our dear, *dear* mothers?"

The empress now entered the room where the two fair young creatures, thus early introduced to the cares of life, were seated; and, after kind inquiries respecting Princess Menzikoff had been made, and a regular detail of her own symptoms given, the empress added,

"Your mother's confinement has been a great loss to me, in so far as it kept your father at home, and I have, in consequence, been teazed by all kinds of people to talk about business, which they know I hate; but the worst of all was your aunt, Countess Devrier. She came crying—and I cannot bear to see tears, you know—so I acceded to her request, and tried to make things up with your father. Well, child! he went off very angry, just as he used to do with your mother, only he did remember who he was speaking to—he *did* remember that."

"I am exceedingly sorry. I beseech your majesty, indeed—*indeed*—I beg, most humbly, your majesty's pardon," said Mary, clasping her hands, and bending in a supplicating posture before the empress.

"Don't say a word about it, Mary," said the good-natured queen; "I did not mind it at all. I know what men are, and what airs the best of them show off now and then. I've seen him worse, years ago, when your mother was as beautiful as an angel, and as good, too, for anything I know, so I thought nothing of it—'twas gone out of my mind the next minute; but your uncle wanted to take advantage of it—he wanted me to turn away, nay, even to ruin, my friend and minister. He is a wicked man, and must think me a fool to listen to him. You must not blame me if I ordered him to keep his house, and sent a couple of guardsmen to see he did it."

Mary, greatly relieved, tried to speak of her father's gratitude, and the sorrow he had felt the preceding evening in the sense of error.

"Yes, yes! I knew he'd be sorry; but the wickedness of one man had made me forget the weakness of the other. I dare say he would be angry at that word if he heard it. No matter! 'tis a proper word; pets are weaknesses, but, I fear, all men are subject to them; 'tis a lucky country that is governed by a *woman*, for, though she may have faults, they are never such great ones as men's are. She neither goes to war for pleasure, as men do, nor spends large sums for mere nonsense, nor forgets the sufferings of the poor, nor ventures to think God made men for her to oppress, and so on. No, no, women make good sovereigns!"

"May my dear country prove the truth of your majesty's assertion for many a year!" said Mary, devoutly and ardently.

"Thank you, my good child," said the empress, tenderly kissing her cheek; "at all events, I will try to live; and you may tell your dear parents that I mean to benefit my health by becoming their visiter, for at least a fortnight, at Oranienbaum, whither they will go, of course, as soon as your mother can remove. In the course of the time, I shall be godmother to your little sister, who must be called Catherine. As there is plenty of room at Oranienbaum, I shall bring my daughter and the archduke, who, I trust, will improve much with so well-educated a boy as your brother; indeed, I wish him, also, to be well acquainted with *you*."

As Menzikoff, in the first place, received all this good news from his daughter, he conceived that she had shown extraordinary abilities in so managing the temper of the empress as to gain what he held to be a triumph in the eyes of all the nobility, as well as a complete reproof to the man who had so lately been a false accuser, and now a subtle designer, against him; but even of Devrier he now thought little—the glory that awaited him in the visit of the empress obliterated even his plans and wishes for vengeance.

From this time, the health of the princess was watched most anxiously, not only from a natural desire for her relief and that of the empress, whose health grew constantly worse, but in order that the display intended might be properly considered and provided for. The first breath of summer had an immediate and happy effect on the invalid, who became extremely desirous to obey the wishes of her husband, and removed before she ought to have done to the palace of Oranienbaum, under the idea that she should gain strength from the salubrity of the air, while she could also listen to her happy consort's plans, or assist his intentions by her advice.

Artificers of every description were now employed in decorating the gardens by temporary erections, required for various purposes. Delicacies for the table of every description, and in great abundance, were sought in every direction; and food, of a more substantial character, brought forward in such quantities, that the palace resembled a castle preparing for a siege, and the neighbourhood said that Prince Menzikoff had mistaken the Oranienbaum, meant for his pleasure in summer, for the Oranienburgh,* which he expected to maintain him the year round. Musicians were sent for to a great distance, and engaged at enormous expense, to add to the pleas-

* Catherine permitted him to build the town of Oranienburgh, and tax the inhabitants.—See "Hanways Travels."

ures of the entertainment, for every Russian has an ear for music; and Peter himself had earnestly desired to render this charming art as refined as it was general among his subjects. Menzikoff knew that friends and enemies, reformers and opposers, the old Hetman and the new noble, would alike be charmed by the concord of sweet sounds, and the warblings of those sirens who bewitch the world as much in the cold regions of the north as the sunny realms of their native Italy.

As the empress had expressed a wish to arrive at Oranienbaum at least three days before the grand *fête*, in order that she might see the preparations made for it, Princess Menzikoff declared her intention of remaining in seclusion until her arrival, a determination the prince much approved, observing "that she could see his various contrivances, and judge of the effects to be produced, in company with the empress; and, meantime, Mary and Ulrica would be found to him very good substitutes for their delicate mother."

Scarcely had the words been spoken, and the busy speaker departed, when a minister of religion was announced; and, as such guests were always held sacred in the eyes of the princess, she immediately began to recall her words, and observe, "that such a visiter could not possibly be injurious to her."

Mary thought otherwise, but the servant had already taken the assent of the princess to the admission of the stranger to her boudoir; great was her surprise when, on the entrance of the minister, her mother, starting from the sofa, exclaimed joyfully,

"Ah! dear Brukenthal, is it possible I am so happy as to see you? My children, behold your father's earliest friend—I may say too, certainly his best, and, I trust, his dearest friend;" then, turning again to the clergyman, she said, "Welcome! welcome, dear Brukenthal, once more! how very long it is since we have seen you!"

"True, dear madam," replied the venerable man; "twelve years have passed over us both since we met last, and our path in life has necessarily been very different; the poor Lutheran pastor of a simple country congregation has nothing in common with the ruler of a mighty people. Nevertheless, there are certain memories and affections which will always bind me to the prince, though I cannot expect such recollections and feelings obtain such influence with him. For this I blame him not; his time and his thoughts are unavoidably claimed by the great and pressing business of his life."

"Not entirely, my friend, for he remembers you often; and has told all his children (save his babe) of the kind and wise young friend who, although only three years older than himself, taught him the value of knowledge, and so prepared him for his future acquisitions—"

"This, then," cried Mary, joyously, "is the good Feorowitz, who saved up pennies to buy writing materials, and taught my father accounts by figures made on wooden pegs. Oh, how delighted, dear sir, he will be to see you!"

"That is not quite so certain, fair girl; so far as he remembers me, his thoughts towards me are as much those of anger as love. At the time of his own elevation, he named me as his friend to the emperor, who gave me a place in his army, and promoted me beyond my merits; but, on learning my love for books and a quiet life, kindly gave me an appointment about court, for which my taste and my principles rendered me unfit, so that I held it but as a splendid bondage. During a journey to the Ukraine, a severe illness made me an object of pastoral attention to a pious Lutheran clergyman, who taught me the Christianity which is of the heart. I adopted his creed, resigned my situation, and have been many years the pastor of an humble people, who love me, and to whom I am of service. With them I am happy, despite of poverty and seclusion; but, as there are many in the world whom I yet honour and love, I have taken a schoolboy's holyday to visit them. Should your father have forgotten me—"

Menzikoff entered as the word forgotten was uttered by the lips of his friend, in a voice once so familiar and so dear; he stepped hastily towards the tall, thin, pale man, whose high brow and intellectual countenance had already struck his children with veneration, and exclaimed, "Ah! is it you, Brukenthal? are you once more come to see me?" and threw himself upon his bosom.

The contrast between the former friends was, at this moment, striking; for the prince, full in his person, singularly handsome, and most gorgeously apparelled, flushed with the consciousness of his fortunes, and looking forward to a position beyond them, showed his proud acquisitions in his features and his gait; while Brukenthal, habituated to the meek bearing of a parish priest, humbled from principle, yet graceful from nature, and dignified from military command in early life, in his black and almost threadbare garments, conveyed the idea of one as much reduced as his companion was exalted, and became singularly interesting to the discriminating eye. Yet his countenance was serene, his brow unwrinkled, and his gentle smile was as manly as it was benevolent.

"You must believe that I rejoice to see you, though I grieve, and am indeed mortified by your present situation, being so far below your merits," said the prince. "Had you continued in the national church, the highest honours she bestows had been yours long since; 'tis true the empress loves and favours the Lutherans, but yet you are in a state of poverty."

"Very true! such poverty as your menials would think appalling."

Menzikoff felt a pang of reproach pass through his heart—the friend of his childhood ought not to have known the pressure of penury.

Brukenthal hastened to relieve the pain which overshadowed the countenance of Menzikoff, and which rose, probably, from mingled feelings of anger towards both himself and the priest. "I adopted," said he, "my religion from sincere conviction of its value, and I have never repented, for I have been independent and happy. Nay, more—I enjoy *power* (that great object of all men's envy when they reach my age)—yes! I live among an honest, faithful people, who revere me and venerate my words. But, surely, the man has no need to apologize for his situation in life who is devoted to the highest, as well as holiest, of all services—the ambassador of the King of kings.

"But, dear Menzikoff, let us talk of yourself; you have attained so high an eminence, have concentrated such a variety of places, are endowed with so many acquisitions, that really I tremble—"

Menzikoff drew the hand of his friend through his arm, and proceeded to his own boudoir, saying, "that his princess was in much too weak a state to listen to any *tirade* beginning with so awful a word as *tremble;*" and he added, "you

were not wont to be so pusillanimous; but I consider *fear* as the badge of your profession."

"You have termed me rash, many a time, Alexander."

"Yes! on the field of battle, where I have seen you brave death a thousand times, and where you twice saved me, almost by miracle, at the risk of your own life; but we are both older since then. However, tell me now why you tremble."

"Lest the very height at which you are arrived should—"

"Pshaw! you prophesied the same thing when I saw you last, yet here I am!—yes, *here* I am, where never minister was before, in the palace of the Czars and its possessors. The fact is, I was born for camps and courts; to govern is my vocation. What thought you of my metropolis, as you came through it, remembering, as you do, when it was a dirty swamp?"

"I thought you had done wonders, and deserved immortal fame for your exertions, but I am still of opinion that it costs more than it is worth, and that a city founded (as Peter himself thought once) on the site of the fishing suburb of Novogorod—"

"No man has dared for years to speak of that scheme in my presence; the daily growth of Petersburgh proves its folly; the present metropolis looks down on all Europe as on its future dominions."

"And by the same rule, my choice would have not only looked, but led, to Asia, which is the largest quarter of the globe, I ween; to say nothing of its wealth and its greater congeniality of habits and—"

"What care I for its wealth or its extent? It is only among *men* that a man of my description desires to excel; the effeminate hordes of distant Asia, or even its nearer and more worthy barbarians, are not the people I should choose to dazzle, or desire to subjugate. The ancient and warlike, the accomplished and learned, must constitute the subjects of my future—I mean my sovereign's future empire."

"You do well to remember her, prince; they tell me she is ill, and that was the circumstance chiefly on my mind when I was about to say I trembled for your highness."

"Call me Menzikoff, dear Brukenthal, as you were wont, but do not teaze me with predictions of evil; as the minister of a religion which is the enemy of superstition, one would expect you to be superior to the saws and dreams of vulgar minds. If the prediction held good, that all who rise must fall, there could not be a successive dynasty in the world, yet we see them both at home and abroad. Such nonsense is unworthy of either of us. Come and look at my improvements."

The prince led the way into the gardens of his palace, and became, in a few minutes, so utterly absorbed in the business before him, that Brukenthal saw at once this was no time in which to impress on his mind the instability of human greatness, or the peculiarities of Russian politics. Long secluded from the area in which his friend was moving, and sensible himself of the effect of years in restraining the enthusiasm, or taming the desires, of man, he saw, with surprise, not unmingled with admiration, the faculties, still possessed in perfection by Menzikoff, of keeping cool in the midst of confusion; of giving to the important or the trifling claims of the moment the attention precisely their due, and, by a just discrimination, preserving, in the minds of all around him, a sense of being properly received and justly appreciated. Sincerely as the good pastor had long desired that his friend should quit the high place he occupied in the government of his country, and by descending, secure peace to the evening of his life, he yet could not forbear to think, that if ever man was born to the station he filled, Menzikoff was that man.

Leaving the minister to the objects of his multitudinous anxieties, which included the welfare of millions and the disposition of flower-beds, Brukenthal attached himself to the society of the princess and her children, especially that of Alexander. Mary was useful to her father, and, of course, her presence much in demand; but so much was she pleased with all she saw and heard of the revered and amiable pastor, that she earnestly entreated her mother to place before him the story of her attachment to Theodore, in the hope that, sanctioned by his approbation, it might be at length placed, as it ought to have been from the first, under the eye of her father.

That father had been now, for some days, so especially kind to herself, so attentive to her mother, and considerate to all around him, she could not help believing that the friendship of his early days, thus happily renewed, had softened and humbled his heart, rendering it pervious to all the sweetest affections, and, therefore, likely to yield in some degree to her wishes, as well as to the reasons which Brukenthal might with propriety adduce on behalf of Theodore.

Neither mother nor daughter had formed any idea of the warmth with which a man, usually so calm and scrutinizing as Brukenthal, entered into his mission, of which he confidently spoke as certain to be successful. It appeared that the village where he resided was at no great distance from Pozeck, and that the fame of Prince Theodore's good deeds had spread through every cottage in the place, many of which had been indirectly benefited by his charity, or the instructions he had tried to disseminate with so much liberality. The very name of one so young and highly connected, thus devoting himself to the most patriotic pursuits, had become music to the ear of our recluse, and his most trivial actions had, for many months, become of interest in his eyes, and nothing less than a thorough knowledge of Menzikoff's former dislike of all the Dolgouroukii could have prevented him speaking much of one whom he so entirely approved and honoured.

It will be readily believed how completely these sentiments won on the good-will of Mary, whom the good pastor, in his turn, liked considerably the more, from the merit of having inspired Theodore with affection. Ambition in early life, and devotion in his latter days, had prevented Brukenthal from becoming himself enthralled by a passion which might have added a little to his personal happiness, but would have so evidently impeded his usefulness, that he had had the wisdom to check it in its bud, thereby leaving an overflowing fund of kindness in his bosom for all who needed it, in the holy exercise of which he received the consolation he imparted; he was trusted as a friend, loved as a father, venerated as a teacher.

Perhaps it is difficult for any human being to live long in the exercise of even the gentlest form of power without becoming subject to making a false estimate of it. Brukenthal, at least, did so; he had been accustomed to mollify stubborn fathers, or remonstrate with froward chil-

dren, and thought himself capable of effecting much because he had already been often successful; but he forgot the great difference of the parties in question, and how entirely the arguments which demand attention in simple communities are disregarded among the great and the diplomatical.

Knowing the time of the empress's expected arrival, and having consented to stay one day afterward, at the earnest request of the princess, Brukenthal delayed to open his negotiation until nearly the time of his departure. This plan, he thought, was the more desirable, because the prince would have got nearly through his preparations for the royal guests, and he would have also increased his own intimacy with the wishes and expectations of a father who looked so high, but he also resolved not to lose any favourable opportunity which might occur when they were alone together. Mary, with terrible solicitude, the result of alternate hope and fear (the fever and ague of the soul), bore with great difficulty the intervening time, sometimes mistrusting the powers of the mediator, at others assured of his success, but never failing to feel "the full force of an honest heartache."

CHAPTER IX.

THE fortunate hour at length arrived. Menzikoff found time to rest himself for an hour in his library, and to appear glad to see Brukenthal already seated there.

"I am sorry you cannot stay to see my babe christened," said he: "my friend, it will be an imposing spectacle, I can assure you."

"And one of great interest to me, though I enjoy it frequently; of course, I mean that of receiving a young child into the Church of Christ. Such a ceremony as that to be witnessed here, I never have seen, or am likely to see. Be assured, I shall remember your babe in my prayers, and its weak mother also."

"I am sure you will, my dear friend; and I trust you will never be so long again absent from us. Occasions like this may occur, when you will rejoice in our joy, and offer us congratulations in person. What do you say, Brukenthal?"

"Perhaps, if your daughters were to marry men whom I approved, my cynicism, as you term it, might so far give way, as that I should once more visit Petersburgh."

"I fear my girls would not approve *your* taste, my friend."

"I am persuaded, that if left to themselves, they *would* approve my taste, for I am told the young men I select are as handsome as they are highborn and accomplished. I choose one because I know, from his actions, he is good; and the other simply because he is *his* friend, and must, as such, be virtuous and well-informed."

"I have no idea how you became acquainted with such men in regions so far out of the world; pray, who may your paragons be?"

"The sons of Prince Lubitsch Dolgourouki and Count Sapicha."

"I give you credit for most excellent choice; and, the fact is, that I should be glad if the latter would wait a year or two for Ulrica, as I should prefer him to any other Russian; but I have reasons for thinking Germany will eventually provide her a husband. As to Mary, her fortune is decided, and will be great beyond her hopes; for the present, neither herself nor her mother is aware of it."

"Then you will give her to Theodore Dolgourouki, whom she already loves, and who is worthy of her, where she—"

"Indeed, I shall do no such thing; her love and his worth have nothing to do with my designs, which I have brooded on ever since I saw you last. Read these papers from the court of Vienna; this note received not an hour ago from the empress; every line will show you that my plans are inevitably arranged, not only for Mary, who is marriageable, but Alexander, who is yet a boy. *She* will be informed soon of the glorious destiny that awaits her, but I intend *his* education to be completed before I dazzle his mind with the honours he is one day to enjoy."

"Are their affections never to be consulted? Must their happiness be the sacrifice of your ambition?"

"Brukenthal, I am a Russian father; I love my children, I have laboured hard for their aggrandizement. I expect, in return, their obedience. What would you more? *I will be obeyed!*"

Brukenthal laid his hands on various papers, which he read, one after another, with great care; and before he had finished the first that were given him, others where handed forward by Menzikoff. Every one tended to show that, for a long course of years, the ambitious, plotting favourite of Peter had been labouring to a certain end, for which purpose he had been conciliating distant courts, compromising various interests, subsidizing some, and threatening others, so as to render his pleas irresistible with the empress, who was thus taught to believe that, as he had placed her on the throne, he alone could keep her there; and she had, within a very short space, and after long consideration, at length acceded to his wishes, and agreed to a twofold union of his children in her family.

Every line that the good pastor read (and he read them all over and over) confirmed him in the utter hopelessness of the case, and the delusive dream which had so lately possessed his mind, and showed, in the long vista of successive years, two young, lovely, and virtuous beings, diffusing unnumbered blessings to countless multitudes, faded before him; and, pushing away the hated but irrevocable documents, he suffered his head to fall upon his hands in all the stupor of sorrow and bitter disappointment.

Menzikoff considered the sorrow of his friend indirect reproach to himself; and, after taking two or three turns in the library, he drew near to him, and said, in a low voice, and with a deprecating air,

"You will say, why did I allow Mary to go to court, to see men there who might take the fancy of a young maiden, and cause her future uneasiness? I answer, that I did put off the evil day until the empress would permit it no longer; and that, from a stroke of ill-fortune I could not foresee, this Theodore you speak of was, for the first time, present; they had both sense enough to see that each was superior to all which surrounded them, but the young man soon after retired to the estate where you say he is adored; and Mary, by remaining, has probably forgotten him. That mournful shake of your head says I am mistaken—"

"Let it say more: that she never will forget him—never *can;* you have yourself given the reason why neither should forget the other—they each saw in the other a superior being."

"In youth all impressions are evanescent, unless supported by hope. Theodore has given up any he might once have entertained, and has wisely withdrawn. Mary must do so, and I

should be glad if you would tell her so; but I am forbidden by the empress to tell her more; therefore, I dare not."

"You *dare* not; it cannot be Menzikoff who dares not to do that which he surely ought to do."

"I have spoken only the truth, Brukenthal, in saying I *dare not;* the empress is not only a kind and benevolent, but a good-natured woman; nevertheless, she is an invalid, and, as such, subject to caprice and fretfulness. She is now in the second year of her sovereignty, and has become sensible of its stability; and if my enemies should gain a knowledge of my design, it might be overthrown, after all it has cost me. Within a few weeks Count Devrier sought my ruin by a bold *manœuvre* with the Duchess of Courland at the head; in a few more the Duke of Holstein may come forward in a quiet but more effective manner: the Dolgouroukis (with the exception of your romantic favourite) are always at work against me. In showing them my wealth on this occasion, and my power with the empress, their intrigues will be removed so far in point of time, that I doubt not bringing my plan into execution before theirs can be brought to bear."

"Poor Mary! I wish I had never seen her, never witnessed her gentle kindness, her filial duty, her active charity—"

"Believe me, Brukenthal, she has far higher qualities than those: her mind is as cultivated as her heart is affectionate; she has been instructed in the art of government, and is not ignorant of the many duties of a sovereign, nor can I doubt that the time will arrive when she will be alive to a noble ambition, and supply to a weak husband the partner required for his people. My daughter is infinitely dear to me; in giving her to my country, I present it with an invaluable boon; nor can I doubt her happiness, seeing she delights in doing good."

"Do not flatter yourself with the belief that she will live to do any," said the pastor, with a deep sigh; "girls of her age often die from disappointments in love."

"Yes; country girls, such as frequent your ministry, I grant, but not girls educated like my daughter; at all events, this risk must be run; if I can get over the first two years, all will be well."

As Menzikoff spoke these words, he went out for the purpose of obeying a summons to inspect one of his temporary temples in the garden. Brukenthal gazed after him so long as he was in sight, saying inwardly, "Can this man be a father? Is it thus that he deals with the child of that fair creature, who bore the reproaches of her kindred for his sake, bestowed on him her beauteous self and her noble fortune? Oh! Alexander, Alexander, how art thou changed since the days of thy boyhood!—the days when, to obtain a scanty meal for a widowed mother was thy greatest earthly happiness! and her thankful smile would send thee back, gladdened though hungry, to new labour: then thou hadst a heart—even yet thou hast one. I saw its workings in thy gasping speech, in thy affected scorn of common feelings and common people; but, alas! it will not avail to give thy child the youth she chose for his virtues, nor even to rescue herself from the hateful fate of enforced union with one to whom she can never be reconciled."

Again he read the papers; and, seeing clearly that the existence of Menzikoff, as a minister, depended on his prosecution of his scheme; that no power to withdraw his daughter remained to him without sinking himself at once into the obscurity he above all things dreaded, and probably adding punishment to ruin, he prepared to tell Mary the worst, in hopes that she would be so urged to exertion by the pressure of circumstance, the shock would be better endured now than at any other time: and he determined to reach Theodore through the medium of his servants, so as to persuade him to see Mary no more; and by remaining abroad for some years, suffer the grief which could not fail to afflict them both to be softened down by absence. It grieved him deeply to assume the stern and inflexible to one he held so dear; but the more he thought, the more he became certain that she had nothing to hope, and that, therefore, her mind must be braced rather than soothed; she must be taught to exert her powers of endurance and acquiescence. Every Russian girl, in humble life, is married by her father; in high life, by her sovereign. Mary was led to the altar between both; she had no chance for escape; nor would one parent, throughout all her native country, think of justifying a girl capable of desiring to escape from the ennobling distinctions of such a marriage as that which awaited her.

But, however he might reason upon it, the good pastor could not cease to feel it. The candour of Mary, the false hopes with which he had unhappily fed her, the excellence of her choice, and the probability that her destination would be destructive to the happiness and projects of Theodore, and might indeed unsettle and ruin his character, passed rapidly through his mind; and slowly and heavily fell his footsteps as he repaired to the boudoir of the princess, who expected him with equal solicitude, but less hope than her ill-fated daughter.

CHAPTER X.

"Dear Father Brukenthal," cried Mary, springing forward to meet him, "you walk very slowly, yet your heart would have sped quickly with good tidings: you have not seen my father?"

"Yes! I have been alone with him for an hour."

"And did you venture?—oh, no! I see you did not dare to speak."

"Yes, my dear child, I spoke fully and freely. Alexander Menzikoff can never be to me the terrible personage he may be to others."

"But I fear he has been unkind to you? I am sure you are in grief?"

"You are mistaken—he was not unkind to me: on the contrary, he laid his affairs and his designs before me with all the confidence of our early friendship; neither is he unkind to you, Mary; nevertheless, he cannot accept of your Theodore as his son."

"Was he angry? Did he rave at the Dolgourouki? Did he—"

"On the contrary, he was calm; nay, more, he spoke handsomely of Theodore, and allowed that your preference was the natural result of his good qualities; but beyond this preference, which he will never seem to observe, you must not dare to go, for you are contracted to another."

Mary's countenance became pale with horror, and she staggered towards a seat like one struck with death; but, in another moment, her pale face was flushed, and she eagerly cried out,

"I have made no contract with any human

being, save Theodore, nor ever heard of any till now. If I were to be sold, like a Circassian slave, why was I not told of it before? Why was I educated to exercise my judgment?—to believe myself an accountable being?—to honour virtue, and therefore love a virtuous man? Why should an automaton be gifted with a soul, and denied to exercise its most endeared perceptions?—and, of all other unhappy girls, is he daughter of Prince Menzikoff, the great reformer and improver of Russia, to be made a victim to those laws and customs both himself and his royal master have sworn to rend from the soil."

"You rave, child, you rave; but young hearts are slow to receive the lessons of sorrow; and, under your present sense of disappointment, I cannot wonder at this ebullition; I can only rejoice that your poor mother does not witness it."

"She has lain down till your return, for her anxiety made her feel very poorly; and now!—ah! I pray you, do not rend her heart as you have tortured mine—she loves Theodore as a mother."

"Perhaps I love him better than her—so well, indeed, that I mean to make a pilgrimage to seek him, in order to persuade him that it will be well he should not return for many, *many* years."

Every word the good man uttered fell on the ears of Mary like the funeral knell of all earthly happiness, and she felt astonished that any human being, more especially a Christian priest, could inflict on a creature, so unoffending and so devoted as herself, tortures which to her apprehension far outwent all the racks and knouts with which former sovereigns had tormented their victims. As the thought of the sovereign and his power passed her mind, she conceived the idea of throwing herself at the feet of the empress, and beseeching her interference to save her from any marriage projected by her father; and this thought, which seemed to enter her mind like a beam from heaven, she immediately communicated to her friend.

"The empress, in this affair, is as much concerned as the prince, your father; they come to give you what they consider a most glorious and enviable fate. You can oppose either of them; therefore, it is alike duty and wisdom to submit—your father has been seeking this connexion for you many years; he has brooded over it, day and night; he has educated you expressly for it—he believes it will enable you to be a blessing to tens of thousands; and conceives no human being can be miserable who can devote her life to making others happy."

"Then I am to be given to some Polish prince, who seeks to be made a king, and weds me for my father's interest?—or, perhaps, some German sovereign, with territories half as extensive as our own bazars; a standing army of three hundred men; and an unfurnished palace, that, in case of siege, may shelter the whole population of his loving subjects? Pray tell me for what bluebeard I am reserved?"

"No bluebeard, nor blackbeard either, distinguishes your future husband. Years must pass ere he claims your hand; but be not the less assured that you are reserved for him."

"Years!—then I will not despair, dear father; let me again hear you say *years must pass*."

"No, my child, I will say no more, lest I again deceive you; it is enough that you know your destination, and learn, as a daughter and a Christian, to submit to it—with you the cares of life have begun early—"

At this moment Menzikoff rushed into the room; his florid face was blanched to paleness, his eyes starting in his head, and both parties cried out, in the same moment, "Heavens! what is the matter?"

"The empress has been fired at, and the bullet meant for her has dangerously wounded a Swedish merchant—never did she go out before without me—fool that I was not to be with her—it is the last time I dare allow her to stir—my horses are now saddling for my congratulatory visit—who knows what the effect may be on her health? I dread the consequences to one so weak and so soon alarmed—to me and mine, the death of the empress might be ruin; ay, instant, irremediable ruin."

"Not so, dear Menzikoff; the heir of the empire is at hand; the boy you have nursed and reared cannot be ungrateful; but go, I beseech you, for unquestionably your presence is needed, both at the palace and in the city. We will break the cause of your absence as gently as possible to the princess, who is now sleeping."

"Yes, yes; tell her the empress was not hurt, and the courier says, 'not exceedingly alarmed'—do not tell her about Count Devrier—we must keep her from all subjects of trouble, as far as possible."

"But what of Count Devrier?" said Mary.

"The empress has banished him to Siberia—did I not tell you? I had no idea poor Catherine had had sufficient spirit when I was not at her elbow. I knew not a word till now, but I shall bear the blame—yes, blame of every kind falls on the proud minister's shoulders; the man who—"

Menzikoff went out while he was speaking, and, in a few moments, was galloping on the road to the Summer Palace with all the speed his Arab courser could supply, but his troubled countenance seemed still before those hearers he had drawn from the contemplation of heartfelt and tender sorrows, to those which agitate empires, and which had evidently shaken the iron nerves of Menzikoff in a terrible manner. Mary was the more sensible to his extreme agitation, because it was evident that it had caused him to forget that which a revengeful spirit had led him so earnestly to desire. Devrier was punished, yet Menzikoff could not rejoice.

"Within only a little time," said Mary, after a long pause, "my father was angry with me for not exerting the influence he supposed me to possess with the empress against this unfortunate, though very blameable uncle. Thank God, I disobeyed him! the groans of the wretched man and his afflicted wife wound not my conscience, though they awaken my pity—in a short time my father's vindictive feelings will be appeased, and then the count will be recalled. Surely, if his first-born child, who has never thwarted him, never pursued him, as my uncle did, was to offend his sense of implicit obedience, and refuse that share of a throne he has with mistaken kindness ensured for her, his heart would soon relent towards her; more especially when her choice, though not sanctioned by his consent, was in itself honourable beyond all expectation, and such as a future sovereign may sanction. The dear empress, it is thought, cannot live long; and when little Peter succeeds,

he will consent to anything for a lump of sugar-candy."

Brukenthal was silent, but evidently attentive.

"You speak not, dear sir—I have offended you by my wild complaints, my graspings after the hope which still eludes me. I am wrong, perhaps, even to think of myself when awful events are around me; but what have I to do with kingdoms, when Theodore's heart is all I covet? Forgive me, forgive me, if, in my wretchedness, I talk as a wayward child—to whom can my breaking heart look, save to you who so lately promised me hope and comfort?"

As Mary uttered these words, she threw herself on her knees before Brukenthal, and looked up to him with a countenance of most impassioned grief, blended with a kind of reliance he saw with bitter feelings of pity and disappointment; for the late agony and alarm, depicted in her father's countenance, had told him how great was his dependance on the stake for which he was now playing; and that the loss of his daughter, at a time when her importance was of the highest moment, would not fail to involve him in difficulties she could neither conceive nor avert, but might vainly lament to the end of a wretched existence.

Endeavouring, therefore, to control the agitation she manifested, and that which he also inwardly felt, he raised her from her knees, and placed her on a chair beside him. "Mary," said he, in a tone of tenderness, "I pity you sincerely, but I also wish to esteem you—will you, by compelling yourself to use your reason and religion on this most eventful period of your life, enable me to do so?"

"I will endeavour, indeed I will; but my brain is in confusion, my sorrow overpowers me, and the resolution I make one minute is forgotten the next."

"Not so, princess; though your sorrow is, I grant, excessive, yet your brain is busy with a thousand schemes; and, if you had this night the power of eloping with Theodore, you would not show the virtue you formerly did, though the same cause still exists, seeing your dear mother is now in a precarious state. I wish to speak to you the more explicitly on this subject, because no one knows your father, or his situation, so well as I do; and I assure you, most solemnly, that such a proceeding would not only draw his deep and constant curses on your head, but bring down on him utter ruin. Think you that your mother would forgive you? How could she, when her only son, her daughter Ulrica, and even her newborn babe, would be the sacrifice of your cruel folly? That you are a victim, I grant; but no more of one than your sex in general; for few indeed marry, as your mother did, the man they love. You have no ground of exemption in being more highly educated, since that very circumstance has taught you the importance of fulfilling your duties, the certainty of your final reward, and the acquirement of those accomplishments which amuse and enlighten the mind. Add to this, that, go where you may, you will soon be caught; for both may, under any disguise, be by foreigners very easily discovered, and surrendered to the demands of your country and the indignation of your father, the death of your mother—"

"Death of my mother?"

"Yes! *death*, I repeat it—her pure spirit will not long linger in this trying scene; I am certain she will be the victim of the passions of others. Oh! Mary, let not a daughter's folly precipitate her removal. She is the guardian of the poor, the protrectress of her dependants, the allayer of your father's vindictive passions, the tender mother of other children meriting her love as well as you. Let not her pure and holy spirit be dismissed by you, 'her firstborn.'"

With downcast eyes and an aching heart Mary listened to the counsels of the priest; her reason told her he was right; her love for her mother was awakened to very agony; and although she could neither persuade herself to believe that Brukenthal could judge of feelings he had never known, or allow that her father had the kindness he professed, she yet held that it was her duty to resign her wishes. She was farther reminded, by Brukenthal, of the unchanging antipathy and enmity her father had so long nourished towards Count Devrier (the husband of his only relative, a lovely sister), and the recollection of this hatred alarmed her for Theodore. She lived in a country, and at a time, when terrible punishments might be perpetrated on those who broke no law and meant no harm, and where mercy was awarded to guilt and denied to innocence; if the will of those in power was led to either purpose—under the full persuasion that there was little hope for her on earth, but a sure judge in heaven who would finally deliver her, she said, at length, in an unfaltering voice,

"Assure my father I will not go hence; there remains to us a means of reunion less dangerous, and eventually more certain, and which depends not upon man."

"My child! my poor child!" said Brukenthal, with great emotion, and Mary saw with surprise tears rolling down his pale cheeks, and all the sterner lineaments of his fine countenance melted, as it were, by the sorrow and pity he felt for one so young and innocent, yet so afflicted. Whatever he might think of the nature of her grief, he yet could not doubt its reality or its intensity. He believed he had advised her well, but of her ability to accede to that advice he could not judge, and, at all events, he saw the struggle must be dreadful.

Mary repaired to her mother's apartment, but not, as was her wont in times of trouble, to throw herself into her arms and weep; no, that mother's health and safety were now uppermost of all the contending ideas affecting her heart. Her countenance was pale, her features rigid; she feared to speak, lest the pent-up agony should burst forth in suffocating tears, and she moved with noiseless step and spectral air round the couch of her mother, who, unable to endure the anxiety consequent on the late interview, had retired to hide herself from the prying eyes of those employed in the palace. She had only to look at Mary, and read in her shrinking, suffering form that the termination of Brukenthal's mission had been fruitless, and probably produced vindictive anger, reproach, and threatening. A chill dread of the future crept over her; and when she tried to rise and embrace Mary, her effort was powerless, and she sunk on the couch in a swoon—protracted so long, that her women pronounced her dead; and her resident physician was eagerly sought for among the crowds now peopling the gardens.

So soon as the princess could speak, she forbade those around to call her husband, and, after

receiving an anodyne, disposed herself to repose, holding the hand of Mary in hers, and assuring her that she was better, and under her care would soon be as well as she was before this slight attack. Mary read her thoughts, and found in them an exhortation to patience, which she sought to practise, and prayed to obtain; but as to therefore dismissing Theodore from the place he occupied in every emanation of her heart and mind, she dreamed not of it, for why should she attempt that which she believed impossible?

The princess herself had, in this respect, as little hope for her as she had for herself. She believed Mary's disposition resembled her own; and, as she had loved but once, and never ceased to love, despite of time and neglect, of an estranged mind, and, at one period, of jealous surmisings and the indignation of a wounded spirit, so she supposed her daughter's affection would survive, despite of her endeavours. She had observed in other young people that dissipation and a love of admiration frequently cooled the ardour of a first attachment, and disposed them for listening to those prudent friends who had inspired them with a desire to obtain the rank and fortune which would enable them still to shine in the gay circles they loved, or, perhaps, step over the heads of rival beauties. But Mary had none of this quality in her nature. Pleasure and praise (the praise of admiring eyes and whispered flattery) had done their work, but without effect, on her mind, which might therefore be termed invulnerable; family affection alone was likely to supplant that early and deep-rooted passion so inimical to her happiness.

Both mother and daughter continued silent; this was indeed no time for the confidence of tender hearts, and self-command (the solitary virtue of courts) was in especial demand. It was yet a relief to know, that if they were compelled to smile while their hearts were wrung with anguish, and to assume the aspect of pleasure at the express period when their fondest hopes were relentlessly crushed by the foot of domestic tyranny, the temper of the tyrant must like be cowed; no loud bickering or stern command must offend the ear of royalty, or disturb the smooth surface of polished society; exhibit to the foreign ambassador the rough countenance of the ancient noble, or show the dazzled minions of amusement "that all which glitters is not gold," even in royal circles. There would, at all events, be external peace and pleasant looks, while the empress remained in the splendid palace so lately her gift, whatever might be the future state of the inhabitants of Oranienbaum.

CHAPTER XI.

In due time, on the following day, the trumpets sounded, long lines of cavalry pranced proudly, preceding and following the carriage of the empress and her daughters, the grand-duke, his tutor, and the attendants of all these royal personages. Menzikoff, with his beautiful daughter on his arm, welcomed them at the outer gate; and the princess, still pale and feeble, wrapped in a costly pelisse, met them at the entrance to the palace, surrounded by her children, Brukenthal, and a few other intimate associates.

It had been the particular request of the prince, after the stormy interview we have related, that his old friend would remain for this day, on which the empress had desired to be as much in private as possible. He knew that Brukenthal understood the manner of courts, was a man of great conversational powers, should they happen to be called upon, and was every way likely to afford pleasure to a quiet invalid, who had more taste for the indolence and luxury of an Eastern princess, than the admiration often sought by waning beauty, or the exertion of unbounded power accorded to absolute monarchy.

The good visiter was restless and unhappy; a night of sleepless anxiety had only shown the scheme of Menzikoff as one full of danger, and he desired to judge for himself how far the empress was the invalid she was said to be, trusting that a woman in her thirty-eighth year, attended by skilful men from various countries, might yet be restored, and in her restoration he thought the safety of his friend might be secured. She had, thus far, been more than grateful, but she was not, therefore, swayed by the caprices of the favourite minister, nor unmindful of the claims of others. With an admirably balancing power she had kept her court in peace, though her courtiers were at war—and had exhibited a kind and merciful spirit, not without effect upon the ferocious and half-civilized among her subjects, offering an example which the better disposed were proud to follow; her reign could hardly fail to be a great blessing to her subjects if continued; whereas, a child on the throne must be a curse, though Menzikoff might be considered, in both cases, the commanding spirit.

The empress took the arm of Menzikoff, and proceeded slowly to the magnificent apartment prepared for her. She had within a short time become considerably larger in her person, her eyes were heavy, and her complexion alternately pale and flushed; but she smiled with parental tenderness on Mary, and praised her for the degree of recovery apparent in her mother, and in a short time began to recall Brukenthal to mind, and talk, as she was wont, of her old friend Gluck, and his goodness to the poor; exclaiming, "Ah! how much more charitable is the man who gives from his own narrow store a small loaf or a poor garment, than he who lavishes that which he can neither want nor use! Sovereigns feed only those already pampered; you poor priests often bestow that which you can ill spare from your own scanty provision, while you are also giving reproof or consolation still more valuable."

However true and general the remark might be, Menzikoff at this moment regretted that he had placed Brukenthal so near to the monarch whom it was his object to absorb. He had allowed few churchmen to approach her, notwithstanding her precarious health, and it had been rather pleasant to him to observe that she rarely desired them, though she often spoke of her state, and had religious books frequently read to her; it had been whispered that she was, in truth, a Lutheran, and her present manners confirmed that supposition; he cared neither for that she professed nor that she approved, but he determined to allow her no privileged priest in either case; therefore, he contrived to draw the attention of Brukenthal to the archduke,

who was admiring all the costly things he saw, and, if of a portable nature, not unfrequently begging them. He was a mean-looking though not an ugly boy; but, being troubled with a convulsive twitching of the mouth and nose, in which he resembled his grandfather, his general appearance was unpleasing, and his utter ignorance was not compensated by the simplicity of childhood. Seen in company with Alexander Menzikoff, he appeared to singular disadvantage, although this young prince was a retiring boy, and by no means fond of being brought forward, either to exhibit his own accomplishments, or attempt to communicate them to the grand-duke.

"They say children learn best of each other," said the empress to Brukenthal, "therefore, I hope my dear Peter will pick up something of geography while he is here. I mean Alexander to teach *him*, and Mary to nurse *me*."

"She would teach the grand-duke better than her brother," said Brukenthal, simply, because he thought boys who were engaged with the classics seldom applied to lighter objects; but Menzikoff instantly conceived that his friend had a farther meaning, and was seconding his wishes. He eagerly promised that his daughter should instruct the Czarovitch, and regarded the unconscious priest with a look of such entire kindness and confidence, that Mary's heart sunk lower than ever. She believed that some plot existed between the friends inimical to her future happiness, and totally opposed to the former professions of Brukenthal; and her faith in the existence of virtue sunk, when she was induced to believe that he, on whom she had relied so entirely, was capable of deceiving her.

This sensation was happily removed before the following morning, when the good man returned to his distant people, deeply sympathizing in her sorrow, yet persisting to the last moment of his stay in urging her to overcome her passion, and forbear, especially, to afflict her mother, by showing how much she suffered. Mary saw clearly that in this particular he was right, and she promised to endure the weight on her heart, and the desolation which, to her own conception, surrounded her in lonely resignation; but when he was gone she felt it in all its bitterness.

CHAPTER XII.

On this eventful day, when Menzikoff shone forth with more dazzling splendour than he had ever exhibited, Mary was well aware that it would ill become his daughter to wear a gloomy brow, or, by an abstracted manner, appear to slight some guests, and awaken the conjectures of others. Anxiously and wisely did she school her heart, and repeat the words of Brukenthal on the duty of obedience to her father, and the necessity of affording support to her mother. Though young, as the eldest of her family, she might be supposed to feel only an attempered cheerfulness, seeing that, in the weak state of her mother, the care of entertaining their numerous and noble guests must rest on her; she therefore trusted, that if the cares of her heart in any way affected her countenance, it would be attributed to the solicitude natural to a daughter so situated; and her efforts so far succeeded, that, although her complexion was variable, and sometimes of almost a deadly paleness, she was highly praised by the empress; and the exulting eye of her father seemed to say, "Mary, you are a good child—you have resigned your lover at my command, and must feel happy in your virtue."

Soon, indeed, the scene became so exciting as to absorb the minds and charm the attention of all who were not suffering at the moment from immediate bereavement or severe bodily pain. Far as the eye could see, magnificent equipages, prancing steeds, with splendid housings, numerous attendants, dressed in Oriental costumes of the richest and most gorgeous apparel, were pressing forward on the road, and pouring into the spacious area. Towards the water, the view was still more dazzling, for the extreme beauty of the weather had induced many of the nobility to choose that mode of conveyance. The partiality of Peter the Great for vessels of every description had induced many, towards the latter part of his reign, to exhibit pleasure-boats and yachts of the most elegant and costly character. Many of these came forward, decorated and, apparently, impelled by numerous banners of silk, rowed by boatmen in fancy dresses of the richest hue; and on cushions of velvet sat beautiful women, whose feathers waved in the gentle breeze, and whose diamonds reflected the rays of the summer sun. The dresses of many gentlemen resembled those of the ancient bozars, partaking somewhat of a military character, so that steel and inlaid gold, sword handles, rich with precious stones, and caps with diamond ornaments, were intermixed with cloaks and scarfs of satin and velvet, and stuffs of gold and silver.

Mary received all with the complacency of welcome and the grace of practised courtesy, as it had been taught by her modest, elegant, and beautiful mother; but, since she could not have the most distant hope of seeing that dear one, who would, in such a throng, have been the "observed of all observers," her heart was not led to throb with any peculiar emotion. The ceremony of the christening took place in an open pavilion, which at once protected the royal sponsor from the rays of the sun, and afforded a view of the ceremony to the most distant spectator. The Archbishop of Moscow, with several assistant dignitaries, performed the ceremony; and so imposing was the accompanying music, the graceful vestments, and the glittering plate brought forward in aid of the repeated immersion of the babe, that the Pontiff of Rome might have envied the rival church its power of captivating the senses, and compelling a profound impression. There was a deep solemnity which, for a time, fell on every heart; and the tears sprang to many a young mother's eyes as she beheld the fair, unconscious babe received into the bosom of that church which, from her inmost soul, she honoured in simplicity and with sincere devotion; and many a stalwart chief, who had looked with suspicion at the father, as the promulgator of new doctrines as Peter's follower, and a general innovator, felt his prejudices subside at the sight, and said, "This man worships God after the manner of his fathers; I will partake his hospitality, and honour his intentions."

The service of the Greek Church is in itself affecting; but it was rendered still more so

when the empress—the kind empress, who had been ever considerate and benevolent—the beautiful empress, who was the widow of the great Peter, the pride of the land not less than its legal lord, took the babe from the hands of the primate, and pressed it to her bosom. Her action seemed typical of her affection for the whole body of her subjects; and the eager yet trembling haste with which she fulfilled her purpose, at once reminded them of her love and her weakness. The women blessed her with faltering words and sobs that would not be suppressed; but the men, of stronger nerve, yet not less faithful feeling, gave the loud "hurrah!" that cleft the skies, and "Long live Catherine our empress, the mother of her people!" echoed from shore to shore. The soldiers round the palace, the sailors in Cronstadt, the numerous attendants on the noble train, the far-distant multitude, drawn by the boons of Menzikoff, or the curiosity natural to all, alike shouted "Long live the Empress Catherine!" and the cannon from the batteries of Oranienbaum confirmed the voice by volleys that were answered by the neighbouring port with still louder, though more distant acclamations.

Rapidly as this passed, the empress, who was exceedingly affected, found she could not retain her burden. The Princess Menzikoff stood close beside her, pale, trembling, and overwhelmed. The young princesses her daughters, and the daughters of her late husband and sovereign, were there also, to receive the light encumbrance; but, by a rapid glance of the eye, she summoned Mary, who was kneeling at a distance, to her side, and, holding out the babe to *her*, she, by an evident effort, thus addressed her:

"Mary (Princess Menzikoff), take this child from the arms of your sovereign, and, remember, she commits it to *your* care. Its mother and its godmother are nearly of the same age, and they may be removed nearly at the same time; therefore, to you I commit it as your present sister and future daughter. I hold it not he less in the light of a child whom the royal family of Russia is bound to protect; and I rust my love and my general conduct have entitled me to demand, not less from tenderness han duty, their attention to a request which nay—*may* be the last I shall ever make them."

It was observed, by those around, that the rand-duke stared as not understanding the appeal of his grandmother-in-law; that the young rincesses were laughing, save the Princess Sohia, who, rushing forward, eagerly kissed the hild, and would have taken it from the arms f Mary, if the father had not claimed it.

Such were the ceremonies performed, the elings excited, when Catherine, the youngest hild of Menzikoff—the lovely creature he fondy termed "the child of his age," made her *enée* into life, in its best and holiest sense, as a elpless, therefore humble Christian.

The company now assembled round tables aced for the banquet, in a beautiful glade, aded by majestic trees, and awnings of the ost suitable colours, disposed in draperies, d, when seated, formed a *coup d'œil* of surassing magnificence. Whatever could tempt e eye or the palate, in luxurious viands and parkling wines, were served with a profusion at awoke astonishment no less than pleasure, d, for the time, envy was suspended, and hatred quelled, in that admiration the princely host excited by his unequalled *fête*. The banquet over, the guests retired to the palace, where a concert awaited them, performed by the choicest musicians and singers of Europe—for Italian *artistes* had already found their way to the Northern court.

During the period when the illustrious and noble visiters were thus employed, the gardens were everywhere illuminated; and the superiority of the Russians in this mode of decoration was here so fully proved, that the ambassadors of France, Italy, Germany, and England, freely owned their surpassing excellence. The gay dance succeeded in a temporary ballroom of immense dimensions, ornamented with the general good taste displayed; but here the empress did not appear, and the young princesses were consigned to the wardship of Princess Menzikoff, herself little equal to the fatigue. The grand-duke was with difficulty induced to open the ball with Mary, though a little dancing was his only accomplishment; but the boy was tired and sleepy, petted and wayward. Mary remarked, that "their future emperor would not work as the last had done, either at Saardam or Deptford;" but they did not the less crowd around him with admiring eyes and crouching servility, as the sun which would soon gild their future horizon, and might be safely worshipped now his superior had retired.

In the gardens Mary first saw the younger Count Sapicha; and, considering him as the dear friend of Theodore, and the person of whom, most probably, he constantly inquired respecting her, she earnestly desired to speak with him in private; but, such was the universal trepidation under which she laboured, that it was some time before she could give him the encouraging look he required in order to address her. Alarmed by the situation in which she found herself, she fancied that Theodore himself must be near, and that nothing less could have so moved her save this dear object; but when Sapicha actually addressed her, his countenance, not less than his words, assured her that she was parted by a long distance, of both land and sea, from the object on which her "mind's eye" was continually gazing. "Theodore," said he, "is visiting a dear and faithful friend, whom I can sincerely esteem, notwithstanding I hold him as a rival. He went to Germany at my suggestion, for I saw that the devouring anxiety under which he existed was making terrible inroads in his health, and had even begun to affect his excellent temper. I thought a change of scene absolutely necessary to him. You ladies can bear suspense and solicitude better than we of the ruder sex—you bend to the breeze, and it passes over you; you mingle with the gay, and become gay by contagion."

Mary felt these words as reproaches; and remembering how very lately she had been blamed by Brukenthal for indulging the contrary disposition, and resigning herself to the sorrows of a too tender heart, tears sprang to her eyes, and she answered hastily, "Count, you know not how little of gayety, or even composure, I have long known; but is this a time for Menzikoff's daughter to indulge such feelings!—this a time to forsake the duties she owes to such a mother as hers!"

"Dear princess, I meant not to wound you," cried Sapicha; "you must have many hours of deep solicitude, surrounded as you always are by

those who love you; and dreading, as you must do, that some one will be favoured by your father, to whom you will be compelled to yield obedience. Ah! 'tis a hard lot, that of woman; the happiest are those who have no hearts, and perform their parts in life like the actors in a theatre. But why do I moralize in such a scene as this! let us dance together; I will be Theodore's substitute. What a pity he is not here!"

Many remarks were made on this short partnership, which was thought to indicate violent passion, or mean condescension, on the part of the count, and coquetry on that of Mary; but Menzikoff himself thought differently; he had heard of the friendship of the young men, and directly conceived the idea that some plot was forming against his commands, notwithstanding the assurance he had received from a daughter who had hitherto been so obedient, and who that very day had exerted herself to the uttermost to please him. Elated by the grandeur which surrounded him, and more especially by the apparent stability of his many high offices, as appearing confirmed by the present kindness and friendship of the reigning and future sovereign, he felt as if the whole world were at his feet, and thought it an absolute sin for any human being to indulge a wish not warranted by his permission.

Mary, the stepping-stool of future honours, had ever been his dearest child; but yet she was, in his estimation, no more than any other vassal of his will, and, while he applauded the strength of her understanding and energies, he had no conception of any right she possessed to use her understanding, or exercise either faculties or affections, save at his bidding. Such are the errors common to despots corrupted by power and blinded by pride—who, on their outset in life, were warm-hearted and amiable, considerate and generous.

Menzikoff soon took care to part Mary from the only person in that vast assemblage with whom her heart could exchange a word in confidence; and Sapicha, seeing his design, or, rather, reading his suspicions, made an ostentatious leave-taking, and departed in his yacht, thereby depriving Mary of her power to send any tender remembrance to Theodore. Others soon followed, and the dawn of day saw the gay multitudes depart, amid the confusion and fear belonging to numerous intoxicated servants too much elevated to obey injunction, or too much stupified to be sensible of what was required. So far as it was possible, the princely host protected all, and facilitated the wishes of all; for he appeared like a presiding genius, issuing commands, as of yore, in the field of battle, or giving instruction with such happy precision and effect as to enlighten the dullest intellect, and sooth the most intimidated party; and, from his care and prescience, not one of her majesty's subjects was injured of that vast company; but their risk, throughout the following day, excited her most serious apprehensions, until the return of various messengers sent out for purposes of inquiry.

CHAPTER XIII.

Theatrical performers, rope-dancers, jugglers, and equestrian exhibitors, had been engaged to form a succession of diversions on the following days; and although the empress did not always partake them, it will be readily conceived that the young grand-duke and his sisters, with a few of the junior nobility and the family of Prince Menzikoff, enjoyed every novelty, and were never weary of running about those beautiful grounds, and dictating improvements, or requesting diversions.

The empress, nevertheless, insisted that some short time should be given to study; and several efforts were made to tie the future autocrat to a book or map for half an hour, under the tutelage of Mary, that of Alexander being utterly disclaimed, because "he was so clever and knew so much, it was quite disagreeable in a boy of one's own age." The task was a wearisome one; and perhaps poor Mary would have shrunk from it, gentle and sweet-tempered as she was, if she had not felt that her father's eyes were upon her continually, as an offending member of his family, from whom he had a right to expect reparation for error. She also well knew that her mother's return to health depended on her father's kindness, and that for both their sakes she must propitiate the empress, to whom she was already bound in gratitude for distinguishing marks of favour.

To the grief of all the family, the sovereign, in a very few days, resumed that habit which had already injured her, of sleeping out of doors in the afternoon. Her *siesta* was, indeed, often prolonged to evening; and the warmth of the season, its well-known shortness, and the beauty of the gardens, with their numerous temporary bowers, formed so many excuses for the indulgence. As this and drinking Tokay wine to the comfitures on which she subsisted were points on which she admitted no advice, and respecting which no remonstrance could be offered while she was a guest, Prince Menzikoff now sought to secure her solace and comfort in repose, and contrive that the least possible evil should arise from the practice.

To this end all the most attractive parts of the gardens were prohibited to every other inmate of the palace, and amusements that admitted of it removed to a distance. Firing and ringing of bells were forbidden at the neighbouring port of Cronstadt; and the fishermen, who plied their quiet calling in the gulf opposite, were commanded not to shout or sing, and promised reward, provided "they watched that no possible annoyance should arise from parties on the water." The large gates, which had lately given access to the visitants who had voyaged thither, were securely closed; and only a small door in the wall remained by which any entrance could be obtained, and this was carefully guarded. Oranienbaum was fortified towards the water, and even its powers, as a castellated fortress, were called up to preserve the royal visitant from all possible annoyance.

But amusements within the palace now became more in demand by the young princesses; and Ulrica, proud of their notice, brought forward various works and drawings, which they desired to learn and copy, Mary being expressly told to apply herself to amusing the heir of the empire. This was every day more difficult, for his total ignorance of books, his deficient curiosity on points which boys in general desire to be acquainted with, rendered it next to impossible for a female to offer him pastime; her books and music, her plants and birds, her pity for the

poor whom she relieved, her schemes for benefiting the intelligent whom she patronised, had no corresponding chord in his bosom; and he either yawned over her description, or, with the petulance which generally accompanies constitutional weakness in his sex, became fretful and reproachful.

Peter had, for the last two years, been told that if he obeyed the empress she would leave him the crown of all the Russias, and make him the greatest potentate on the face of the earth; therefore Peter had been generally inclined to obey her; but the yoke her mild temper had imposed had neither led him to desire information, nor taught him the slightest habit of self-denial. Like many boys of his age, he had an inordinate desire to be manly, and concluded that athletic sports would make him a man, and as soon as he was a hunter, he would be deemed a hero. His personal weakness hitherto had counteracted his wishes; and Menzikoff had, in true kindness, opposed his inclination, and, by accompanying him, suffered him only to take as much exercise as he knew his strength was equal to bearing. Much as he frequently suffered in consequence of his exertions, the wayward boy was too often angry with the restraining hand that saved him from more; and it was foreseen, by many in his own circle of attendants, that the time was advancing when his judicious friend would be considered his personal enemy. The empress, on the contrary, thought, that as his mind strengthened, his judgment must show him the value of a guardian so wise and faithful.

The gentle kindness of Mary's manners; her exquisite beauty and elegant deportment; the musical sweetness of her voice, a quality which affected him (as that of her father had delighted his great ancestor), and the pains she took to amuse or teach him, had evidently impressed him much in her favour; and he would now often accompany her to the library, and listen to historical facts or anecdotes of adventurous travellers. He also would carefully follow the finger which traced out, on the map, those lands he expected to govern; and listened, with especial avidity, to the names of different nations and tributaries whom he considered born to serve him.

Though usually silent, he would, in turn, tell her something of the pleasures he expected, the people he liked or those he liked not; and, puerile as were his communications, since he mentioned the visits of the Dolgourouki occasionally, Mary fondly listened, in the hope of again hearing "the one loved name." She knew that Theodore would wait on the empress previously to leaving the country, and she did not know that he was there more than once. She had never heard of his refusing service in Persia, it being indeed unlikely that, however angry his father might be, he should expose his son to her majesty's anger. Several days had, however, passed; and the grand-duke had talked, at times, of every noble about court, every general in the army, every handsome and ugly woman, and splendid dress he had ever beheld, without once naming the *one* person whom she desired to be mentioned.

At length, in extreme trepidation, "I think," she said, "you told me that Prince Theodore Dolgourouki gave you—"

"Prince Theodore! I told you no such thing! It was Ivan, his cousin, who is gone to Persia, that gave me my white pony; and, when he returns, we shall go a-hunting together. I love him better than anybody in the world; and when he comes back, I know he will make me a man, in spite of the pie-man."

"And Theodore gave you nothing?" said Mary, loving to linger on the name.

"How should he, when he is gone to Germany? Show me Germany in the map: oh! there it is, in such great letters! what a very large city Germany must be!—tell me all about it."

But Mary's thoughts were wandering afar, and the fear that they might never meet again had been excited by words which, undoubtedly, gave no new information, yet operated painfully on her feelings. She became incapable of attending to the frivolous questions of Peter, and stood pale and silent, revolving the many painful peculiarities of her position, when she was suddenly roused from her revery by a smart slap on the arm, and the angry voice of her companion, exclaiming,

"What do you look so queer for? I shall not like you if you don't speak when I want you to speak. I like Ivan Dolgourouki better than Theodore, because he talks and laughs, and old empress Kate, too, because she is a good-natured granny, and tells me about sieges and getting into the oven. I did love you very well, but I won't love you if you don't attend to me every moment, I can tell you that, Princess Mary."

The extreme ill-humour and boorishness in which the last words were spoken, induced even the gentle girl to reply,

"I don't want you to love me, prince."

"But everybody else wants me to love you, I can tell you that, too; besides, if I don't love you, I sha'n't marry you, I can assure you, miss."

"Marry me!" said Mary, mechanically.

"Yes, marry me! the empress says I must, or she won't leave me the crown; and that three are as near it as I am, with more years and more sense than I have; and she says, too, Russians like female sovereigns, and such nonsense. I dare say it is a lie, and that your father is at the bottom of it; for Ivan Dolgourouki says he manages everything, and that it was all along of him I was not made an emperor when gruff grandfather popped off. Well, don't look so very sad, Mary; I don't like pale people; and I love you very well when you chatter to me."

Mary heard him no longer. The mysterious something which her mother had long dreaded; the inexplicable question of Brukenthal when he spoke of her father's long-nurtured project, and insisted on the necessity of her submission, broke upon her mind like a mighty cataract, at once overwhelming her by its suddenness, and sweeping from her the last vestige of hope and happiness. A mist came over her eyes; her frame trembled; she put forth her hand to seize the table near which they were standing, but failed, and fell upon the floor.

The boy-lover, believing her to be struck with sudden death, rent the air with his cries for help; and the library was filled with friends and attendants, by whose care she was soon restored to consciousness. The seizure was accounted for in various ways, all far removed from the true cause, for Peter himself gave no

clew for it farther than saying "she looked comical, and did not speak; so he scolded her, but only a little; and he would have said nothing, if he had thought it would give her a fit."

The physician thought she had exerted herself too much, and been too anxious for one so delicate; but the alarmed mother well knew, that when in ordinary health, both her mental and bodily constitution could bear much more; and the expression of her countenance, when she returned to life and its troubles, assured her that some terrible and hitherto unsuspected evil had fallen on her gentle and almost idolized Mary.

The secret soon transpired. Peter, who could not forbear to consider himself in some way the cause of her swoon, crept up to the Princess Menzikoff, who was assisting the attendant to remove her daughter, and whispered thus:

"All I said was just telling her, that if she did not do all I wanted, I would not marry her. That was all, I assure you, princess; but I will marry her, for all that, since you all want me, and because she is so pretty."

"Are you jesting, prince? What can you mean?"

"I mean I will marry Mary; my grandmother says I must; and, since I love her and love you, why shouldn't I? You know I grow older every day."

The princess could not reply. With faltering steps she followed her she deemed a devoted victim; and, when the mother and daughter were alone, a warm embrace and a burst of agonizing tears told each party that the thunder-cloud had burst which they alike had dreaded so long, that Mary must now be inevitably sacrificed on the altar of her father's ambition—for when did he falter on the threshold of any scheme that admitted him to power?

Deeply did the princess now deplore that love for her had restrained her daughter from accepting that means of flight which Theodore had provided; for she trusted that, in the then immature state of his hope of attaining an object so far beyond all ordinary conception, he might have yielded forgiveness to Mary, and found, in his connexion with Theodore, the advantages so evident to Brukenthal, and commented upon so strongly: but all hope on this head was evidently over, and the absence of the lover likely to be taken advantage of to hurry on the irretrievable step. Nor could she, indeed, under these declared circumstances, bear for a moment to contemplate Mary subjected to the curses of her father, and that father suffering under the displeasure of the empress, exposed to the machinations of his enemies, and compelled, with his helpless and innocent children, to meet the keenest blasts of adversity.

It was altogether impossible to brave the natural indignation of the court. The convent would afford no refuge, for Mary had never spoken of a conventual life as her choice; and though Peter at this time would probably prefer any toy that could be offered to him, if obstacles arose, he would become clamorous from opposition. Look which way she might, the prospect was appalling, and every hope for her child's peace and happiness in domestic life was quenched forever. The princess, with the feelings of a tender mother, had nourished dreams of felicity for her daughter that she had long resigned for herself. The independence of Theodore's mind, his resolution to avoid the excitements of ambition, and seek only the calm enjoyments of domestic life and the benefit of his fellow-creatures, had won for him her affection and respect; and in dwelling on the possible happiness of Mary, she had been enabled to endure her own anxieties. Even when Brukenthal had pronounced the utter incompatibility of her scheme for the future with that of Menzikoff, to whom all must bend, she rather assented than believed; but now, the long-dreaded development of his plans had taken a tangible shape, and her heart sunk before it: the daughter she had nourished so tenderly, approved so entirely, was doomed to be more a victim than she had ever been herself.

The consequence of this shock to one so weak, and who had already exerted herself beyond her power, was an attack of fever during the ensuing night, which alarmed her attendants, and brought Mary again to her couch, when her affectionate anxiety as a daughter quickly superseded all other fears. Indeed, she had already gained some comfort from the supposition that little Peter must wait so long ere he claimed her hand, that many circumstances might arise to thwart her father's designs, with which her personal conduct could have little to do. It has been said, "hope springs eternal in the human breast;" but that is only in the season of youth: it is also *then*, when in the pressure of trouble, it looks to death as a natural relief, and feels that, under certain circumstances, that "terminator of sorrows" must arrive. Mary had said to herself a thousand times, "I shall die, dear Theodore, and I desire to die:" but this was not the language of her mother. In youth, we wish to fly from trouble; in maturity, we seek to sustain it.

When the empress met Menzikoff in the morning, she was herself extremely languid and unwell, and seemed to have a superstitious fear that sickness, and, consequently, sorrow, had fallen on the mansion, as a retribution for the late grandeur and gayety it had exhibited so abundantly. After having visited the princess, she professed an intention of returning to her own home that day, but was persuaded to complete her engagement, and depart on the morrow, under the escort of the prince, who was extremely relieved to find that, in the course of the day, she spoke of the projected alliance with pleasure and satisfaction, and wished the betrothal to take place at a more early period than he had presumed to hope for. This auspicious temper increased when it was known that the princess was better; the truth being a belief in the empress that Mary's skill and kindness must be restorative on all to whom it was exerted, and a desire to benefit by it in her own person.

The grand-duke, disliking Alexander, whose presence seemed to act as a reproach to his ignorance and folly, was clamorous for the company of Mary, and wondered "what people were ill for when they ought to be well," until reminded "that the empress herself was poorly, and could not help it, and even Peter the Great had died, and—"

"Could not help it, I suppose? Perhaps not; but he could have helped my father dying, I've a notion"

The empress cast upon Menzikoff a look of troubled inquiry; and soon after, when the boy

had left the room, for the purpose of what he truly called "plaguing his sisters," she observed that, "notwithstanding her constant care to guard Peter from obtaining knowledge of past circumstances, which could do him no good, and might influence his disposition and temper unpleasantly, he certainly received whispered communications from some one, which tended to derogate from his respect to his grandsire. No one," she added, in a voice of deep feeling, "has more lamented the death of his unhappy father than myself—no one known the consequent sufferings of his grandfather half so much as myself; therefore, I am the more anxious that all should be forgotten. In condemning the late emperor for one error, a boy like Peter will be apt to condemn him for all; and, since many of the nobles want the sense and the patriotism requisite to further the glorious improvements he meditated and partly accomplished, Russia may return to the barbarism from which she is even now only emerging. Peter the Second may undo all that Peter the First so nobly effected."

"I tremble for that myself," said Menzikoff; "and Heaven is my witness, that, in desiring power for myself or my daughter, the great endeavour of my heart is to forward the purposes of my great, my glorious master! Your majesty has already done much; but two years are a short period in which to assist the civilization of so many millions."

"We have, however, done great things, even in that time, Menzikoff, thanks to your abilities and devotedness; and if we are not thwarted—"

"Thwarted!" cried the minister. "Who shall dare to do it? Has your majesty suspected any attendant of the young prince? If so—"

"Hold, Menzikoff! I will sign no more committals to Siberia. There are many shivering there, I fear, at this moment, whose hearts were once warm and true towards me. I must, like all others, risk something, and leave the purity of my motives to plead for themselves; but I will not run the chance of inflicting cruel punishments on persons who might, from mere thoughtlessness, say words which, although mischievous, were void of guilty intention."

"Fools do more harm than rogues, and should be taught to govern their tongues by restraining the use of them. I do not call freezing an unruly member a *cruel* punishment; it may be a useful one."

"I cannot jest on this, Menzikoff. Banishment alone from our fellow-creatures and friends is a dreadful affliction; and when to this are added poverty and sickness, with no hand to help, no tongue to speak comfort; a wife and innocent children perishing of hunger before our eyes; a gulf like that of death between us and the world—oh! it is terrible to bear; terrible, therefore, to sentence. We must look into it. There are many who ought to be recalled, and shall be. I see them in my dreams; I think of them when I am sleepless. Never let me hear you talk of that, as a light punishment, which has appalled the bravest hearts that ever beat, in times past, and may do so again in time to come."

The empress rose, and walked slowly towards the door; the usually ready arm of Menzikoff was not offered for some seconds: the slowly-uttered words of the empress had fallen not only on his ear, but his heart, and suddenly quelled the haughty and vindictive sensations which had so lately risen and revelled there. Suddenly, a sense of his own wisdom in attaining the highest point of elevation, and thereby securing himself from the malice of fortune, reanimated him, and he sprang to the empress, who accepted his assistance, but remained silent, as if most painfully impressed by the recollections that agitated her bosom.

The following morning all were on the alert; and Mary, pale as the cambric which formed her morning habiliments, waited on their royal guest at breakfast, and reported some slight improvement in the health of her mother. It was with extreme difficulty she conquered a repugnance which now sprang up in her mind towards the young prince, prompting her to consider him in the light of an implacable enemy, who would pursue her to destruction. Yet, when she looked at him, or was compelled to listen to him, dislike became, perforce, contempt, and her mind could not bend to acknowledge such a being as the controller of her destiny. Ardently did she desire the society of Brukenthal: and, though his words were ever present to her memory, she felt as if his actual presence were necessary to enable her to fulfil their import. Such was her distress, so frequently would unbidden tears swell into her beautiful eyes, that even the youngest princesses noticed it; but they naturally imputed it to the situation of her mother, as did the empress; but as her father did not, he willingly hastened the departure of the royal party, fearful of farther observation.

Again the cavalcade, escorted by guards and soldiers, excited the admiration of toiling serfs and wandering mendicants, or claimed the envying gaze of their superiors, who were yet at an immeasurable distance from the outermost precincts of royalty. To the spectators, all appeared *couleur de rose*; yet, amid the trappings of rank and wealth, the *moth* and *rust*, which belong to humanity, were privately marking their prey; the empress was sensible of increased indisposition; the great man, however determined in his conduct, felt those tuggings at the fibres of his heart, which the consciousness of his wife's and daughter's sufferings could not fail to inspire; and all the younger branches of the imperial family were silently brooding on the loss of Oranienbaum, as a demesne far too magnificent to be the abode of any subject, and inwardly blaming the generosity of the empress in having alienated it from the family of her late husband. Its noble rooms, costly furniture, and surrounding gardens, studded with temples and statues, enriched by verdant avenues and choice exotics—all furnished subjects of regret, according as the tastes of each party inclined them to select beauties on which memory rested, and all were observed to be sullen and fretful; less inclined to acknowledge the pleasure they had enjoyed, than to dispute the right of Prince Menzikoff as its dispenser.

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE are moments of consolation to all those who sorrow, when the nature of their suffering is ascertained, and both mother and daughter experienced great relief when the em-

press and her interminable train had departed, and they could enjoy the sad privilege of weeping together. Mary was, however, sensible that it was her duty to check that desire for sympathy which was so natural to her situation, and, so far as it was possible, bear her burden alone, and with apparent fortitude, as she clearly perceived that the mental disquietudes of her mother had a far more sensible effect on her weakened frame than they exercised upon her own.

To seek for help in humble prayer, and also recall the words of Brukenthal as the rule of her future conduct, was all she could do; but the princess aided her, by urging her to supply her own place in restoring order to the disarranged household, and in exciting that kind attention to her baby-sister which the affections of her nature were so capable of supplying. Mary did all she could, all that a wandering imagination and estranged heart allowed; and, in the evening, finding that her mother had sunk into slumber, she resolved to take a solitary walk in the garden, rejoicing that it remained for this day under the embargo laid on it for the empress's pleasure, and that not a single attendant would cross her path, or interrupt those meditations which were at once her consolation and her bane.

The stillness and comparative desolation of the gardens suited the tone of Mary's spirits, and softened into pensive meditation the keener sense of grief under which she had lately laboured. Indeed, if any external scene could sooth the throbbings of an anxious heart, and awaken patience or resignation in a bosom religiously disposed, the tranquil beauties and softened gloom of those umbrageous avenues, traversed beneath the light of an evening sun, were likely to effect it.

Mary's steps led her towards the sound of the surge, which here broke so near the walls, she thought its murmuring would aid the soothing influence she sought; but, on passing an alcove frequently used by the empress for the same reason, she was startled by perceiving a man emerge from it, who had the habit of a foreigner, but yet of a seaman. She was too far from the house for any cry to be heard, and she felt that she had not strength to fly; therefore, with a resolution inspired even by her fears, she stood still, as awaiting his approach.

The height of the stranger was commanding, his air noble—in a moment the truth flashed upon her, and she cried out involuntarily, "Theodore!"

"You are alone, Mary? quite alone?"

"I am: you have nothing to fear, though perhaps I tremble; the surprise, the—the—"

"Say pleasure, Mary? surely that much you may concede me—"

"Willingly—Heaven knows how willingly!" said she, submitting to his ardent embrace. "But, alas! Theodore, our difficulties are so increased that I cannot help believing pleasure, and even hope, are taken from us forever."

"For that very reason, as Sapicha has so often urged to me, it is necessary to seize happiness for ourselves. Listen, Mary; our time is precious."

"Ay, very, *very* precious. What would you say?"

"When you last left me, Mary, I became so wretched, and so deeply impressed with the belief that your father would dispose of you, perhaps suddenly, to some foreign prince, in order to strengthen his interest; so fearful that my own father might also return and forward such design, in order to prevent me from a union he would abhor, that I reviewed those arguments in favour of our elopement with a different perception of our case to what I had before. I knew, from your good governess, that the princess, your mother, however she approved our conduct, regretted its consequences; and I considered, that although it would have been perhaps dangerous to have taken you from her on the eve of her confinement, when that was over you might quit her safely, and she would readily reconcile herself to a loss so necessary to your happiness. For this purpose I went to my friends in Germany, and have so arranged everything—nay! start not, Mary; our case is desperate—"

"Yes! desperate, hopeless. We must submit to our fate, Theodore, unhappy that we are," cried Mary, bursting into tears.

"Not so, beloved of my soul!—all is prepared, all things are ready; even the excellent Henrietta Rensa is on board the vessel with her brother, which has for the last three days anchored in the Gulf of Cronstadt. I have been twice before in these gardens, where I saw not a human being, but I know I have been observed, and cannot come here again without discovery. Happily, you are now shrouded in that large veil, and the sun is just setting; my boat paddles within a short distance, and—"

"Ah, no! nothing is favourable to us, dear Theodore; nothing!"

"Nay, look not so despondingly, dear Mary. We shall soon reach Dantzic, and there will be married; from thence we can fly to Switzerland, that beautiful country you oft desired to see; then we shall realize all the bliss that young, fond hearts desire in this world, and go gently hand in hand towards another."

"Impossible, Theodore! either my father or your own could drag us from the highest alp, or pluck us from the humblest valley, and they alike would oppose our union. In this one point, at least, they would agree."

"Then let us to England, the land of the fearless and the free; in that island home the sea will throw its protecting arms around us, and—"

"Oh! Theodore, think you that in pursuit of his vengeance, Prince Menzikoff would hesitate to make war on England? No! though the rude hordes he collected would ruin the fairest lands of Europe as he advanced to that noble island, and death menaced all who reached her! No! he would still press on; and what would follow his footsteps save blood, and tears, and famine? Shall the cry of the widow and the orphan, the death of the brave, the ruin of the innocent, the misery of tens of thousands, come at *our* bidding, and draw the curse of Heaven on our union? Nay, God forbid!"

Mary wept passionately as she spoke, and seemed about to withdraw, but Theodore snatched her with an emotion bordering on agony, and drew her closer to his breast, as in a half-suffocated voice he said,

"Then, Mary, we will go far, *far* from the shores of Europe. We will leave the Old World, with its grandeur, its governors, and the fetters they forge for fond hearts like ours. Yes, we will go to New-England, where the very name of your father is unknown; where a band of hardy, industrious, and religious men unite to

cultivate a land resembling our own, but far superior. With them we can enjoy intercourse of heart and mind; we can assist their purposes, partake their virtues and safety, without injury to any human being—"

"Yes, one, *one*, the dearest, the best; my mother, who is now more an object of anxiety than when you saw her last; with you, Theodore, I could go gladly to the farthest confines of the globe. I could dwell, thankfully, in the mud cottage of the rudest serf; with my own hands I could prepare our food, and make our garments; nothing could be too homely or difficult for me, but I cannot quit my mother in her weakness. How could she know I lived and enjoyed my state of new and extraordinary existence? How could her meek spirit endure my father's reproaches, the empress's anger, the ruin of her whole family, brought on by that ungrateful girl, whom she taught so well, and nurtured so tenderly. Oh! Theodore, you could not bear to injure her yourself, I know you could not; we should be alike wretched and guilty, and in our misery even cease to love each other—"

"Never, Mary! *never*. Our sufferings would bind us the closer to each other; and when our friends were enabled to inform her what was our destination (which Sapicha could easily effect), she would be reconciled. Besides, great and terrible changes may take place here, and within a short time, and who can say that the wanderers beyond the Atlantic may not be the means of giving an asylum to those who have driven them thither? It will be better to seek the plains of New-England than—"

"Alas! Theodore, you know not, nor can I bear to tell you, the changes about to take place; but be assured they confirm my father's greatness, and increase, not diminish, his power. He meditates—yes, he expects an alliance with the throne."

It instantly struck Theodore that Menzikoff was seeking to break his marriage bond by some unheard-of wickedness, and endeavouring to form a union with the empress, who had been said, in early life, to have held him too dear. Recoiling with the natural horror of a virtuous mind, he stepped aside, and Mary perceived two tall athletic men advancing immediately behind; she seized his arm to point them out, when a voice from the water called out aloud, "Fly! fly!" It was the voice of Rensa; and in such alarm were the words uttered, that Theodore turned to obey the warning instinctively; but even as he did so, a sheet was thrown over him by the men, and, although he struggled excessively, they succeeded in bearing him away to the postern-gate by which he had entered; in another moment Mary rushed after, rending the air with her shrieks; but a key had been left in the door, which was instantly turned, and she beat against it in the fruitless ecstasy of horror and despair; a loud shriek was followed by the splash of a fallen body in the water, and then all perception of terror and sorrow ceased, for she fell by the door as utterly senseless and lifeless as the stones on which she sank.

CHAPTER XV.

The Princess Menzikoff awoke about midnight, much restored by the calm sleep she had enjoyed in consequence of the stillness of the palace, and the absence of any of those little vexations which add small stings to great sorrows, and lacerate a wound already bleeding. She naturally looked for that dear daughter who so generally was seated near her couch, and for a moment rejoiced that she was not there; seeing that the lamps indicated the departure of day, long as it lingers during the summer season in Russia. A nurse, disturbed by her motion, arose and said, "The Princess Mary had not entered the apartment since she threw a veil over her, saying, 'she was about to walk in the gardens till sunset.'"

It was immediately ascertained that she had not returned to the palace, and the alarmed mother instantly concluded that she had followed the example of the empress, and was sleeping on a couch in one of the arbours. Several attendants were immediately despatched in search of her, but every recess was explored in vain, and she was at length discovered by one stumbling over her, who had imagined she might have been borne away through the small gate by some unknown enemy or daring lover.

The motion of carrying her into the house, to a certain degree, recovered her from the long swoon she had suffered; but it was evident, even to the most ignorant observer, that her senses were not restored, and that she was alarmingly ill. A coarse covering for the head had been picked up in the garden, and, about the same place, there were marks of feet deeply indented, as if some struggle had taken place; therefore, some contended that robbers had been in the grounds, and, being discovered by the princess, had sought to bear her away, but, on finding her apparently dead, had flung her back; all conjecture was, however, hushed by the appearance of the alarmed mother, who instantly required the presence of the physician, by whose orders she was placed in a warm bed, and restoratives administered by every medium.

A violent fever ensued, and the first words which escaped her lips were those of delirium. It had been the intention of Menzikoff not to return to Oranienbaum for two days, as he had much business to transact at the capital, in consequence of his long absence; but the princess became so alarmed in the course of the ensuing day, that she sent a courier entreating his instant return, also the presence of other medical men of note. On receiving this message, Menzikoff considered that Mary (his guileless Mary) was getting up some pantomime to divert him from his purpose, since she could not fail to know he was making court to the empress, in order to expedite by every means the scheme on which he had so long laboured. The demand for the physicians, however, staggered him, since they could not fail to discover whether her illness was a feint or not; therefore, after securing their attendance, he returned in extreme ill-humour, thinking that, whether innocently or not, the whole affair of her illness, by thwarting his designs, justified his anger. What providence does a despot own but his own will? And does not the exercise of unlimited power, the attainment of unequalled wealth, make every one a despot?

The sad looks of every one at the palace convinced him there was cause for alarm, since all could not have been tutored to act a part, and he hastened to the couch of the invalid, who,

restless and tossing, fixed her eyes upon him with some degree of recognition, which was the first time she had manifested such power. He was instantly subdued by the evident reality of her illness, and the altered character of her countenance, and said, in the soft and tremulous accents of parental alarm, "Mary! dear Mary!"

"He is drowned—drowned, I tell you."

"What does she mean?" said Menzikoff to his weeping wife.

"I cannot suppose she affixes any meaning to these words, though she repeats them often. All she utters is wild and incoherent, the effect of delirium, and I fear much bodily suffering."

"There must be no speaking in her chamber," said the physician; "and it would be better that those she loves should not be much in her presence; the fever may be soon reduced, but the shock her spirits has received may affect the brain for a considerable period—"

"But her life," cried Menzikoff—"do you promise me her life?"

"Certainly not; she is very dangerously ill, and no wise man will venture to promise, or predict, in such a case."

Menzikoff felt, at this moment, the insufficiency of his own power to command; felt that he must obey, and left the apartment for his own boudoir, overwhelmed with affliction; he then hastily summoned the servants who had found her in the garden, examined the cap they had picked up, and the place where she had dropped, and came finally to the conclusion that the garden had been entered by a false key, and that the person of the empress had been the object of the robbers, as she always wore many valuable jewels, and her custom of sleeping in the gardens had been talked of by the servants. Many foreign vessels were lying in the neighbouring harbour, and among their crews might be found some who were adroit and reckless enough for such an attempt. As the cap was found within a little distance of the door, the princess in her fright might fly towards it, and probably be pushed rudely back, and much injured by her fall; that one of her hands was cut against the stone was evident.

This solution of the mystery seemed so likely to be the truth, that all who heard accepted it as such; and since nothing had been taken from the person of the princess, and vessels were getting out every day, little inquiry took place in a pursuit which seemed hopeless. Indeed, Menzikoff soon became so extremely alarmed for his daughter, and so entirely absorbed in her, that his grief suspended, if it did not conquer, his vengeance. Still the same words kept issuing from her lips, accompanying deep moans, which seemed rather of sorrow than of pain; when it was remarked by some that it was strange she should seem to lament the drowning of a wretch who had terrified her; others would answer, "it was quite natural to one who had all her life been kind to every one, and would not injure the worm that crawled in her footpath."

The continuance of her daughter's illness soon compelled the princess to keep her own couch, in the helplessness of weakness and solicitude; and Menzikoff, fully aware of the injustice of his first surmises, and recalled to natural feelings and the promptings of his better nature, which, though injured, was not extinguished by ambition, soothed her distress by literally devoting himself to the care of his daughter. She had from the first evidently known *him*, and in a short time she appeared to desire his presence; and though the same mournful words, "he is drowned," were those she adopted on his entrance, yet others succeeded. The medicine he prepared was never refused, and the fruit he offered to her lips was often received with a grateful, though a melancholy smile. At such moments the heart of the proud man melted into the softest sorrow, and he bitterly regretted that he had ever given pain to that fair and loving creature, who was now become so fragile that she seemed ready to exhale with every breath, and unable any longer to utter those moanings by which her crushed spirit had revealed its sufferings. The father yielded full belief to the near approach of death; but the physician, on whom they most depended, gave hopes that she might yet rally, her constitution being naturally very good. "If," said he, "we could procure sleep—"

"She will sleep too *soon*—too *long*," said the bursting heart of the stricken father.

This salutary effect took place when the fever at length left her, and reason, by degrees, resumed its place; but, happily, memory came more slowly; and she was sensible that she had been very ill, and was become extremely weak, also that she had great trouble upon her mind, before she recollected what that trouble sprang from. Meanwhile, she was exempted from those injudicious questions which might have thrown her back in the first glimmerings of convalescence; and, therefore, by slow degrees she attained life and strength, to bear the sorrows life had in store.

But youth can struggle through much, when professional skill and parental tenderness are ever on the watch to aid the glimmering spark. Mary soon became sensible of her father's exceeding kindness, that his arm raised her pillow, that his voice whispered words of comfort, and urged her to take the reviving cordial; but, alas! a terrible thought now rose upon her mind. "Surely no less a misfortune than the death of her mother could have thus softened the nature and changed the occupations of a father perpetually involved in the cares of government, or busied with the exhibitions of rank;" anxiously casting her eyes around, and then fixing them on him, she faintly articulated the words, "Have I, then, no mother?"

"Your mother is in her own apartment with her babe. Surely my Mary will not object to her father supplying her place?"

As he spoke, tears—tears of pure tenderness such as seldom gush from the eyes of man in the day of his strength—rolled down the cheeks of Menzikoff, and fell on the fair thin hands of his enfeebled child. Mary had always loved, but she also had painfully feared her father; but now, her whole soul was dissolved in grateful tenderness, and, putting out her weak arms with all the little strength she possessed she wound them round his neck and sobbed out "Oh! yes, you are my own dear father."

But even while she was in this affecting position, memory returned, bringing out by degrees its sad train of sorrows; the very circumstance of her father's affectionate care recalled the interview she had had with Theodore to her mind, and the terrible consequences which ensued; and it struck her that the knowledge he

had obtained of Theodore's death was the cause of her father's attention and pity. To her conception of the case, her loss was one that would have drawn sympathy from stones, and she doubted not the whole Russian empire was then mourning for the loss of their brightest ornament; and as the dreadful remembrance and various circumstances of that terrible evening rose to her view, she burst into a fit of hysterical weeping, which seemed likely to prove fatal to one so grievously reduced.

But when her pale, shadowy mother again appeared by her couch, Mary restrained her sorrow, and submitted to her dictates with all the same dutiful affection and anxiety to relieve *her* that had ever marked her conduct. She was thankful to God that her late fears had been vain; that one so unspeakably dear was still saved from the wreck; and although she now felt an irresistible desire to throw herself on the maternal bosom, and pour her sorrowful story into those ears which were always open to her tales of trouble, yet she obeyed her injunction to remain silent, until she had more strength for speaking.

It has been observed with truth, that fierce and apparently intractable natures, when by circumstance they are melted down and own the emotions of our common humanity, are more effective in their influence than others. The lover, who is terrific to all save one, touches the heart of her, so distinguished, with the most lively interest; and thus Menzikoff, so long proud and cold, considering his family the mere slaves to his arbitrary will, and the mere steps of his ambition, now became all kindness, and, returning to the amiable character of his early days, awoke, both in his wife and daughter, and especially the last, that full confidence and glowing gratitude which was most likely to heal her sorrows, or give her strength to endure them. She had wished for death, prayed for death, so soon as returning reason told her Theodore was no more; she now desired rather to live for those dear parents to whom she saw her death would be a great affliction; of other persons, and future circumstances, she thought not at all, for the nature of her trouble fully absorbed her mind, and left her no cares beyond her present overwhelming one.

After two or three days more had passed, and the medical men had pronounced her out of immediate danger, and the prince had lamented the absolute necessity he was under of seeing the empress, poor Mary, with her fond parents on either hand, recited the sad story of her interview with Theodore, together with that which she held to be the fatal result; and in naming which all her fortitude could not avail to prevent the most dreadful agitation. The princess wept with sincere grief the loss of one she had long held in the highest regard—and Menzikoff spoke of him in the highest terms; lamenting, only, "that the last act of his life had been an endeavour to seduce a daughter from the allegiance due to her father; but this—*this*, my child, I will never mention or allude to again. He is gone, and be his fault washed away with the waves that roll over him—"

"We know not yet that he is lost," said the princess, hastily. "Theodore Dolgourouki, the heir of the highest family in Russia, is not a man to vanish from the face of the earth, and no note be taken of it; nor was he a man to make enemies, and tempt assassination. He was averse to politics, he had left the army, and about Pozeck he was adored for his charity and munificence."

"He is undoubtedly dead, nevertheless," said Menzikoff, firmly, and almost angrily, "and it would be cruel to awaken doubts on the subject. As yet, his friends, of course, believe him to be in Germany, and a considerable time may elapse before they are informed, if, indeed, they ever are, in what manner he came by his death; better, far better, that they should never know: better for them, and certainly far better for me."

"For you, Alexander?—you were with the empress at—"

"Do you not see that, however innocent, the Dolgourouki would find but too much right to suspect me? This unhappy young man is dragged from my garden, it will be said, by my people, who suffocate him in the very presence of my daughter, and plunge him into the sea that washes my walls. He had no enemies, you say. True, none but myself; and though my inmost soul would abhor the treachery, and shudder at the performance of such an act, the Dolgourouki, as you must know, would not hesitate to charge me with it. They will be deeply afflicted, not the less so because Theodore differed from them and shared not their ambition. Death is a great reconciler—they will now extol his virtues, lament his loss, and, of course, seek justice on his destroyers. The distress and difficulty which surround me are inconceivable; my innocence is known to God, but can never be made clear to man. So strongly do circumstances appear against me, that I question if Brukenthal, who has known me from my cradle, would not suspect me; combining this dreadful catastrophe with the sentiments I have lately expressed on this unhappy subject."

Bitterly did the princess lament that ever she had given the slightest encouragement to the excellent young man so prematurely cut off by enemies utterly unknown, and now never likely to be discovered, since nearly a month had elapsed since the murder took place. She was grieved to the heart for her husband, and the probable injury his name would sustain, when the friends of the prince should report the manner and the place of his death; and she eagerly promised, for herself and Mary, that positive silence which could alone save him from conjectures fatal to his reputation. The mourning and bewildered daughter had wished to see Sapicha, and talk with him on the subject, not doubting but he would raise heaven and earth to discover the destroyer of his friend; but she saw it was her duty to be silent. It was everywhere reported, in consequence of the assertion of the servants, that the gardens had been entered, and the Princess Mary almost frightened to death; and the accounts of the physicians coincided with such report; but beyond that room, the splash of the falling body had been never mentioned, save by poor Mary in her ravings, which comprised all possible horrors, though drowning was certainly the principal.

As it was every way desirable to Menzikoff to give this affair the appearance of an attempt to rob the empress, and as he did really know the person who had surreptitiously entered his garden was from a foreign vessel, he immediately issued orders for a strict *surveillance* of all craft whatsoever in the port of Cronstadt, and

made many regulations of so strict a nature as to have been, from that time to this, the source of delay and vexation to all foreign visitants to Russia, but which were, at the time, highly satisfactory to the inhabitants. The grand-duke was particularly satisfied with them, for he had already high notions on the sacredness of his own person, and could scarcely believe that he had not been in some kind of personal danger, fame having, of course, magnified the irruption of two men into many, and given them black faces, terrible oaths, and instruments of the most deadly description.

As a farther safeguard, Menzikoff requested from all his friends silence to his daughter on the subject of her late alarm, whenever she should be again able to mix in society, saying it was the especial desire of the medical men, in order to save her from relapse, as her nerves had received a shock which might take years to restore. As nearly all his late visitants had remarked the changing complexion, and sometimes ill-suppressed sighs of the Princess Mary, and knew that she had been a close and anxious attendant on her mother, and was, in fact, far from well when it took place, this account seemed perfectly natural, and no person could be so unreasonable as not to promise strict attention to the injunction.

The Princess Menzikoff soon perceived that, when symptoms of returning strength reanimated his daughter's frame, her father rejoiced in that removal of the young prince which facilitated his project; and, although he would now allow his merits, and listen without reproof to her candid opinion on the subject of his eligibility as a son-in-law, he insisted that he was dead, with a certainty he could not possibly possess if he were innocent, and of that she had no doubt. It was, therefore, plain that, at all events, it was most desirable poor Mary should persist in the sad belief that, "until the sea gave up its dead," never more must she behold the lineaments of that form which was light to her eyes and rapture to her heart; that heart which was now full of self-reproach that she had not, at the first moment, sprang to meet his wishes, since she might then have eluded his enemies, saved his life, or shared his destruction. Such thoughts were natural to her in the first days of a sorrow so terrible and overwhelming; but did not, therefore, render her insensible to the kindness of her parents, and the caresses of that dear sister and brother, who received her as given from the dead, and by every fond endearment sought to assist her recovery and restore her spirits. However strong the attachment of young hearts, however deep their sorrows, it can only be a perverted and selfish mind, which turns coldly from the dear companions of childhood and the ties of nature to indulge them. Mary could not be happy, but she could be grateful; she could still love those who sought to enliven her, though their efforts to console her were vain, because the cause of her despondency was hidden in the recesses of her soul.

Menzikoff, notwithstanding his pride, and the general stateliness of his carriage, was a man possessing extraordinary powers of conversation, and a knowledge of men and manners, not indeed derived from books (for which he had possessed little time, though much inclination), but from actual observation. He had dwelt in many courts, travelled through many countries, for the express purpose of examining their customs and their characters; and few persons could better amuse the passing hour with ludicrous description, or impart more entertaining information; hence his appointment to represent his sovereign when Peter the Great made the entertainments for his court, which he denied his presence. These powers he now exerted to command the attention, and sooth the spirits of his faded and still languishing daughter; but Mary had no power to engage in conversation, or listen even to any details save of those who had, like herself, been bereaved of the heart's idol. A mind so afflicted may, in its natural benevolence, be interested by the woes of others, and lured into exertion on their behalf; frivolous objects lose their power to charm, when either great designs or strong passions have seized upon the heart. We are either disgusted or insulted by anything which dares intrude on the sacred shrine devoted to cherish a worthy sorrow; and this sense of hallowed grief is felt more intensely in youth than maturity, for those who are only entering on life have seen little of the transitory nature of all earthly things; are more single-minded and pure; have less attachment to the world, but more to the few dear individuals that constitute their own world.

While engaged in his present tender offices, Menzikoff became sensible of a kind of calm, domestic happiness, of which he had not believed himself capable, and which increased so much, that, when called to the counsels of the sovereign, or, rather, when necessitated to perform her duties, he obeyed with constrained demeanour, and a heart that lagged behind. The good-natured empress pitied rather than resented the chagrin he evidently felt; told her own tale of symptoms, and inquired after those of Mary with the utmost solicitude. When the time at length arrived that he could say Mary was capable of taking an airing, she professed a desire of naming an early day for the betrothment of the invalid to the archduke.

For once in his life Menzikoff felt apalled by the fulfilment of his own ambitious views; how could he urge Mary to do that which might again reduce her to the state in which he had so lately seen her? Yet, when he looked at the empress, he felt that there was no time to lose; for, should she die before this contract was made, the wayward and sickly boy might either refuse to fulfil it, or, in fact, be unable; and, should he too die, the Duke of Holstein would instantly and justly seize the throne for his wife. On the contrary, should he live long enough to bring Mary forward as his empress, her beauty, virtue, and talents would do the rest. Once on the throne, she would hold her place for life; and his own power was established beyond the power of faction: his old passion rekindled as the view returned.

"Your majesty's will," he replied, "must be our law. Although the betrothment, according to all Russian forms, is a solemn ceremony, it is not a long one, therefore my daughter may be able to go through it in another week. The prince himself is very delicate, and your majesty's health (which is the most important point for consideration) seems to preclude all festivities on the occasion."

"I do not intend to trouble myself with any, but I wish to have your daughter near my per-

son. I have arranged all things necessary for state and convenience suitable for a grand-duchess; the change will amuse *her*, and to *me* she will be a great consolation."

Thus was the field won, the prize ensured, for which pride had so long toiled, and servility insidiously catered; yet was the brow of the conqueror cloudy; and, although his daughter received him with an assurance that she was better, he quitted her presence as if stung with conscious shame, and hastened to seek counsel from his wife.

CHAPTER XVI.

To the great relief of the anxious father, the princess appeared less shocked by his information than he expected, and undertook to speak of it to their daughter, without saying more on the subject than to request that she might break it to Mary in her own manner, and at the time when she saw her best able to bear it, to which he readily assented. The anxious mother had observed with sincere joy and heartfelt satisfaction the increased love of Mary for her father; and she thought that gratitude towards him, joined to the affection she had felt, from her cradle, for the gentle empress, would render her less averse to a marriage which was likely to benefit her whole family than the prince expected, because he could not conceive the extent of her love for them, and how entirely her nature was devoid of selfishness. Opposition in words she could not fear, since every Russian maiden of rank knew that the will of the crown was paramount in disposing of her hand; and that every circumstance had been the groundwork of her hopes for a long time, with respect to the union of her daughter with Prince Dolgourouki. At the time when he first saw and loved, he was highly in favour with the empress; Mary was fresh from the country, therefore he had no rivals; and she thought the approbation of the sovereign might be easily obtained, for she knew not of the plans of her husband, nor how closely that sovereign was beset.

Now all hope was gone by; the prince had succeeded in fully convincing Mary that Theodore was murdered, and, to his apprehension, by some foreign rival, who would, after a time, unfold his views. She saw clearly that Mary must marry a silly boy and mighty empire; and in her heart she believed that if ever woman was equal to the task of improving the one and benefiting the other, her daughter was that woman; nevertheless, she shrunk from imposing the task such union assigned her. Had Sapicha been the man proposed, how different would have been her sensations! Young, handsome, generous, already beloved as a friend: in time esteem would have warmed into a softer sentiment: and, alas! who could say that when the image of Theodore had faded, that of his friend might not supply his place in the bosom of Mary? Ah! then, what would be the fate of her pure, high-minded child? suffering on the one hand—guilt on the other—what a perspective for a devoted mother, a truly virtuous and religious woman!

In truth, these sad meditations so disturbed the weakly princess, that, instead of reasoning with her daughter, she was again conveyed to her couch; and Mary, rousing herself from the languors of early convalescence, hastened to become the nurse and comforter of her mother, and she, therefore, soon learned the true cause of her disorder, and also of the gloomy countenance of her father. She had endeavoured to prepare her mind for what she had lately deemed her future destination; yet still the shock was great, and inspired her with somewhat of indignation towards the empress, which, however, wore off when she remembered that she was ignorant, from first to last, of her love for Theodore, and also could not suspect his death, nor must be allowed to suspect it. Yet still, she felt that her natural feelings were not respected; and, flinging herself on her knees by the couch of her mother, she wept long and bitterly; for the father she had so loved and thanked appeared again in the light of a tyrant, and the empress in that of a weak woman, whose actions were moulded by his will. Oh! why had she returned to life and to suffering? why had they drawn her from the grave, to render existence hateful?"

From these few words, mingled with sobs which escaped, the princess read her thoughts, and, pressing her to her bosom, she said,

"Mary, you have yet a *mother*."

The weeping girl gazed upon her; and the belief that, though she was *now* a mother, the kindest and best of mothers, even that single source of comfort might not be long left to her, awoke a new vein of sorrow. Terribly as this pang was felt, it was yet useful; for when she could subdue the strong emotion under which she suffered, she saw clearly that her duty demanded a cheerful sacrifice as the only medium of her mother's health, her father's honour, and the future welfare of their young family; that, however she might despise the grandeur and loathe the connexion about to be forced upon her, yet she ought to accept them with apparent satisfaction, as the boon of those who had sought to make her happy and great. She remembered every instance of her father's late tenderness, and could not bear to forfeit similar proofs of kindness by what he might deem perverseness; and she trusted that when this last pinnacle of his ambition was attained, and his safety secured by alliance with the crown, he would return to those domestic affections and religious observances, from which the turmoil of his anxious, grasping spirit had so long estranged him.

With these conciliating thoughts were mingled others, which, though deeply affecting to a young and tender heart, and which, from time to time, drew tears from the eyes, were yet soothing in their influence. "If," said the fond mourner, "I am compelled to take a husband, surely my beloved Theodore (if, as I believe, he looks down upon me in pity) would rather I was tied to this plain and silly child than to any man about the court. Should earthly feelings be capable of pervading his pure essence, and shedding a gloom over the holy happiness of his state, my union will not disturb him, for even earthly jealousy could not be excited respecting me. No, beloved Theodore, thou dear and idolized being, for whom alone my heart could ever throb, to thee still sacred be all its warmest affections, its fondest preferences; and, in a few short years, I may be permitted to rejoin thee, and plead my unshaken constancy to a love neither death nor marriage could dissolve.—Thou canst read my heart more plainly now while on earth; thou canst see how thorny is the path I am called to tread; beseech the saints, who are thy glorious companions, to

shorten the way and support me under its troubles!"

Thus, by degrees, an ameliorated sense of her sorrowful situation crept over the heart of Mary, and, though still weak, pale, and fragile, she so struggled with herself as to meet the wishes of her father in a way most gratifying to him, and, in consequence of his favourable report, she, within the time specified by the empress, received visits from the grand-duke and the daughters of the empress. The tremour with which she spoke, the frequent changes of her complexion, and her forgetfulness, after her first thanks were tendered, of the rich presents they had brought her, might have induced older and more observant visitants to read somewhat of what was passing in her abstracted, and, indeed, wretched mind; but, happily for her, a piece of court scandal occupied them wholly. It was said that a certain nobleman, well known to them all, had discovered his eldest daughter's predilection in favour of a French merchant, and had given her, in consequence, a terrible beating. The young ones all commented much upon this incident—the youngest princess laughed, as if it were a very droll story—the eldest spoke of the father as an unfeeling brute—on which Peter declared "she talked very like a fool, for surely every man had a right to beat his own daughter."

"Your great ancestor sought to abolish such disgraceful ways of acting, my dear prince," said Menzikoff; "and I trust, as Russians become more enlightened in succeeding times, the very memory of domestic punishment of this nature will be obliterated."

"I am sure the empress, our dear mother, would wish it to be so," said the Princess Elizabeth; "she has done her best, by good example; for I don't think she ever struck you, Peter, in her life, and we all know you have often deserved it."

"Me!—what nonsense you talk!—it would have been a pretty business to strike a future emperor and a boy—beating is only fit for girls, and every Russian has a right to give his wife or daughter as much of it as he chooses."

"But your highness will allow that, in so doing, he acts neither like a gentleman nor a man," said Princess Menzikoff.

"Oh! you think it is unmanly, do you?"

"Every nation in Europe says so."

"Well, I don't say it is right, exactly; but only it makes me cross to think of old gruffy Peter making it out to be wrong: a few straps on a girl's back are very little matters compared to breaking old men on the wheel, and knouting young ones to death; and I know he has done such things many a time, for all the empress makes a fuss about him, and everybody calls him Peter the Great."

"I trust the time will come when they will call you Peter the Good," rejoined the anxious mother.

"I don't care one bit what anybody calls me when I am an emperor, because I can make them hold their tongues when I please; and I will have plenty of horses, and go a hunting whenever I choose; and perhaps I shall go to war, and kill more people than anybody; everything shall be just as *I* please."

"Poor Russia!" said Menzikoff, "what a prospect is thine!"

"Poor Mary! what will become of thee?" echoed silently through the heart of his wife.

A fortnight afterward the royal will was universally promulgated, and the chief officers of the crown summoned to witness the betrothment of Mary, the daughter of Prince Menzikoff—whose long train of titles and offices were duly registered—to the grand-duke, heir of all the Russias. All who were summoned, of course, attended; but many were absent, whose high lineage gave them a prescriptive right of preference, and it may be concluded these were not backward in reprobating the whole proceeding.

The nobles of Russia might be considered at this time as of two distinct classes, and they probably remain so to the present day. The ancient nobility of long descent and vast possessions, the holders of serfs or slaves to an immense amount, and therefore, in all times of public commotion, a powerful body—and the nobles by creation, whose revenues arose from posts bestowed on them by Peter the Great, who held them by gratitude for favours granted, or by expectations it was always in the power of the sovereign to realize. Himself a man not only of energy, but genius, he was naturally attached to all whose talents could assist his views, and whose exertions in forwarding his plans evinced attachment to his person and appreciation of his motives; and in numerous cases, no doubt, he rewarded the meritorious, and deserved the thanks of his country for bringing efficient labourers into the field. But with the courage or the wisdom of these auxiliaries was blended that admixture of human frailties inseparable from all conditions; and the ambitious, the insidious, the self-seeking, and unprincipled, were necessarily interwoven with the mass. Opposed to them were the ancient nobles, too ignorant to see the value of abilities they had never felt the want of; too self-satisfied to desire the change sought by their highly-gifted emperor; and even when naturally as clever as brave, also too honest to seek, by any dereliction of principles, to curry favour with that sovereign who preferred an inferior class. The Dolgouroukis alone had stepped forward to oppose cunning by cunning, and had therefore become obnoxious to him who stood not only at the head of the *parvenus*, but, after the death of the Czar, of the empire itself. The marriage of Peter the Great with Catherine had been to the old nobility very hateful; the marriage of Menzikoff's daughter to the young Peter was not less so; and those who, far removed from the seat of government, could at their ease abuse the pieman and lament the changes of the times, prophesy the ruin of the country, and secretly desire some terrible revolution which they yet dreaded, were certainly happier than the gay throng who shone in the court of the empress, and fawned on the brilliant star which had now attained its elevation; for they feared changes which might work evil for them, yet were generally discontented with their respective situations, because there were others above them. The aspiring are rarely the satisfied; and those who have been raised beyond their expectations pretty generally desire to rise beyond their merits.

Such were the high officers of state, who now attended the summons of the empress to witness how highly a subject in Russia may be elevated by marriage, and to observe the curious anomaly of a country, supposed to allow less esteem and less courtesy to woman than any other, exhibiting one woman of low birth upon the throne, and another virtually elected to fill its throne, at no great distance of time; it might also be said in sacred language, "What went ye out to see? a reed, shaken in the wind!" for such was Mary, the betrothed.

Pale, but calm, and resigned to a state she held to be inevitable, and willing to suffer for those who had suffered for her; arrayed in white satin, and glittering with jewels, the young princess appeared like a lily surcharged with dew; beautiful, yet melancholy, despite of the smile she sought to assume. The behaviour of her future lord, which was capricious, and appeared likely to become ferocious, accounted for her pensive looks to some; while others well remembered the gala evening in which she had danced with Theodore Dolgourouki, and thought her memory might haply be employed in also recalling the noble mien and animated features of that young nobleman, as forming a contrast to the little ill-favoured husband parental ambition and royal gratitude had gifted her with. Nevertheless, little pity was felt for her, not only because Russians in that day had little sentiment, but because, as the daughter of Menzikoff, she was involved in the general feeling which attached to her sire, who was hated, because he was envied, by those who yet inwardly confessed his abilities, energies, and that devotion to his country's welfare which ought to have won from all the praise of patriotism and humanity.

The princess had, on this eventful day, accompanied her daughter, from whom she expected to be separated; but found, to her relief, that the empress thought it more consistent with terms that Mary should return to her father's house for the present; and this was so welcome a permission, that it threw a gleam of sunshine to the heart, which reached the countenance, and rendered her able to receive the compliments of the courtiers with so much graceful urbanity, that the grand-duke was much better pleased with her than before, and declared very fondly "that he would fetch her himself on the morrow, as her apartment was prepared, and he might as well stay at Peterhoff as at home, when she would be at hand to play with him."

The Menzikoff family returned in great state to their dwelling, where a large party assembled for the evening, to whom Ulrica did the honours, being evident to all that both mother and daughter required retirement as a restorative. The father was indeed most anxious to afford his daughter every possible solace, for, like all other men who have given every faculty of their souls to the attainment of one object, that being secured, he felt either alarmed for its continuance, or sensible of its insufficiency for happiness. "Should Mary die before Peter," said he, "or Peter die before the empress, all my hopes will be crushed before one of them is realized."

"But yet there is another opening by which to insure power; my son is some months older than the grand-duke, and of a far better constitution; besides, he is very handsome; if I could bring about a marriage between him and the Princess Elizabeth, all would be well. She is only two or three years older than Alexander, is very lovely and resembles her mother in sweetness of disposition; she is fondly attached to Mary, whom Alexander resembles, and might be induced to love him for her sake."

"True! she is not the immediate heir; there are two married half-sisters nearer, whose husbands would struggle for their wives' precedence; but what have they done for Russia? tut, tut, I am on the spot, and everything here is done by *coup-de-main*. Elizabeth is the daughter of Peter the Great; daughter, also, of the Empress Catherine, whom all the Russians love. She will make an excellent empress, and I will place her on the throne of her father."

Elizabeth did indeed reign, and prove the truth of Menzikoff's prophecy—but where was the prophet then?

While such meditations, interspersed with solicitude on many points, were passing the mind of the host, he could not fail to appear in some degree abstracted and unjoyous, though long accustomed to practise that necessary habit of courts which may be termed the dissimulation of politeness. To some this appeared a desire to affect humility; others came nearer the truth in thinking that he feared his daughter would not live to become empress; but none supposed (aspiring and successful as he proved himself to be) that his plotting brain had hatched another scheme for a royal marriage, and held it possible that Catherine should consent to give her own fair daughter, whom every throne in Europe might be proud to woo and win, to a schoolboy.

CHAPTER XVII.

The following morning Mary prepared herself for her great trial, that of quitting the tender mother who still required her services; and her first duties she held to be accurate instructions to Ulrica respecting the peculiarities of her constitution, and the thousand lesser cares, whereby affection contrives to alleviate the evil it may not cure.

Now that the time was actually come for transporting to the palace-home he had so long prepared for her this jewel of his house, the father felt (as fathers ought) a mournful tenderness, a lively solicitude for the future, and a determination still to protect, so far as it was possible, the happiness and honour of his daughter. True, however, to the suggestions of his ambition, as awakened the preceding evening, he determined to form a more intimate acquaintance with his son than his busy life had ever yet permitted; therefore, he called him from his studies to walk with him on the ramparts, as he wished to explain to him the nature of those regulations he had lately been making for the port of Cronstadt.

Like all boys of his age, Alexander was proud of his father's notice, but, at the same time, his heart lingered with that beloved sister from whom he was soon to part; and he felt her removal the more, because he could not help disliking, and somewhat despising, her future husband. He was, at this time, much too closely engaged with classic history to be "ravished with the whistling of a name, whether Czar or Cæsar," and was little likely to be deemed other than a romantic boy, blind to his own interest, had they entered upon the subject now uppermost in the ever-toilingly busy brain of the father.

They looked forth on the waters of the gulf, which flowed calmly before them, bearing towards the capital various vessels laden with provisions and merchandise, which kept near the middle of the stream; but there was one fisherman's boat immediately below, the owner of which looked towards him with an earnestness which struck Menzikoff as singular, and recalled to his mind that when he last went to Cronstadt, the same man, or one resembling him, had thus gazed both as he went and returned. "Do you know that man, my dear?" said he to his son.

"Certainly, papa; it is Peter Bichoff, the fish-

erman who supplies the palace—at least, used to do. We have not seen old Peter, or his partner Alexis, of late."

Menzikoff now remembered distinctly having himself spoken to this man when the empress was at Oranienbaum, and he concluded that he was looking to him for reward; but his mind misgave him: events of a dreadful nature had passed since then; and, telling Alexander he had better return to the palace and spend his time with his sister, he passed down to the water-side, and hastily addressed the man with that tone of affable kindness which he generally adopted to his soldiers, but rarely to his domestic servants.

"Well, Peter, have you been lucky of late?"

"I have had little luck with fishing, your highness, and plenty of trouble to boot; but, in catching the enemy you were afraid of, and who would, for certain, have murdered the empress (whom God preserve!), I have surely caught that which will make a poor fisherman for life. Day after day, week after week, have I waited to see your highness."

"I remember telling you and your partner to have an eye to the postern-gate, and keep the crews of vessels from making any noise to disturb the empress when she was taking repose in the gardens; but I know not to what you allude."

The fisherman, then, with all the circumlocution of his class, and also with much of the trepidation a man feels who is by no means sure that he has done right, however right he might be in his intentions, proceeded to inform the prince that, "being extremely vigilant on account of the orders he had received, he had, three successive evenings, perceived a small boat plying under the walls, containing two men and a boy, and which, on the second night, he saw return to a vessel (he thought a Dantzicker) which lay in the gulf opposite Cronstadt. On the third evening, one of the men landed and approached the gate, when himself and partner were at a considerable distance, and could only see that the person entered, without knowing whether it was opened to him from within, or whether he possessed a key. When he had entered, the boat pushed off, but lay to close within shore; on seeing which, Alexander and myself were certain harm was meant; so we lost no time in plying our oars, and soon reached the very spot from whence he had sprung. God help us! we thought it high luck, and supposed it would be the making of us."

"What followed?" cried Menzikoff, impatiently.

"We consulted together for a short time, and concluded it was, by all means, right to take the traitor alive, and to go quickly, lest his friends, who, most likely, were well armed, should join him to murder the empress: so, taking up a new sail which we had just bought, we went softly into the garden, and there we saw just beyond the belt of trees this very man palavering with a damsel of the palace."

"Damsel of the palace" somewhat offended Menzikoff's ear, and he bade him "go on" in an imperative tone, not likely to forward the story; and Peter Bichoff assured his highness, very obsequiously, that they determined to catch the murderer without hurting him, "not so much because of the reward they expected, as that he should be brought alive and hearty to the torture, as he ought to be."

"But what did you do with him, my good fellow?" said the prince, in a milder tone, and by no means without a throbbing heart.

"We came behind him very cautiously, threw the sail right over his head and arms, and one grappled him round the legs, while the other seized him by the shoulders; but he was mighty obstreperous; and, stout as we both are, it was all we could possibly do to bring him into the boat, when I thought it right just to see what we had got, and so I unfolded the sail; and, if your highness will believe me, he was a regular conspirator, with a fisherman's clothes put over his own, which showed his treason quite plainly; so I said we would bind him, and put him in the new prison; but he started up, and swore he would never be taken there; and, seizing Alexander's dirk, gave him a severe wound, on which I ran my own weapon right through his body. What could I do, your highness? I was left alone, as it were, and should have been murdered on the instant."

"Was he killed?" said the prince, in a faltering voice.

"It was all the work of a single moment; doubtless he was mortally wounded, but by a terrible effort he sprang into the water; and, after swimming a few yards, his own boat, which had seen something of the scuffle, received him, the boy giving a shriek when he saw him, that rings in my ears ever since."

"Did you not pursue the boat?"

"They had firearms; besides, poor Alexander was bleeding, as I thought, to death; and, indeed, he has never done a day's work since; night also had fallen upon us, and I neither knew what to do for my comrade, nor how to account for his state. I thought I had done right, but still I was bewildered. All I have to say more is, that when the sun rose next morning, that Dantzic vessel was gone."

"The empress departed the very day in question, therefore you could not save her life; you have taken that of a fellow-creature for no purpose."

"We were out the whole day, and had been very successful, so we knew not of her majesty's departure. Besides, it was life for life, for the man wouldn't yield; and, seeing he was a disguised gentleman, no wonder he struggled so. Oh! had we secured him, what a reward should we have had from the empress!—but surely your highness is the same; it was your bidding we obeyed."

"You have murdered a man, and you ask a reward! Would you have hanging, or the knout?"

"I have told your highness the truth, as poor Alex's wound testifies; what I did was in obedience to *your* commands. I had no ill-will to the man, who was young and well-favoured, and might have been one of the highest in the land, from his bearing. I am your slave; I complain not; what I did was in the service of my lord. I may not have recompense, but your highness is not wont to punish those who are vigilant and honest."

Menzikoff felt extremely uneasy; he might, to suit his own purposes, have desired the absence, or even death, of Theodore; but yet, he could not remember him without admiring his excellent qualities, and honouring those virtues in him which he was conscious of being deficient in his own character. His youth, beauty, and courage; his becoming a victim to his love for his own darling daughter, were all claimants on his pity and regard; but care for himself soon superseded sorrow for Theodore. He looked on the stalwart arm of him who had dealt the death-blow, and could not doubt that it was

fatal; but it was plain that the splash heard by Mary was his own plunge, and that he had lived to be received by his friend, the young German baron. If even he died without the power of explaining the mode of his murder, would not the young German conceive it, and believe that he had employed an assassin?—would he not reveal the sad story, in all its horrors, to the Dolgourouki, who would consider its truth confirmed by the long-sufferings and the succeeding marriage of his daughter to the heir of the empire? The latest accounts from Theodore's father spoke of an advantageous settlement with Persia, though not a brilliant victory, and he was now, probably, returning. What must be his emotions on hearing of such a catastrophe?

Time was that the misery of this unhappy father would have afforded all the pleasures of vengeance to Menzikoff; but now he felt that they had at least one point of union—the same circumstance caused them to be wretched.

Yet the words, "had the fools consigned him to the deep while he was still smothered in the sailcloth," rose continually to his mind—the wishes of the murderous hand, mingled with the selfish fears which all who are not utterly and irretrievably abandoned feel for their reputation, blended also with the improbable supposition that Theodore himself might one day rise from the sick-bed, which should have been a grave, to reproach him, render his daughter a maniac, and his wife a corpse. Would not his sovereign reproach him, her people loathe him, the old nobility rejoice at his exposure, the new unite to disgrace him, that they might rise on his ruin, and fatten on his confiscated wealth; while the courts of Europe, remembering his splendour, and detesting the exercise of those talents, which, by turns, had held them in thraldom, would rejoice in the humiliation of that country he had sought to raise above them all.

Such were the thoughts, the fears, the agonizing apprehensions, which rent the heart of Menzikoff, the very day after he had completed the desire of his soul for many a doubting, anxious year; and such will ever be the results of an ambitious, grasping, avaricious spirit, which has suffered the nobler wishes of a truly patriotic mind to dwindle into the narrow desires of selfish aggrandizement. Such is the weakness of human nature, that but a hair divides the nobler and truly virtuous intention from the grovelling instinct which runs along with it, until by some especial temptation it gets the start, and precedes it even to the grave.

Poor Peter watched the troubled countenance of the prince, and clearly perceived that he had done wrong, and that his chance for recompense was too likely to be commuted for punishment; and he was casting about in his mind how he could withdraw from the observation of that arbiter of his earthly destiny whom he had long sought to attract, when Menzikoff, starting from his painful revery, put a few roubles in his hand, telling him to take care of Alexis, and look to the well-known charity of the princess in his time of distress during winter, saying, impressively, "that he must never mention this unfortunate affair to any human being, save at his own command;" and adding, "since you supposed that you did service to the empress, and acted according to my command, I am willing to overlook it, but the civil authorities will not."

At this very moment the heart of Menzikoff warned to bestow a meed which should release this really industrious man from the poverty which pressed upon him, and was unquestionably, from his late loss of time, likely to be severely felt during the winter now commencing. He dared not do this, lest it should hereafter be adduced as a proof of his guilty participation in the death of Theodore—a charge that he felt to hang over his head like the sword of the tyrant suspended by a single hair, although he was unquestionably as innocent in this unhappy affair as he was guilty in others; for several persons, from very slight causes, had been condemned by him, or, rather, by his intriguing spirit, to the deserts, and even the mines of Siberia, to expiate, by a daily death of torture, an idle jest, or an honest invective against the ruler of Russia, or the empress who aggrandized him.

With a lingering foot and downcast eyes, this pampered child of fortune returned to his splendid palace, conscious that a barb was lacerating his heart, which it was utterly impossible for him to extract or even reveal, and fearing that even his well-practised art could not wholly chase from his countenance the painful sensations that were rankling within. He was, however, compelled to try (happy in that some excuse for sorrow existed in parting with his daughter); for the Prince Peter had arrived, and the household were in the bustle of preparation for her departure, many lamenting the loss of one so beloved, and not any rejoicing, as the grand-duke expected, in the glorious destiny ensured to her by a union with the future emperor.

Two of the princesses, Anna and Elizabeth, had accompanied the cavalcade, and were most amiably attentive to the Princess Menzikoff, whom they loved and pitied, as about to sustain an irreparable personal loss in her daughter. Menzikoff, never losing sight of any plan for the future, which was formed however crudely by a mind so imbued and incrusted by ambition, roused himself to show particular attention to the younger, and caused Alexander to wait upon her with all that could tempt the palate or amuse the sight, though mortified to see how little his simple-hearted though sensible son had the manners of the courtier. This deficiency he determined to amend, and considered that there might be time for it before any positive steps could be taken; but he started, as if his scheme had been discovered, when the young princess observed "that she did not wonder Mary could not forbear to weep—it was a sad thing to leave good parents and dear sisters—she, herself, would never marry."*

"You would marry soon enough, if it would make you an empress," said Peter, indignantly.

"I would not marry a boy to be an empress ten times over; and if, by any chance, I were placed on the throne, I would have no other husband than my people."

"But you have no chance—no chance whatever—neither you nor Anna."

"We have all the chance either of us desire; reigning is a burdensome honour."

"Yes: men only ought to reign, I know that: 'in some countries,' my tutor says, 'they never let women reign at all,' and I intend it shall be so in Russia. They call it a Salique law, and I will make it here; old Kate shall be the very last woman that sits on the throne of Muscovy. Prince Menzikoff, remember what I tell you."

The prince smiled and bowed: at that very moment his eye was on two fair females whom he thought equally fitted for that imperial seat, and two future empresses were indeed before

* She never did marry, and was an excellent empress.

him, who lived to prove themselves far more fitted for their high office than the young bridegroom; but the superior qualities of the next empress have placed their memories in the shade. A more unfortunate prophetic threat was never uttered; nevertheless, it had an effect on the mind of Menzikoff far from agreeable, and set his faculties busily at work to counteract the grand-duke's schemes for the future, if schemes he could be said to have, whose words were a repetition of the last he had caught from another, and whose intentions varied with the whim of the moment. Such a political opponent was not likely to give much trouble to the long-headed, experienced minister; nevertheless, unlimited power is a terrific engine, and difficult to direct, even when held by imbecile hands that look to others for assistance.

The awful moment arrived that tore poor Mary from her idolized mother, her beloved family—but her sacrifice was made: she had wound up her mind to endurance; and though, at this moment, it somewhat revolted from that father she had loved so fondly, yet, when she beheld his troubled countenance, and remembered that he would never cease to be her support, to him also she accorded not only duty, but affection. Little did she know that the image of her own Theodore was uppermost on this eventful morning, as much in his heart as her own, and happy it was for her that she was ignorant of those harrowing details which had met his ear, and left doubt on his mind as to the present existence of her lover.

It was the utter hopelessness of her case that rendered it endurable, by directing her mind to heaven as the medium of future reunion with him, and teaching her humble submission to God, and active benevolence to her fellow-creatures, as the path appointed to her bereaved spirit on earth, and which would not fail to conduct her to heaven. She omitted no ceremonies held to be sacred in her very ceremonious church; for crossings, fastings, and frequent repetition of prayers were a relief from the broodings of a morbid imagination; but her mother had imbibed from Brukenthal, many years before, the doctrines of a more enlightened era, and Mary had learned to worship in spirit and in truth, and to substitute pure Christianity for imbecile observances, though she made no pretences to higher knowledge than those around her, and could frequently find comfort in adopting usages which were the habits of her childhood and her country, and were at least symbols of better things.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When Mary arrived at the palace of Peterhoff, which was a favourite abode with the empress, although at that time small and inconvenient, she was struck more than on the preceding day with the enlargement* of her person and her extreme debility. She soon became sensible that the ceremony of betrothment, and her own early removal to the palace, were in consequence of the royal invalid's desiring the assistance of one to whose abilities, as a nurse, she attached a kind of supernatural value, in consequence of her mother's recovery from a state of great danger. To enter on any charge likely to produce good to any human being Mary could never have objected, for kindness was a part of her very nature: and she was not only grateful to the empress for her munificence to her father, but loved her for her merciful disposition and happy equanimity of temper.

Although it was evident that the sufferer's case admitted of nothing beyond temporary alleviation, it was admitted by all, that for a time the dreaded stroke was averted by the unceasing care and affectionate watchfulness of the young grand-duchess, who obtained the power of inducing the empress not only to forego her favourite wine and confections, but repent that she had ever indulged in habits inimical to her health. So much better did she at one time appear, that her physicians ventured to predict her return to health; and her daughters, with the happy facility of youth which always hopes for that it ardently desires, became fondly attached to Mary as the cause of her amendment. If a patience which never wearies, a temper "that can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day," and that close observation of symptoms and changes so necessary for information to medical advisers, could make so young a woman (what every woman should be) an efficient nurse, we cannot doubt the utility of our gentle Mary, since her understanding was happily not inferior to her tenderness.

Whenever amendment was announced, or the return of disease evinced in a case continually fluctuating, all the machinery of intrigue became instantly afloat in the court. Some were rejoicing in the return of their generous mistress to her station, others lamenting that the time had not arrived for humbling Menzikoff, many balancing the probability of his fall with the fascinations of his daughter, who might prevent it, or even increase his greatness and stability; all were busy and anxious to secure aggrandizement, or ensure the place they held.

It was whispered that the heir of the crown did not receive Menzikoff as he was wont, being generally engaged, all the time they were together, in complaining of the absence of the grand-duchess, whom he wanted to amuse him or to teach him something, but who shut herself up with the empress. The prince, in reply, admitted that it was hard upon him, and took all possible pains to assist his amusements, as well as reason with him on the duty all owed to the empress, and tried to excite pity for sufferings in which his own ill health enabled him to sympathize. As Menzikoff had been considered the finest figure in Russia on horseback, and the most perfect master of the *ménage*, if Peter was inclined to take a lesson in riding from him, in general his good-humour would return; but, since he was really unequal to any exertion, and suffered spitting of blood in consequence of it when the rides were cut short from a proper attention to his health, he considered himself ill-used and improperly treated, and hastened to vent reproaches both on father and daughter.

The empress, notwithstanding her increasing infirmities, sought to sooth all asperities in so far as they were revealed to her; and, conscious of the dulness of her court, whenever she found her health a little better, exerted herself to share or invent some amusement for her family circle. A little time before the death of Peter the Great, he had added to the many benefits conferred on his country that of founding an acad-

* Her complaint was dropsy.

emy, which was modelled on the plan of the Royal Society in London, and the academy in France, and to which he had, by noble endowments, drawn men of literature from various countries. This, the latest of his institutions, had, ever since her widowhood, been the especial care of Catherine; and it had been opened, the preceding year, with great *éclat*, by a splendid lecture on the utility of the sciences, and an *eloge* on the munificent founder; and, the anniversary now approaching, the empress determined to add her presence and that of all the royal family now resident in Petersburgh to its support and honour; but, previously to her appearance, thus publicly, as a member of her august house, wished the marriage ceremony of Mary and the grand-duke to be completed. This proposition was received gladly by Menzikoff; but his daughter's change of complexion and look of dismay evinced her inward agitation and repugnance, though she remained perfectly silent. The empress looked scrutinizingly and severely upon the father, saying, "Mary's heart is a very good heart, but I fear it is not, as you informed me, a disengaged one. I trust, in time, she will be able to turn it to Peter; between thirteen and sixteen he will improve materially; and she, too, may conquer any childish fancy: that some such has affected her I cannot doubt; she has struggled with some secret grief ever since she came among us."

Menzikoff durst not trust himself with reply, for he had also a secret grief closely connected with his daughter's, and lived in daily fear of some discovery inimical to his name, and likely to subvert his prosperity. The empress saw clearly that she had spoken the truth; and, pursuing the subject, she recollected the meeting with Theodore Dolgourouki, who had so strangely (to her conception) disappeared from the court he was so fitted to grace, and since then requested permission to travel. Doubtless, poor Mary, then scarcely fifteen, had suffered herself to be caught by his attractions, a weakness to which she had herself contributed on that eventful night when all were so much exhilarated; as, however, she had never seen him since (so far as the empress knew), and years might pass before his return (the general leave of absence being five to those noblemen who desired to travel), there appeared no reason for evading the conclusion of the marriage, and placing Mary before the public as the future empress.

It is probable that this amiable woman never entertained love, as an impassioned preference, for any man. Her marriage with the young soldier, whom she lost on the same morning, was the result of her forlorn situation in extreme youth; and the good priest, whose servant she was, could scarcely fail to desire such protector to one so beautiful in such a time of trouble. When she became the choice of the czar, it must be evident there was no choice for herself: that the high state to which he raised her, the luxuries he lavished on her, and all that he beheld of his munificent designs and wonderful qualities, won her esteem and admiration, we cannot doubt; and her own power over him in soothing his violence, purifying his passions, and exalting all the higher parts of his strange-mingled nature, would unquestionably excite her affections. That she both loved and honoured his memory there can be no doubt, since she proved it by every action of her life; but *love*, as it is generally felt in woman's heart—fond, trustful, tender, constant, self-renouncing love—was not among the ingredients of her strange, eventful history. The idle tales of her early *liaison* with Menzikoff defeat themselves; for the protection his house afforded her was accorded by his wife, then a beautiful, newly-married, and idolized bride, to whom General Bauer, with a delicacy which ought to be recorded to his honour, consigned her, because, being a bachelor, she could not be properly placed under his roof.

"We shall have my Persian general, Prince Lubitsch Dolgourouki, home soon. He has been now a good while employed as a negotiator with Persia, for he could not carry his war on by a *coup de main*, like his son Theodore," said the empress to Mary.

The burning blushes that rose on the name of Theodore, and as quickly subsided into more than marbly paleness, confirmed the suspicion of the empress; but it so far moved her compassion that she ever afterward avoided naming him, and became the more intent to give either amusement or employment to the dear girl who was, every day, more valuable in her sight; but, at the same time, the father declined in her estimation. Mary was inwardly convinced that her tender predilection was discovered and pitied, yet, in some sort, held to be a folly; and her heart overflowed with gratitude towards one who could treat her wounded spirit with so much lenity, and often did she ardently desire to throw herself at the feet of her royal mistress and compassionate friend, and at once confess her love, her sorrow, and the death of him who could never be an object of jealousy to her future husband; but this she could not do for her father's sake; and her perception of the empress's vexation towards him awakened, to the utmost, her desire to restore him to confidence by all that seemed possible on her part—a cheerful acquiescence and grateful sense of the honours awaiting her. "May I be enabled," said she, "to make my sacrifice complete!—since I cannot live for Theodore, may I live for my family and for my duties!—In seeking the happiness of others, in entering on a state which will enable me to make many hearts happy, my own may find peace, though it has lost felicity."

Pursuant to these sentiments, and really possessing a taste for the fine arts, and a perception of scientific pursuits far superior to her age, Mary now entered with apparent ardour into the plans of the empress for a splendid exhibition at the academy; and even bore, without shrinking, the preparations for solemnizing the second ceremony for tying her to Peter; at the same time, she redoubled her attention to the royal invalid, in order to enable her to encounter the fatigues in prospect.

At this time the empress was much diminished, and so much younger-looking than she had been for the last three or four years, that she submitted to the labours of the toilet in a manner she had never done since the death of the emperor. Her skin was delicately fair, and her hair flaxen; but, as her eyes were of the darkest hazel, she had been accustomed to have her hair and eyebrows dyed black, which enhanced the lustre of her complexion and the brilliancy of her eyes. Rouge had not yet become general in the Russian court, though it has since then become notoriously so; nor would Peter the

Great have authorized it; but Catherine, willing to efface from her subjects the idea of sickness, now used it sparingly, and, gorgeously ornamented with diamonds over a dress of green velvet, trimmed with point lace, worked in the convent she most patronised, appeared before her court, and afterward more publicly, the same beautiful woman and benevolent sovereign all had known her years before as the wife of the Czar. The people rejoiced that her power was perpetuated and increased in a manner they had never done before, as the completion of the academy was her own work, and awoke their memory to her munificence, not less than to a recollection of her mercy and humanity. As her carriage moved slowly onward, shouts of joy, mingled with words of congratulation and prayers for her life, rent the heavens and affected her exceedingly, tears mingling with the smiles and blessings she tried to utter. Mary, alarmed for the consequences of this trial to her strength, by every tender assiduity sought to sustain her; and, as it was generally thought, her cares had thus restored their "beloved mother" to her people, she, too, experienced the loud plaudits of a people awakened to enthusiasm, and of course the grand-duke came in for his share, to his great delight. He was proud of Mary's beauty, and delighted with the attention and applause she received, and had never appeared so amiable and interesting in the eyes of his future subjects as on this eventful day, which was in every respect joyous and satisfactory, save in its effects on the empress.

The consequence of her fatigue and agitation did not, however, immediately appear, and her spirits seemed cheered and soothed by the apparent improvement of the young prince, who, connecting the *vivas* of the day with the learning of the academy, professed an intention to become very studious, and to attain the knowledge called for by his situation as the heir apparent. No plan could be more calculated for inspiring him with due esteem and affection for his consort than this, for Mary was well able to instruct him, and the sweetness of her temper was calculated to ameliorate the weariness of study, and excite the emotions of gratitude; but the scheme devised for improvement, and entered on with avidity, was suddenly suspended by the return of the empress's disorder, which speedily assumed a form that baffled all the powers of medicine.

At this awful juncture, Mary again entered on every kindly office with the tenderness of a ministering angel, but her attendance was now called upon to sooth and cheer the departing spirit, rather than to aid the suffering and sinking frame. The archbishop and other ministers of the Greek Church frequently prayed with the empress, and she adopted (without therefore relying on their efficacy for salvation) all those forms which constitute its ceremonies: but she had, in very early life, been imbued with doctrines of a simpler and more efficacious faith; and happy was she to find that, from the lessons of Brukenthal, her youngest but best instructed friend comprehended the higher views of Christianity, and without turning disdainfully from what many term "the mummeries of the priesthood," yet looked to the word of God, and the great sacrifice which that word reveals, as the sure medium of salvation and the source of hope to the departing soul. Sacred and happy, though mournful, were the readings, the conversations, and the broken yet heartfelt prayers, which relieved the wearisome nights of the sufferer, who, to the last, retained her faculties, received her ministers, instructed the heir of her empire, and consoled her own dear daughters. These princesses, and those of the emperor by his former wife, together with his nieces, were alike anxious to prove their love and watchfulness over her; but, perceiving how much more efficient were the attentions of her who had been so long accustomed to the cares of a daughter, they left the charge to Mary, confiding in her skill, and thankful for her exertion and affection.

One day, when her pain had subsided, and in consequence she felt a temporary relief, she desired to see all of her relations who were then within the walls of the palace; and, causing herself to be raised in the bed, she laid her head on the shoulders of Mary, who sat upon the couch, and addressed them as they arrived with the kind and sweet voice which was peculiar to her. She then adverted to the many changes of her eventful life; she observed that the highest station exempted no one from the general lot of humanity; that none could bear the pains of death for another; and that it was of little consequence to her, at that moment, whether she were a servant in Marienburg, or an empress in St. Petersburgh: her only source of hope now lay in being an humble Christian.*

In a few short moments her smile faded, but the countenance remained calm, and a faint sigh only told that the spirit had departed.

CHAPTER XIX.

Only two years had elapsed since the deceased empress had succeeded to that most glorious but most responsible of all earthly situations, the absolute sovereignty of the greatest nation, or, rather, assemblage of nations in the world. Little gifted for such a situation, and, apparently, devoid of the ambition which would have led her to seek it, we can hardly doubt that she was stimulated by Menzikoff to desire it, or led to believe that, unless she obtained power, she would sink into poverty and obscurity; that no medium state would enable her to retain the comforts she desired without ensuring the splendours of a throne.

Every view of her character proves, however, that selfish anxieties had little to do with her acceptance of the throne; for there is every reason to believe, that the good of the people was, indeed, her great object, together with the desire to forward the especial views of the great man to whom she had been allied; nor can we doubt that, if her life had been spared until his grandson had attained manhood, she would have resigned with pleasure the crown for which she had little desire, since she would, by that means, have dispensed with the business for which she had a positive aversion.

That Menzikoff apprehended such an event, we cannot doubt, from his anxiety to strengthen his own power by his daughter's marriage with a sickly child like Peter II., since it appeared the only means of prolonging his administration of the affairs of Russia, which he undoubtedly intended to hold in his hands whether Peter or

* Historical.

his wife were on the throne. However we may blame his ambition, it must be allowed that he sought to perpetuate the designs of his great master, and the welfare of the country which he loved.

On the present occasion, not one dissentient voice was heard on the subject of the succession; for the heir of the empire was unquestionably the grandson of Peter, who was immediately proclaimed by Menzikoff in the most pompous and emphatic manner any precedent allowed, good care being taken to link the name of the empress with that of the emperor. This ceremony over, his next care was to make the most magnificent arrangements for the funeral, which took place in the usual manner, under the immediate control of the favourite minister.

Meantime, the young princesses, and all of the household who had ever attended the late empress in person, were drowned in sorrow. They had lost a most tender mother and beneficent mistress, whose pure kindness of heart and integrity of intention, informed by a sound understanding, had compensated to them for shining talents and elegant accomplishments. Nor was the grief without the palace much inferior to that within; wherever there was a tear to wipe, or a mouth to feed, the kindness of the empress had sufficed for help; she abolished torture, which had heretofore existed in its most hateful and horrible forms; she examined the cases of the condemned, and, where it was possible to extend pardon, consistent with the general safety of the community, never failed to do so, and, by her vigilant inquiries, abated the nuisance of bribery, and purified the courts of justice. Quietly labouring to promote the gigantic views of the mighty reformer whom she succeeded, she expedited beneficial changes without wounding the prejudices of those she desired to improve, and thus offered an example to her own sex of proceeding safely and surely, meekly yet perseveringly, to the attainment of a virtuous object.

Catherine, even in her short reign, had effected so much good, that no one questioned its value to Russia, and its still greater value to the present youthful sovereign; nor did any reasonable man deny the efficient services of that minister who had been both hands and eyes to Peter the Great, and everything to his successor. The merchants, artists, and artisans especially praised him: the army (now at rest) ascribed their efficiency to his regulations; nor were the navy less friendly: but the ancient lords of the soil, and their dependant serfs, derided the qualities they could not comprehend, despised the splendour they could not imitate, yet naturally envied, and clung more than ever to the prejudice in favour of high birth, because it offered a flaw in the proud upstart's escutcheon, which neither time nor merit could efface.

When due honours had been paid to the memory of the departed, it was expected that a court, headed by such youthful sovereigns, would be unusually gay; but the emperor's necessary exertions had enfeebled him, and for some weeks he was a regular invalid; but his disposition evidently softened; and the unwearied attentions of his gentle wife, and her endeavours to amuse him, awoke his affection, and his mind and temper alike evinced improvement.

The arrival of Ivan Dolgourouki from Persia (with whom he had settled a peace advantageous to Russia) aroused the spirits of the emperor, and depressed those of his trembling wife, who, above all things, dreaded the arrival of Theodore's father. From this trouble she was soon relieved, as Prince Lubitsch had been wounded in the beginning of the late campaign, and remained in such infirm health, that he desired leave to reside in his native air at Moscow, which was immediately granted, and accompanied by messages denoting the approbation and warm regard of the emperor.

The sentiments thus expressed were perfectly consonant to the feelings and opinions of Mary; nor were they opposed in the slightest degree by her father, who honoured courage even in an enemy; nevertheless, a slight ominous shudder crossed his features, not unobserved by Mary, though she had purposely seated herself at her embroidery. Alas! the name was a source of alarm; for she could not prevent the impetuous blood rushing to her cheeks whenever she heard it. "Theodore" was a word, though unuttered, ever on her lip, his image before her eye, his voice in her ear, and she had hoped that, from the constant familiarity of her thoughts and her sorrows as regarded him, she should be able to subdue any external signs of that which dwelt within; but at this time she had not attained the perfect self-command which her situation required.

Well, however, did she struggle with herself, knowing that other branches of the family must, from time to time, present themselves, and that the grand maréchal, whom she sincerly reverenced, was sure to appear whenever his infirmities permitted; therefore, she must compel herself to receive them without tears or blushes. The frequency of Ivan's visits had somewhat familiarized her to his appearance, and she could receive him without starting; but a lady of the court one day remarked, within her hearing, that "the arrival of Count Ivan made the empress colour," adding, maliciously, "but, indeed, he is a very fine-looking man."

Was it possible that one so artless, so retiring—one that knew her inmost soul was devoted to the memory of the dead only too fondly, could be suspected of a preference so unwarranted? Alas! in her peculiar situation there was room for the bad to suspect, and the good to fear; but never did the breath of slander light on her fair fame, or detect one glance of coquetry, one demand of vanity. This observation taught her self-restraint, the necessary accompaniment of the most perfect innocence at courts, and taught her also the value of her father's frequent presence; for, as he had been created Duke of Cazel in addition to his many honours, and also appointed grand steward of the Czar at the time of his proclamation, it was his duty to be frequently near the royal person; and it was not known beyond the precincts of the court that his influence was diminished or diminishing.

From the time of Ivan Dolgourouki's return, he, however, became sensible of it himself, and, therefore, performed his duties the more assiduously, and watched the proceedings of his young enemy the more attentively. Words merely spoken by chance frequently alarmed him from the mouth of Ivan, who was gay and lively, nevertheless shrewd and designing, and not unfrequently cast upon Menzikoff looks so fraught with meaning, that he could not for-

bear to entertain the belief that his cousin's death was known to him, and intended, hereafter, to be revenged upon himself. Penetrating and subtle, possessing the pride of his family, and, most probably, its ambition, though veiled under a careless demeanour, Ivan caused the powerful minister more of anxiety and suspicion than he had ever known before, and had the effect of quelling his project of seeking farther aggrandizement by the union of his son with the Princess Elizabeth. The relinquishment of his project was most happy for the boy so destined, since, instead of bringing him to court, and rendering him prematurely insidious, cunning, and subtle, with the despotism of a tyrant and the servility of a slave, he was now at liberty to pursue his studies under a wise tutor, and cultivate virtue and religion with a pious and high-minded mother.

To this mother the heart of the young empress clung with even more of affection and dependance than she had ever known; to witness her returning health, receive the meed of approbation from her lips, was a recompense and support to which she was continually looking, and which, after the death of the empress, she naturally hoped to enjoy. The princess had visited her sovereign once since Mary's removal; and the few moments she could pass in that trying time with her daughter were a mockery to her mother's feelings; so that she too expected, when the solemnities of the funeral and the pageants which followed had subsided, her daughter might be allowed to visit her freely, and, in reply to her request for that purpose, the emperor readily promised she should, professing himself sincerely attached to her, and happy to attend to her requests.

This promise was never fulfilled; for, even at the moment of departure, in the mere wantonness of caprice, Peter would command her to remain with him, and, in the same spirit, Ulrica her sister was forbidden to enjoy the gayeties of the court, and Alexander declared to be too young to appear there. Even when Mary urged the promise she had made to the late empress to fulfil on her behalf the duties of a godmother to her little sister, she was denied either visiting or receiving her, by an assurance that "so good a mother as hers could want no assistance in educating a baby;" and the emperor added, in a marked accent, and giving a glance to Ivan Dolgourouki, "don't trouble your head about her; you will have enough of her by-and-by."

These mortifications, combining with that abiding canker-worm which gnawed the heart in which it was enshrined, had an effect on her health and spirits she could not control; the rose, which begun, though faintly, to revisit her cheek, under the effect of her beneficial exertions for the late empress, again faded—her appetite failed, and her form became attenuated. The symptoms, which moved compassion in others, awoke only anger in the monarch. It was the pleasure of the emperor that she should look not only beautiful, but gay, and dress very splendidly, for he observed that "his grandfather (whom everybody called great) liked the late empress because she was handsome, and set off his court; therefore he would have a handsome consort, and if she grew pale and ill-favoured, he would get a new wife; he knew very well the bishops could send her away any day if she were not pretty and lively, and obeyed him as she ought to do."

When these taunts were uttered in the presence of the father, he felt not only angry, but alarmed, and took an early opportunity of urging his daughter, for the sake of all her family, to endeavour, by every means, to secure the attachment, or, at least, the approbation of her ill-conditioned husband. Mary thought she could do no more than she had done; but, having lately sought to beguile her sad thoughts by taking lessons in music from an Italian professor, she hoped to make it the medium of soothing and amusing her wayward little lord. The Czar had, indeed, an excellent ear, and the passion for music so universal in his country, and he became much pleased when she sang him the songs he was fond of; but his taste was not sufficiently cultivated to relish her performance on the harpsichord, then newly introduced. Frequently would he compel her to sing until she was completely exhausted, and then, forgetful of all the pleasure she had given him, he would rudely dismiss her from his presence, and again comment on her pale cheeks and exhausted appearance.

That the Czar was prompted to this cruel conduct Mary could not doubt, since she had become apparently dear and necessary to him during the last days of the empress, to whom he had yielded her as a painful loss to himself; and at that period she had entertained hopes, in common with her father and the royal invalid, of being extremely useful to him, and, consequently, to the country he must govern. These hopes had now vanished, and fears for her family awakened in their stead, and she could no longer doubt to whom she owed the change, for Ivan Dolgourouki sedulously persuaded the infatuated monarch that listening to a woman's singing was unworthy of him, and hastened to introduce men who sang hunting and drinking songs, whereby his original passion for the chase was revived in all its enthusiasm, and he was led to join in the libations of these companions to the immediate injury of his constitution, every error of this kind placing him under the care of his physicians, whose remonstrances endangered their own safety without producing advantage to him. So soon as his head could leave his pillow, he sought for the solace of Ivan's company, who exercised over him an influence so absolute, that, a century earlier, it would have been imputed to witchcraft, but was undoubtedly that fascination which the accomplished Frenchwoman, under such an accusation, declared to be "the natural power of a strong mind over a weak one."

Ivan Dolgourouki used for a spell the word "manly," in order to stimulate a delicate boy of thirteen to efforts beyond his strength, and which, therefore, retarded considerably the growth and robustness he earnestly desired. He was himself athletic, and trained to encountering fatigue, and giving proof of strength and agility, and perhaps thought that, in tempting a weak and foolish boy to feats which nature forbade him to perform, he was training him to hardihood; but not wisely, since it must be evident that the life, and not the death, of his sovereign would be to his advantage. To Mary, and also to the young princesses, it appeared a system adopted to thwart the views of Menzikoff, who never failed to deprecate hunting for

the emperor until he were older, and always joined him in this diversion at great personal inconvenience, in order to guard him from danger on the field, and see that he received all possible care on arriving at the palace.

On these occasions, Mary never failed to arrange all things necessary for comfort and safety to the exhausted frame and jaded spirits of her lord; and he would, at the moment, be thankful for her attentions; but on the following day they would be resented as intrusive, and the cautions of her father considered as insult. At other times, because the prince had lately increased in bulk, and was supposed to be averse to hunting, as a fatigue he would willingly escape, his attendance was imperatively called for, and the most important public business, which he was known to be desirous to despatch immediately, commanded to be postponed, since his presence was indispensable. Yet, on his arrival, coarse jokes on his person, sneers on his love for business, as "one who was born to labour," or cold, averted looks, and fond attention to the favourite, were all he met from the boy wont to receive all his pleasures from his hands during the life of his grandsire; the boy whom he had loved as his own, and "borne on his back a thousand times." It was evident that not only affection was extinct, but hatred engendered in the royal mind towards him, yet it was expressed with enough of outward courtesy to hold him true in his allegiance; and, indeed, Mary was held in the light of a hostage for her father, who was frequently observed to eye her with looks of the tenderest pity, and there were times when his proud heart swelled almost to suffocation with indignant emotion.

There were not wanting those about the court who might have told the young emperor that, but for Menzikoff, the Duke of Holstein might have been on the throne, seeing that the Dolgouroukii had always desired his elevation; but, alas! "a favourite has no friends;" and even those who inwardly blamed the emperor for his ingratitude, and thought that Ivan Dolgourouki was a poor exchange for the talented Menzikoff, yet remembered some offence given in the hour of his greatness which wounded their self-love, some omission in his distribution of places which mortified their cupidity; yet all saw so clearly the fickle temper and vacillating weakness of the emperor, that they knew not but another week might exhibit Menzikoff again in the ascendant, and his blameless daughter appear as idolized as she was lovely.

CHAPTER XX.

From the Empress Mary to the Princess Menzikoff.

LETTER I.

Oh! my beloved mother, how can I longer bear this cruel separation!—you are sick, and Mary is not kneeling by your couch; your heart is ill at ease, fearing alike for your daughter and your husband, and I not near to sooth your spirits, or, perhaps, allay your anxieties; yet we are but a few versts asunder, and numerous horses, stately carriages, are supposed to be at my command. Alas! the daughter of the lowest serf is not so cowed in spirit, so enslaved to circumstances, so enveloped in the meshes of idle ceremonies and silly commands, as your own poor Mary, whom men gaze at with wonder, dazzled by her diamonds.

But my time is limited (although, thank Heaven, my apartment is sacred!) and I have taken up my pen not to speak of my own situation, nor to pour into your tender heart those sacred sorrows which you alone can pity and sooth. I will not even mention the *name;* I will follow your advice and obey your precepts. Dear mamma, praise your own Mary for a forbearance necessity, not resignation, has taught her.

My alarm is so excited on my dear father's behalf (which, of course, includes us all), and I am so encompassed by listeners and spies, that I durst not trust the delivery of this to any hands but his own; the intent of it being to persuade him to leave the court—the country. Did not our dear friend Brukenthal say he had large sums vested at Venice? That beautiful country would restore your health and his own peace of mind; he would be honoured by the natives, among whom his riches would circulate, and those sunny-hearted people would atone to him for the cold, ungrateful breasts around him. He could exercise the best power, that of doing good; and as his years increase, his desires will become moderate, and the empire of charity, benevolence, and knowledge suffice. Yes! he will be far happier than he has ever been.

I see clearly (and I think he also sees it) that there is an intention of so thwarting his wishes, and defying his advice, as to provoke him to resign his situation, and ask leave to travel; and when he has so done, his estates will be confiscated, his palaces given to others, and his immense wealth made the occasion of base accusations; for, although they all know the manner in which he has received those noble gifts, in recompense for noble actions, no one will choose to recollect what the ungrateful sovereign wishes to be forgotten, and what he cannot personally remember. Yet surely this offers no reason for not instantly relinquishing his situation, and flying while it is yet within his power. Father, dear father, surely you are reading this letter!—my mother has placed it in your hands; she is pale and trembling by your side; she kneels (as I do in spirit), and beseeches you to have mercy on yourself, on her, on the promising son, the lovely daughters, whom every country in Europe will be proud to receive.

I conjure you by the virtues of my mother, that mother so fondly loved and so highly respected, to have pity upon her, and secure to her evening of life a peaceful end. Nay, I conjure you by my own patient bearing, my continual efforts to endure cheerfully a loathed life, to afford me the only reward my sacrifice admits; let me know that you are safe, and I shall have my only chance for comparative happiness.

Think not that you have only to contend with a few evil words from insignificant courtiers; he who breathes a scandal soon becomes a malignant liar, and the whisperer of a detraction presently becomes the inventor and propagator of a wicked fiction. Sin feeds on itself, and becomes strong. My experience compared with yours is, I grant, a very short one, but it has shown me a growth in evil purposes and insinuating falsehoods, of recklessness as to the welfare of others, ingratitude for the highest servi-

ces, and overweening selfishness that I should have thought a long life nurtured in evil could scarcely have attained. What honest men have we but Count Sapicha and Woronzow? Who retains the integrity and simplicity of early life but the old field-maréchal? Are the women better than the men, more free from ambitious aspiration, from a mean, intriguing, prying spirit, intent on finding the means of mischief to those whom they affect to love, or whose patronage they court? Oh, no! they are not better, but worse; and in cases where you have been the sole making of their sons and husbands, these female reptiles tattle of your actions as if "the poison of asps were under their lips."

'Tis true you escaped bad consequences when the wife of the unfortunate Alexis accused you falsely of giving bad counsel to the heir of the empire, but then Peter the Great was your judge. Yet a time came when this sovereign, so fondly attached to you and so full of wisdom, did give ear to accusations against you, deprived you of your principality, and meditated your death. That he should have calmly reconsidered the matter, and reinstated you the following day, was much less likely, dear father, than that your head had rolled from the block, and Peter, when too late, lamented your loss and punished your accusers.

The good empress was always grieving over the imperfection of Russian laws, and saying "it would take a century to reform them," though she herself did much under your guidance. The progress of such improvement is for the present checked, and will be so as long as Peter reigns. We have no war calling for your generalship, therefore Providence itself seems to call on you to take care of yourself. To perish for your country would be a glorious and worthy death, but to perish by a wicked faction, and leave a desolate widow, a ruined family—father, father, do not dare to commit the sin of negligence—

I am obliged to relinquish my pen; the emperor's head aches, and he sends for me.

Remember my words. I am most anxiously, but most affectionately, your own fond

MARY.

The Empress Mary to the Princess Menzikoff.

LETTER II.

My dearest Mother,

A new and awful visitation has occurred: the emperor is seized with that dreadful pestilence, the smallpox; and, so great was his debility previous, the physicians think he has small chance of enduring it. The princesses have removed to Peterhoff, the court have fled, all the servants who have not had it decline coming near the apartments. Let not my dear father come to visit us, for, though safe himself, he may convey the infection to his family.

Fumigate any billet I may hereafter send before you read it. I write now because I am going to take my abode in the emperor's chamber. At this awful crisis I will not behave as one unworthy of such a mother as I was blessed with. The issue is with God; *his will be done!*

Should I be taken, remember that my attachment to one who was taken first made this world a desert, and . . . I find I cannot write; tears will flow when thoughts of the past are awakened; and I must be tranquil that I may be useful. You can only help me by your prayers, beloved mother, and well I know you will pray for your

MARY.

Piously and with full purpose of heart did Mary now repair to her sick husband's chamber, who was then suffering from the fever of the disease he had imbibed in an extraordinary degree. His constitution debilitated by over exertion, his blood heated by the pernicious potations taken to recruit his jaded spirits, and give temporary strength for the occasion, rendered him in a state singularly unfitted for taking the infection; and the weather having set in extremely cold, the eruption would not come out freely, so that no rational hopes were entertained of a favourable issue; and, in such a season, the fear of contagion, more especially from such a subject, became itself a disease to the pampered inmates of the palace.

The young Czarina alone, neither fearing for her life nor her beauty, alike moved by that compassion which ever animated her breast, and that high sense of duty which always marked her conduct, gave herself up to watching him day and night with equal skill and tenderness. She soon perceived that even when delirious he knew her voice, and submitted to her entreaties; and, having been informed by the medical attendants that he should drink freely of the warm gruels provided for him, and which he had hitherto obstinately refused, she applied all her powers of persuasion to overcome his aversion. By degrees she prevailed on him to take the cup from her hands, and he soon became sensible of the relief to his parched mouth, and demanded it himself. The consequence was, amelioration of the burning heat, a determination of the disease to the skin, and in another day the appearance of pustules in the ordinary way.

Conscious of the great care she had manifested, and assured by his physician that all was going on well with him, the few words now uttered by the sufferer were praise of her knowledge and thanks for her love, to which, at intervals, were added inquiries as to who remained in the palace, since the state of his eyes precluded him from knowing whether few or many visited the sick chamber. In reply, he was informed by the resident chaplain that not only was visiting his chamber imminently dangerous to those who entered, but exceedingly injurious to himself, and that, at the utmost, two persons only ought to be admitted at a time.

"Then I will only have one: it is my wife who has given me the bad physic and the soft draughts, and who holds my head and shakes my pillow, and I will have nobody at all but her; so go away yourself directly."

"Alas! sire, the empress is completely worn out; she looks fainting at this very moment."

"Take her away, then, take her away. I won't have fainting people near me; what business has she to faint, I wonder?"

At this very moment Mary dropped on the floor, and the attendants, who waited without, were loudly summoned to carry her to her own apartments. On the arrival of the physician he pronounced her infected with the disease, which he suspected to be the case some days before, and solicited her majesty, but in vain, to take the necessary care of herself. On hearing this the Czar became much affected, and declared

that he owed his life to her, if he should eventually recover; and it was soon rumoured that the power of Menzikoff would become greater than it had ever been, whether the young empress recovered or not, since the emperor now frequently reverted to various times when he had been in danger in the field, from which that prince had rescued him, and to many periods when he had suffered from taking those potations against which he had cautioned him. "He has been good to me all my life," said he, warmly, "and so was the empress; I have had no real friend besides them."

This conviction of Menzikoff's uprightness and true kindness seemed to gain strength in proportion as his mind rose, purified from the disease; and the faculties, long clouded by improper conduct, regained the power of reason and recollection. Unhappily, as his disorder abated apparently, it yet exhibited symptoms of an alarming character, and gave reason to suppose that the lungs were affected, and rapid consumption would ensue.

When Menzikoff found that his daughter was in danger, he determined to visit the palace, and, for a time, renounce his now beloved home, lest he should injure his family, a resolution exceedingly approved by his wife, whose anxiety, on her daughter's account, amounted to very agony, since she was become unable to gain any intelligence of her progress on which she could rely. The prince first visited the couch of the emperor, whom he understood to be convalescent, and of whose returning regard for himself he had heard much from those who, depending on his future services, sought thus to gain his good-will.

He was received, indeed, with apparent pleasure and thankfulness; but he was so shocked to observe the effects of the horrible disorder, and so sensible of the extreme weakness of the invalid, that he stayed a very short time in the apartment, having, indeed, been requested to do so by the physician. He now hastened to that of his beloved child, with whom the complaint was making its customary progress, and which was borne by her with such patient resignation to Heaven, and such obedience to her attendants, that they ventured, in the first instance, to predict the most favourable issue. They knew not the hidden sorrows, the painful surmises, rankling in the gentle bosom of one whose sensibility was as acute as her understanding was powerful, and were surprised to find that, as the disorder increased, she too became rambling in discourse, and full of melancholy prognostications. On seeing her father she evinced a perfect recollection of him, yet little pleasure; for, that time, her whole soul was occupied, to distraction, with desire for his departure, and she was continually raving about ships and the wallows in the Gulf of Cronstadt, which were occasioned by the bones of a warrior that required entombment. Well did her father understand the ideas floating in her bewildered mind, and much did he fear lest the incoherent words she uttered, in a low but thrilling tone, should be registered by any inquisitive attendant; but still more did he desire to convey to her something on which her heart could repose for comfort, as respected himself and family.

The letter written by the young empress to her mother had, to a certain degree, alarmed him, because her views coincided with his own observations; and it drew his heart to her who felt and feared so much for him in cords of affection more strong than he had ever felt them; but, while he owned the truth with which she characterized the courtiers in general, he believed she went too far in her condemnations, as the young usually do, whether for praise or blame: nor could he believe that she who was, the other day, a mere child, running after flowers in his garden, could be in any way competent to judge what was proper for him to submit to or elude. Who knew better how to sound the depths of courts than one who had dwelt among them since he was thirteen, whom his mighty master had so often praised for adroitness and versatility, and found a successful diplomatist in every court to which he had sent him? Surely he who had grappled so often with the passions of Peter, and the envious hostility of all his principal old nobility, ought not to quail before the least important of all the Dolgouroukii, and the merest boy that ever swayed a sceptre.

Often as these thoughts passed in succession over the mind of Menzikoff, as he sat by his daughter's couch, she would start and utter words which seemed as if given in reply to what was passing in his mind; and the expressions were frequently so terse and apposite, that, heard by the bed of sickness, and too probably of death, to a superstitious man they would have been appalling, and held to be prophetic; but Menzikoff was not superstitious, either as the word applied to the ceremonies of his national church, or to the thousand omens and dogmas believed in by the great body of his people, from the class in which he was born, even to that with whom he now mingled. He, therefore, imputed such wandering predictions and warnings to their true cause, as disease acting on an already agitated mind, teeming with past sorrows and present fears, and was the more confirmed in his resolution to stand his ground, maintain the dignity of his station, and encourage his friends to support him, by showing them he could support himself. Besides, did he not know that the emperor now saw the error of his late conduct? He had always seen some good traits in his disposition, and always believed that Mary would elicit them; and he could not doubt that, from this eventful time, she would be loved and honoured as she ought to be. The Czar had said that he owed his life to her care; should that life be prolonged, of course he would cherish her for his own sake; and, should he die, appoint her his successor.

He stooped over his daughter to convey to her, if possible, a share of his own satisfaction, and perceived her eyes closed in slumber; and, although he had not permitted himself to feel alarm from her words, his imagination suggested new hopes from her silence. Every Russ is, by nature, gay and sanguine in his temperament, and Menzikoff was unusually so; and every circumstance of his eventful life favoured the delusions of hope and the promises of conscious power. Having attained all which he desired, he supposed that he could ensure all that he willed. "The wife and daughter who loved and warned him were only women, and what was the wisest woman but a tool in the hand of a man? She might second his purpose, but could never originate it."

Catherine, the late empress, had ever been

acknowledged, in Russia, the saviour of the army at Pruth; and, in reward of her conduct at that period, the emperor crowned her with his own hands at Moscow, and spoke of her as his future successor. His army was at that time encamped on the banks of a river, and so surrounded by natural impediments, and hemmed in by a much larger army of the Turks, that his utter ruin seemed inevitable; and in an agony of despair he retired to his tent, forbidding any person, on pain of death, to approach him. Catherine was with the army, as she accompanied him everywhere; and by her presence, and the value he attached to her society, had rendered it a fashion for the wives of all the great officers of state to accompany their husbands, and bring with them their jewels, and large sums of money also.

In this terrific juncture, when the courage and intellect of him who had so often effected deliverance in times of danger were withdrawn, the Vice-chancellor Shasfirof called together the principal officers in the presence of Catherine, and drew up preliminaries in order to obtain a truce from the vizier, which the empress thought he was, under present circumstances, little likely to grant, and which could not be despatched without the signature of the emperor. In this emergency, she sought to obtain by bribery what would be denied to treaty; and, throwing all her own valuables and money into her apron, she assembled all the ladies around her, pointed out to them the terrible situation in which their husbands and themselves were placed, and so wrought on them, by her simple eloquence, her tears, and her example, that every one brought all the property she possessed, and a sum beyond calculation was collected instantly. Her wishes thus crowned with success, her spirits excited to the utmost, and all the nobler qualities of her generous nature awakened, at the immediate and avowed hazard of her life she commanded the guards to give way, and rushed, with the treasure she had acquired and the preliminaries handed to her, into the presence of the emperor.

Whatever might have been the first emotions of rage in that violent man, who often confessed that he had reformed his country but not himself, we know not: it is enough to say that Catherine's voice had not lost its power of entreaty, nor her swimming eyes their power of captivation. The treaty was signed, the treasure conveyed, and not only a truce, but a peace, was happily purchased.

Menzikoff was the happy mediator on this occasion, and well he knew he had been instigator also. To him had been already revealed the cupidity of the vizier; and he had ascertained, through various channels, the certainty of extraordinary wealth, existing in the hands of women who were, at this time, shut out from view with as much jealousy as in the harems of the enemy, and who had, therefore, no chance of exhibiting the jewels capable of effecting this important business. Well did he also know the unselfish nature of the empress, and her power over the heart of her ferocious husband; nevertheless, he trembled for her, at the moment of her entrance, as he had never trembled for himself: and we may well believe the Princess Menzikoff was moved to agony.

Recollection of this, and many other transactions of lesser consequence, now rushing on his mind, naturally served to confirm his foregone conclusions; and, on quitting his daughter, he despatched a messenger to his wife to relieve her of various apprehensions, and entered himself on the despatch of public business, with not only the zeal and ability which distinguished him, but with an air of cheerfulness and importance which had of late appeared to have forsaken him. This was universally imputed to the altered sentiments the emperor had evinced towards himself and the empress, in consequence of which many visits were made to the Princess Menzikoff, and an interest evinced in the health of her daughter that wore the character of friendship.

For all those messages which gave a favourable account of her beloved Mary's progress, the princess was deeply thankful to the Great Disposer, but neither in the exultation of her husband, nor the congratulations of his friends, could she rejoice as assurances of the emperor's regard. She had known him from his cradle, and remarked that a peculiar fickleness was a part of his nature, and was in itself pitiable, as being apparently derived from his father. Had he been put under a kind but firm tuition, and compelled to obey the dictates of a superior, he might have attained steadiness of conduct from habit, which would have been seconded by his own reason as his mind expanded, and he became sensible of the value of stability. On the contrary, the natural delicacy of his constitution had induced the easy-tempered empress to foster the error of his nature, and add the caprice of petulance to the weakness of mutability; and, while educating for a station of life which, above all others, calls for calm examination, cool judgment, perseverance, and decision, he was allowed daily to break his toys, dismiss his servants, beat his playfellows, and swear at his tutor, whenever it was his pleasure, "because by-and-by he would want them all again, and most probably treat them all very well: it was Peter's way, poor fellow."

Very different had been the conduct of the princess to her own son, who had been given over by his busy and ambitious father more than he ought, but the powers of the most distinguished minds are finite, and he who takes charge of numerous nations of different laws, habits, religions, and capabilities (conglomerated, not amalgamated), must inevitably abandon the duties and forego the pleasures of paternity. Children that, only as pedestals, support a father's grandeur, cannot be expected to crown his brow or nestle in his bosom.

CHAPTER XXI.

So soon as Ivan Dolgourouki heard of the short visit made by Menzikoff to the palace, he also went thither, and determined to be an abiding guest: he had himself gone through the disease in his infancy; but, fully expecting the emperor would die, and anxious to assist the Duke of Holstein in the succession, he took the advantage of the season, and journeyed towards those friends who were likely to aid his views, giving orders that he should be followed with information of what was passing at the Winter Palace. Surprised to hear that Peter lived, and not sorry to find the empress was expected

to die, he hastened back with the utmost celerity, and soon presented himself to the royal invalid.

"So! you are come now I don't want you. Come to look at me now I am a fright, but you ran away like the rest when you might have nursed me and done me good. I take it exceedingly ill of you, Count Ivan Dolgourouki, because you had not the same motive other people had; you did not fear the infection."

"The physicians forbade entrance into your majesty's chamber, and everybody must know that company would have made you much worse before the crisis, though a little is now needful for your amusement."

"I don't care for physicians; their potions do me no good, and I like to have people whom I know ready to speak to me; it was cruel to leave me, and I have a right to be offended with *you* above everybody in the world."

"I am exceedingly glad your majesty is strong enough to scold; it is a sign you will grow fast, and become a very stout man; it was my own case; the best thing that ever came to me was the smallpox—it made a man of me."

"Sit down and tell me exactly how you felt, and when you began to grow, and how they managed you."

From this moment Ivan Dolgourouki gained the sole and nearly exclusive possession of the emperor's ear, to whom he paid the most sedulous and unremitting attention. He would frequently inquire after the empress, especially as to her appearance, and whether she remained weak; in reply to which, he was generally told (by Ivan Dolgourouki's orders) "that her situation resembled his own, save that she was weaker as being a female," an answer always satisfactory. The truth was, that she had risen from her bed of sickness extremely debilitated, but unmarked by a single scar—a circumstance the attendants feared might render the emperor fretful, and thereby increase the weakness under which he continued to labour.

Two or three of the principal officers, from time to time, were admitted for a few minutes, and when it was supposed all infection had passed away, his sisters were recalled, but it appeared to be for no other purpose than to upbraid them and dismiss them; but he expressed no desire to see the empress; and when he spoke of her, said repeatedly, if she continued weak and pale, and especially if she was grown ugly (as she most likely was), he should put her away directly, and marry some foreign princess; and this was repeated so often, that the late reports of the favour in which Menzikoff stood were entirely reversed, although they thought it hard that the one of all his family who had remained with him, and been to him an invaluable friend, "should be so treated;" and as it was thought by all that Ivan Dolgourouki influenced all the emperor's words, and might be said to speak with his voice, there were some, when he took his accustomed rides, who had the good feeling to remonstrate with him on behalf of one so virtuous and beneficent as Mary. To their observations the favourite only replied "that the emperor was petulant, as many invalids were during convalescence, but that he had no meaning in his words, and more frequently praised the empress for her goodness, than blamed her for what she could not help."

It was yet certain that words of the like import were bandied about, and the name of a young princess mentioned as Mary's successor in case of the loss of her beauty, and at length spoken of to her father. Menzikoff had trembled for the life of his child while she was attending her husband's sick-bed, yet he did not allow himself, by a single word of remonstrance, to intrude upon the holy sacrifice she was performing, nor had he uttered a sentence of lamentation for the consequences which ensued; but he could not bear in silence to hear the wayward boy, whose life was preserved by her cares, to whom her virtues were a blessing and her talents an honour, declare an intention to repudiate his virgin wife if she had lost her beauty by the disease he had communicated, and which had left him under its worst infliction. No: his indomitable pride, the merit of his child, and his own long services alike forbade it; and although he replied with the forms of speech due to his sovereign, the petted boy was conscious of the turmoil he had raised in the father's bosom, and the deep contempt with which he was regarded.

Mary, in the mean time, was slowly progressing in health, and most thankful to receive visits from the Princess Anne, who was much attached to her, and came to her apartments so soon as it was possible to do it with safety. She had unfortunately suffered her heart to imbibe a passion for the Duke of Biron, who was unworthy the gift, and proved, at a later period, so much the trouble of her life, that most probably he was the means of accelerating her death; but he was now remanded to a great distance, and it was a consolation to her to pour the tale of tender sorrows into the ear of the solitary invalid. Mary could sympathize but too well with her feelings, but in reply "she never told her love," though the princess guessed it, and praised her for the forbearance she evinced, as becoming the wife of her cousin. With what passed in the apartment of the emperor she was at this time totally unacquainted, but the tattle of the world without she had heard, and commenced her narrative by saying,

"The people, soon after the late empress's death, insisted that she was poisoned; nothing could be more ridiculous, for we all know that she had two dangerous complaints, either of which would have killed her, and that her own bad habits might have done it without either, though at a later period; nevertheless, it has been bruited through Petersburgh, and, of course, will make its way through Europe, that General Devrier killed her by a poisoned pear. She was fond of fruit to excess, we all know, and I suppose she might make herself ill with one."

"She ate not one, but many, at a time when they were sure to make her worse, and while I was sleeping on the sofa. I well remember the time, because I was so grieved that I had ceased to watch her."

"Then it seems there was something like the shadow of a shade whereon to hang a story in this case; but they now say your father is the man who poisoned her, in consequence of a slight quarrel. It must have been slight indeed, for it evidently did not injure their friendship, which all the world knows remained firm to the last."

"My poor father!" cried Mary, suddenly, "with how many enemies hast thou to contend!"

"This tale defeats itself, and will soon die away as the first did, but it is certain your father has much to contend with; and, had the emperor been taken, my sister, the Duchess of Holstein, would, I doubt, have soon displaced him, for I know Ivan Dolgourouki has intrigued against him in that quarter. Indeed, none of the royal family respect him as they ought, save myself and Elizabeth,* and we are too far from the crown to ensure his welfare; we have no influence; you have none, well as you have deserved it; in fact, Ivan rules all; he is everything and everybody."

"And he is my father's evil genius."

"I think so not less than you; in fact, he is a man I dislike and fear; yet I can tell you one anecdote of him that you will own was noble. Old Lubitsch Dolgourouki, the constant opponent of your father, as proud a Keyser as ever lived, on his son Theodore refusing to go to the war with him, declared 'that Ivan should be his heir;' and would have proceeded immediately to invest him as such, leaving only to Theodore the estates he already held from his mother; but Ivan would not hear of it; he said he would fulfil a son's duties to his uncle, but never rob a cousin whom he must honour for his virtues, and whom he actually loved better than any person upon earth. Was not that admirable?"

"Very, very admirable!" said Mary, moving towards a sofa.

"You are ill, Mary; yet your cheeks, even your forehead, glows. I will assist you; I will not call an attendant; I am your *friend*, Mary."

The empress burst into tears, but spoke not.

"God help you! you are worse off than myself, for you know not where Theodore is; but I will not repeat a name which I see you have abjured. I will leave you to seek composure. Would that I could imitate you as truly as I esteem you sincerely!"

The Princess Anne retired, leaving the invalid full of awakened regret and melancholy presages, ardently desiring a few minutes' conversation with her father for the purpose of again urging him to depart while it was in his power, and when the health of her mother presented a self-evident reason. It then struck her that she could mention her mother's health to the emperor, who had always professed a great regard for the princess, and induce him to forward the plan of removing the whole family to a warmer climate; and so strongly did the idea seize upon her, that, after despatching an attendant to request permission, she threw on a veil and proceeded to visit the emperor.

She found the invalid playing draughts with Ivan Dolgourouki, who started in extreme confusion on her entrance, not having attended to her message when she sent to request admission. The emperor probably thinking surprise the proper emotion of a *man* on the occasion, protested "that she had terrified him exceedingly, for she looked like a ghost and not a woman, much less an empress;" and desired "she would not think of entering the Presence till she looked more like a creature of flesh and blood;" adding, in a reproachful tone, "that she had so managed herself as to avoid all pockmarks, but she had fastened abundance upon him, with her pretended good nursing."

Mary retired instantly, somewhat indignant, but far more sorrowful. The image of Theodore had been so lately recalled to her mind, that she could not forbear to think how differently he would have received her under the same circumstances, and imagination offered his image, his words, and the peculiar tenderness of his looks and manners, under circumstances of an affecting nature, as she saw him at their first meeting, or had seen him last, when, with all the pathos of harrowing solicitude, he had predicted those evils to her house which she now believed to be about falling upon it, though she could not see in what manner the storm would descend.

From the peculiar confusion manifested in the countenance of Count Ivan, and the extraordinary rudeness, and indeed inhumanity, of the emperor, she was induced to believe that they had been speaking of her before her entrance, and most probably suggesting some scheme to mortify or degrade her; yet how, or why, she could not conceive. On chancing to see herself reflected in a mirror, and referring to the words uttered by the Czar, light seemed to break at once upon her case, and she exclaimed,

"Ah! Peter once said he would not have me if I lost my beauty; and more than once has Ivan, in my presence, talked of the necessity every monarch had of forming foreign alliances—happy, thrice happy should I be, if he would dismiss me, and consider my degradation an atonement for my father's error in placing me on the throne. I would my mother knew that the cloud she has so long thought impending over us would burst with no worse effect than that of restoring to her a daughter more calculated to be worthy of her friendship than before she entered on a scene for which she is totally unfitted, and which time would render her less able to endure."

When next the Princess Ann visited her, she mentioned the rude reception the Czar had given her, which appeared by no means to surprise her auditor, who, after ruminating some time in silence, said,

"I know that plans are constantly meditating against you, and even that your father has given great offence by resenting them; nay, it has even been whispered that negotiations are making with either a Polish or a German court; but, with all this, I do not believe Peter will ever carry the designs he may partially devise, or allow, into effect. Only yesterday evening he told old Counts Voronzoff and Berleff the progress of his disorder, and spoke of your patience and tenderness with tears in his eyes, exclaiming, as he concluded, 'I can never part with her! *never!*' I have been received myself this morning; and on saying I was coming to see you, he spoke of you affectionately, but said 'you must not come into his apartment until you were well, till you could go out and get a little colour,' and this I would have you attempt as soon as possible."

"I will do that gladly—perhaps I may now be permitted to visit my mother?"

"I think you may, for the emperor is about to have the singing-men whom Count Ivan Dolgourouki introduced, and whose conduct produced so much injury before, as I told him; but my remonstrance, though given in the kindest language a relation could use, drew only ill-natured reproach, and even threats. Such con-

* These two princesses reigned in succession soon afterward.

duct is very trying, especially when one clearly perceives that he is really ill, notwithstanding his assertion to the contrary."

In a few days, the physician having declared that a change of air would benefit her, and that all danger of infection was over, Mary wrote an humble note, requesting leave to visit her mother for a week, at the same time mentioning the necessity of changing the air, as urged by her medical attendants.

By a verbal message she was rudely refused permission to repair to Oranienbaum, but informed that she might go to any of the palaces in the emperor's possession; but, before she had determined what to do, a kind note was delivered to her, saying "that the emperor had reconsidered the matter, and thought it better she should depart for Oranienbaum on the morrow, and that he had sent a courier there to announce her intention, and given the necessary order for her carriage and attendants."

This note was written by Ivan Dolgourouki, and was some time after followed by a verbal message, fixing an early hour for receiving her adieu; because, at that time, the emperor would be quite alone.

This message, and the air of secrecy with which it was delivered, confirmed her in the belief that the emperor was entirely under the influence, and virtually the command, of Ivan; that he had, in the first place, been harsh, under the idea of showing himself manly and despotic; and, in the second, followed a better disposition as permitted by his ruler, and the same ameliorated sentiment continuing, he was unwilling to part with her in coldness and indifference.

At all events, the permission was the happiest thing which had befallen her since the day when she came hither a reluctant, mourning, but determined sacrifice; and, with the sweet anticipations of her age and her sex, she felt that to be pressed to her mother's heart, and converse with her sister, brother, and the infant, would render her as happy as she was in the days of childhood; and the anxieties which had lately harassed her so much, on behalf of her father and family, seemed to vanish like a dream.

Such are the privileges of youth, and the rewards of a pure, well-nurtured affection. Mary had an abiding sorrow, but she had also in full perfection the clinging fondness of a child and sister, and the power of finding in the love of her natural connexions an emollient which soothed the wound it could not heal. For many months it had been cruelly withheld, vexatiously refused, and was now hailed with joy, proportioned to the disappointments so frequently experienced.

Determined, if possible, to improve the present leaning of the emperor, and fully relying on the information and judgment of the Princess Anne, she dressed herself with the utmost care, and caused her attendants to dispose of her costly ornaments in the most becoming manner; her hair, which was long and luxuriant, being curled spirally, and falling on each side in the manner seen in Vandyke's pictures, and till lately in England; and, for the first and last time in her life, adopted *rouge*, which the Russian court was then beginning to use in imitation of that of Louis XIV. This magnificent dress being more calculated to please the eye of her husband than ensure her own comfort, she caused her attendant to place apparel of a more homely character in the carriage, and proceeded to the boudoir of the emperor.

Her endeavours to win approbation did not at this time fail of effect—the Czar praised her appearance exceedingly, and seemed to argue that, as *her* health was evidently improved in the last week, *his* must do so likewise, since he took the disorder first. He made innumerable inquiries after her symptoms and sensations, and yet seemed to have something more to say, which he evidently repressed with difficulty, and at length observed, in a tremulous voice, as if ready to weep,

"Well, Mary! let what will happen hereafter, I shall always say you were the best of all wives to me. I should not have been alive now, if you had not watched me and nursed me kindly, for all I was often cross—when emperors are dying, nobody cares for them—they think only of their successors—you did not want to succeed me, I am certain."

"Indeed I did not," said the empress, emphatically; adding, "pray don't speak so mournfully; you are better now, and will gain a little strength every day."

"I speak that which is uppermost, because you are going to leave me, and I cannot speak to you to-morrow."

Mary immediately professed her willingness to remain, and send off a courier immediately.

"No, no," he cried, impatiently, "my word is passed, and every man, more especially an emperor, must keep his word:" then, in a softened and desponding tone, he added, "Yes, he must keep his word, and his secrets; so go, dear Mary, but first let me tie this necklace round your neck—I believe it is of immense value, but, were it twice as much, you deserve it—but I wish it to be quite hidden under your gown, as well as your pelisse—there! no one can see it now, and I beg you not to show it."

As the emperor spoke, he tied a brilliant necklace round her fair throat so loosely that it admitted of being tucked beneath the close winter-clothing the season and her weak state compelled her to adopt. When he had arranged it to his satisfaction, he kissed her tenderly, and said, in great trepidation, "There! go away—if you stay another minute, I shall not let you go at all—I feel as if I could not."

Cold indeed must be the heart that does not return affection in some degree, especially when duty and gratitude join in the claim. Despite of his unfortunate appearance, this newly-exhibited tenderness awoke in Mary's bosom the warmest sense of regard and pity her young husband ever had elicited, and she departed with feelings of regret she had thought herself incapable of experiencing, saying to herself, "I am sure I should love Peter as well as Alexander, if he were always thus kind and amiable—yes, I could be to him a most affectionate sister! Why does that wicked man influence him against me?"

Every circumstance, as she pursued her journey, rose to her mind as confirmatory of her fears of Ivan's inimical influence. She recalled the looks and words of the young Czar, the confusion of his countenance, the sudden breaks in his sentences, and especially the secrecy of a gift of great value, given, one would suppose, for the express purpose of being exhibited; and

which, it was natural to conclude, he would have made her openly, since he openly acknowledged his obligation to her. Must he not be positively under the control of one he dreaded to offend, more than he had ever feared the empress or her father in his early infancy?—and if Dolgourouki could thus mould him to his will, at the very time when his temper, however petulant, and his mind, though vacillating, still retained a sense of her kindness, surely she ought to have remained, almost by force, in order to watch over him with maternal solicitude, forestall his wishes, amuse his wearisome hours, and, if possible, prevent the return of those coarse and noisy companions whom Ivan had introduced apparently for the purpose of keeping herself and the princesses at a distance; and to induce him, from the exhaustion occasioned by illness, to indulge in wine, which his constitution forbade him to take, and which, in his present state, was utter ruin.

Yet, when she recollected, on the other side, the implicit obedience he upon all occasions exacted, and the absolute dependance of a Russian wife, together with the schemes now plotting against her, who could say that any possible act which militated against his commands would not be used as an excuse for her punishment?—and who believe that she should fall alone? If her father fell, she would be willing to partake his fall; but God forbid that she should be the means of pulling down the ruin she had become a victim in the hope to avert!

That father had set forth in all the splendour which he loved to exhibit, and doubtless with much of the affection she so well merited, to meet his empress daughter; and it gladdened his heart to behold her arrayed so magnificently, and looking so beautiful, though by the aid of art. The pleasure that sparkled in his eyes, and animated his voice, so far reassured her that she forbore to damp his happiness by rendering him the partaker of her present apprehensions, although she much wished to inform him of what was passing in her bosom; and she proceeded in solitary grandeur, under his stately escort, to the most beautiful palace in Russia—a palace which was the gift of a generous sovereign to an unequalled servant, whether for loyalty or utility; but yet a gift which her successor never ceased to envy till it was again in the possession of the monarchy, with whom it remains at the present hour.

CHAPTER XXII.

All fears for the future, all sorrows in the present, were forgotten at that joyful moment when the young Czarina (our gentle Mary) once more found herself clasped to her mother's breast, and surrounded by the dear companions of her early and only happy days. When her father beheld her innocent delight at thus entering, unshackled by forms, the dear paternal home, his proud heart melted, and tears struck into his eyes, from the sad conviction that here only could she be happy; and that the stately home to which, with so much difficulty, he had conducted her, was strewed with more thorns than belong even to royal residences, and that a heart full of all the sweetest impulses and sympathies of nature should be rejected and chilled at the very period when it naturally sought to be cherished and consoled.

Mary found her brother, who had entered his fifteenth year, much improved during her absence. He was a youth of extraordinary intelligence, simple manners, but an ardent, affectionate heart; and he expressed his delight, on seeing her, with the utmost artlessness, forgetting the empress in the sister. Ulrica, on the contrary, treated her with profound respect, not unmingled with conscious dignity on her own part; and she was not long before she hinted her sense of the neglect she had experienced, in never being invited to the balls given occasionally at the palace. This had been a source of great mortification to Mary, and of inward vexation to Prince Menzikoff; but she had laboured in vain to avert the covert insult expressed in it, and well knew that Ivan Dolgourouki had purposely thwarted her wishes. He was, indeed, the more able to do this, because the emperor had liked neither her brother nor sister when he was staying at Oranienbaum, considering their superior knowledge and accomplishments a tacit reproach of his own ignorance.

"Dear Ulrica," said Mary, fondly embracing her, "do not be cold and distant to me, nor doubt, for a moment, that I have experienced the most cruel mortification in not being permitted to invite you; but the same influence which prevented me from visiting my mother was extended to wound me in this particular. You may consider me exalted in rank, and suppose, also, that my age would give me a little power, as I am now turned of seventeen; but this is not the case. I am entirely a Russian wife, subservient in everything to my husband's will, and indeed his whims. Ever since I lost the empress, who was truly my friend, this despotism has been practised towards me. There is a power behind the throne, which, in seeking to injure my father, grinds my father's daughter to the dust, far more than you can suppose or he suspects."

"Then would I drag it before the court and the country," said Ulrica, proudly; "yes, I would expose and banish it; I would not be young and fair, and know myself the daughter of that man who, next to Peter the Great, has been the highest benefactor of Russia, without making my claims, and proving my power in turn."

"Probably *you* might do it, and be successful, Ulrica; but, if not, the effort would be ruinous. I have neither the talents necessary for disconcerting the bold, nor detecting the cunning. I tremble for the effects on my family, should any assertion of my own rights be made and frustrated. I dare not provoke revenge in my desire for justice."

As the empress spoke, she looked earnestly at her sister, and thought her the very loveliest young woman in all the Russias, and was sensible of the pride and pleasure she should have had in placing her next to the princesses in her most brilliant circle. She had grown up so remarkably like herself, as she appeared at the time when seized with that illness which ensued on parting with Theodore, that they might have been taken for each other; but there was in the features of the empress a more touching expression of tenderness than in those of the

beautiful, but gay and somewhat haughty countenance of Ulrica.

Their present discussion was broken in upon by the arrival of little Catherine, a lovely child, beginning to lisp its wishes and conceptions, full of that animated gayety and inquisitive faculty which render children of that age so endearing and delightful. The finery of her sister's new gala-dress naturally attracted attention; and her little hands were clapped as she gazed on brilliants less sparkling than her own eyes. Mary was charmed with her caresses and artless admiration; but she observed, "Surely she will love me to-morrow, when I have got plain clothes, which will certainly be the case, as I could not, otherwise, enjoy myself in my old haunts, or enter on my old occupations."

"How strange," said Ulrica, "that you can for a moment think of relinquishing a dress which becomes you so well, and is also the insignia of your rank!—it appears to me to be the only thing for which I have a right to envy you."

"You shall wear this finery the rest of the week, if you please, Ulrica; and long before the end of it you will discover that what is very suitable for days of state is very inconsistent with domestic comfort. One ornament I am not permitted, as empress, to abandon when at home; but here that also is at your service, since our dear parents have promised me a week of privacy and love."

Ulrica accepted the offer, though sorry to hear the latter part of her sister's speech; but her observations were interrupted by the princess, their mother, who, referring to the child, said to Mary,

"You are naturally delighted with your little sister, my love, and doubtless well remember how solemnly the dear empress placed her under your care. I trust you will be able to fulfil to her a mother's duties; but yet I do not wish her to be brought up in the court, much less married there; not but good people may be found in that situation, and then they are as gold seven times tried. Endeavour, my dear, to impart to her religious instruction, as you received it from me, when I had time and strength to explain the Scriptures as our good Brukenthal explained them to me."

The empress looked at her mother, and, notwithstanding the calmness with which she spoke, saw but too clearly that the event so long dreaded had now nearly arrived. The insidious complaint, increased if not caused by anxiety, had now assumed a mild but determined form, and stolen upon her, unsuspected by her family, who considered her weakness only the effect of general delicacy of constitution, and the solicitude she felt for her husband. Her extreme attenuation, the transparency of her skin, the hectic flush so subject to rise and decay, told even the inexperienced Mary that all rational hope must be abandoned; and she retired to her bed with that weight upon her spirits such a conviction could not fail to produce.

Thoughts of Theodore also mingled with this sorrow; and memory, as if endued with new power from her approach to the scene of her agonized parting, recalled every circumstance of that dreadful evening to her mind with terrific truth and distinctness. She determined on rising very early, and proceeding, unseen by all, to the very spot in the gardens where she had last beheld that dear countenance, and listened to that voice which was alike music to the ear and heart of one so devoted, and recall every particular of the manner in which he was torn from her so cruelly, to be murdered on the instant. It is one of the peculiar characteristics of the human heart in early life, that it thus seeks to awaken and recall its own sensations when they are of the most afflictive character; to lacerate the wounds which time had somewhat healed, and again crush the bruised spirit to the earth. Surely this is a part of that generous self-abandonment and even immolation which belongs only to the young, who, in their zeal to honour the object they lament, care not how much suffering they heap on their devoted heads, enlarging the load under which they shrink, not with a view to end, but gratuitously increase its pressure, as being a due sacrifice. In after years, either from a weariness of pain, a blunted sensibility, and somewhat more of selfish wisdom, even the most attached and amiable natures avoid the penance of such inflictions. Perhaps we then feel that we have suffered enough; that a state of being so nearly over demands no farther draught from the cup of sorrow.

Like many persons who spend the night in restlessness and feverish grief, the young empress slept heavily in the morning, and, on awaking, became sensible that her purposed walk in privacy was, for the present, frustrated, as the hour was late, and the inhabitants of the palace were stirring. On the entrance of her attendant, she thought there were more symptoms of bustle in the household than common, and believed visiters were arriving, to her great annoyance; and while dressing, she inquired of her woman if such were the case.

"Count Mariskin and General Devrier, an please your majesty, have been here half an hour, and are with my lord the prince in the library, and very much flushed he appeared when, by chance, I had a look of his highness's countenance."

The attendant's words (which had been uttered in a low voice, and with an air of mystery and fear) were now interrupted by an exclamation of Menzikoff's, who was traversing the adjoining gallery. "My daughter, the empress, accompany me, and proceed to a seat, which is the distance of more than two hundred versts; really, count, this part of your mission is incredible! For myself, my wife (though sick), and my children, of course, we obey the will of the emperor; but for—"

A strange and apparently sympathetic voice checked this sally, and answered in a low, yet probably peremptory tone; for, in another moment, the steps returned, and Menzikoff rushed into his daughter's dressing-room. His countenance was inflamed, his eyes shot fire, and his tall form was dilated by rage, which was yet controlled by pride that restrained the expression of his anger, lest it should also display his sorrow.

Mary flew towards him, eager to restrain the boiling fury menaced in his gestures; and, though trembling exceedingly for the future, aware that the present might render all that was bad still worse. The storm she had long dreaded for him appeared to have suddenly de-

scended upon him, but to have been pointed towards her. Eagerly dismissing her woman, and carefully closing the door, she looked fondly into her father's face as she threw herself on his bosom, and inquired into the cause of his surprise and vexation.

Menzikoff burst into tears as he folded her to his bosom.

Mary was now seriously alarmed: she felt assured that this speechless agony was endured for herself and her sorrows, and that her liberty, perhaps her life, was menaced.

Often had she thought, in her days of apprehension, that she could willingly lay it down for the sake of securing the safety and welfare of her beloved family, feeling, as she did, that to her it was of little value; but now that the axe seemed really uplifted, life was sweet and death terrible. Determined, however, to know the worst, she gaspingly inquired in what way she was to be rendered a victim.

Menzikoff saw the deathly paleness of her countenance, and compelled himself to answer.

"The emperor has banished me to my principality of Plescoff, with all my family—even you! *you*, the empress, whom he designates my eldest daughter. The snivelling brat! who made him emperor?"

Mary burst into hysteric laughter, mingled with sobs and tears; a scaffold or a dungeon, contrasted so strongly with a fine castle in a beautiful country, far from the dull formality or malicious trickery of a despotic court, surrounded by beloved relations and thankful dependants, that she was violently affected in the relief she experienced. So soon as she could regain the power to speak, she drew an eloquent picture of the happiness they should all enjoy, and warmly thanked the emperor for his kindness in removing her with her family, and enabling her to attend to her mother. "And oh! dear father," she added, most soothingly, "what a fine place you will make of Plescoff! another St. Petersburgh will rise at your bidding; your serfs will be delighted to enjoy your personal command, and the climate will benefit my mother; shall I break the intelligence to her?"

"Yes; go, child, go; leave me, and let no one intrude; I shall soon conquer this emotion. It is one thing to banish me, another to subdue me, as the Dolgourouki shall see."

Mary repaired to the couch of her ailing mother, who was already prepared, by the looks of her servants, for evil news, and, therefore, felt with Mary that, however it might mortify the pride and disgust the feelings of her husband, many blessings remained to him and to them all, since his wealth would ensure to him the power to improve to its utmost a beautiful and extensive district, where he would reign in all but name a sovereign, and transmit to his son the fruit of his energies and his abilities. Yet, even while she thus reasoned, she feared the haughty soul of her husband would never stoop to mediocrity after he had for so long a period enjoyed, in fact, supremacy of power. Noble as was the inheritance to which he was banished, would he bear to be confined to its limits? might he not degenerate into a petty tyrant purely by way of occupation, and extend the severity of such sway over those children whom he had hitherto been too busy to notice? Or who should say what schemes of revenge might not arise in the breast of one still powerful in his wealth, in his courage and abilities, and so long the idol of the soldiers? From *this*, of all other horrors, her gentle and virtuous bosom shrunk. "May God preserve him from guilt!" was her first and her most ardent prayer; in all else her meek spirit said, "His will be done!"

Reflecting on that awful period in their history when this very Plescoff had been taken from her husband by Peter the Great, when charging him with peculations he despised, and that the following day it was restored to him with additional honours, she could not help hoping, through the whole of this day, messengers might arrive from the palace to reverse the command of the morning, which she understood to be "the removal of the Prince Menzikoff and his family in twenty-four hours," and which command he was evidently preparing to obey, from the confusion in the household. So warmly did the young empress express her satisfaction in being included in their removal, that she could not bring herself to desire an especial recall for her; yet was she alike sorrowful and indignant, that one so innocent and blameless, so fitted to adorn her station, and render it a fountain of beneficial deeds to millions, should be exposed to obloquy by implication, and rendered an inevitable sharer in the future fortunes of her family; true, her presence with that family might soothe many pains, and perhaps prevent many mischiefs.

As the anxious wife, the drooping invalid, thus reasoned, feared, and hoped by turns, allaying the sorrow of her astonished son and younger daughter, and endeavouring, as had always been her wont, to tranquillize the tempest in her husband's bosom, and support him under the bitter mortification he experienced (well knowing that, however averse to her advice, he had always accepted consolation at her hands), the hours wore away, and no succeeding messengers arrived to supersede the messengers of the morning, or even lengthen the term which was so unreasonably short for the removal of such an establishment. True, when Menzikoff had calmed down the turmoil of his soul with that self-command for which he had been remarkable in the field of battle, and the contentions with this fiery-minded master, he had gone forth to his servants and dependants, and given orders with a precision and promptitude indicative of surprising calmness. Every one was full of conjecture as to the cause of this sudden journey, and the events that it might produce. Many thought that their great master must be recalled in a few weeks, since his loss in the business of the government would soon be felt; others believed that he was sent to perpetual exile, since the star of the Dolgourouki, having gained the ascendant, would be likely to keep it, for they were many, and the prince was only one. Yet rapid changes might take place—the emperor was very ailing—his heirs, the Holstein family, were not beloved—great changes might arise—it was better to remain with him than desert him—"a shaken house was not always a falling one."

What accusation had been made respecting the prince by those who named his punishment (if any) never transpired, for no one durst ask, lest they should recall his rage, or increase his grief; but when he, after long, necessary absence, repaired to the boudoir of the princess, Mary, wrapping herself in a dark pooshe, stole forth, as she had intended, and visited that

well-remembered spot, to which she must now bid an eternal farewell. She opened the door near which she had sank in that long swoon, which she had often wished had proved fatal, and cast her eyes over that waste of waters, in which she believed the bones of her beloved Theodore were then whitening. That his body had never been cast up she was certain, since his disguise was not so complete as to have prevented all recognition; and, as his family could not have heard from him, such a circumstance would not have failed to alarm them, and cause the strictest inquiry. But might not his friend, who witnessed the transaction, have recovered these precious remains! might he not have rescued and even preserved his life! Oh, no! swathed as she had seen him, that was impossible; and she felt that it was wrong in her to suffer her mind to waste its powers in vague conjectures at such a time as this.

"Surely," said she, "my duties call me to far other employ than the wild reveries of a love-distracted brain! It is little to be divorced from honours I neither desired nor enjoyed, since the emperor can lay nothing to my charge; but it is hard to witness the degradation of my father, thereby hastening my mother to the grave, and condemning his children to comparative obscurity. On Ulrica's account, for the present, it is the most to be lamented, for how would the dear girl have graced a different scene! how would she have enjoyed the splendours of a court, and what may not a spirit so aspiring suffer in her enforced solitude!"

It was late in the night before any of the family sought their pillow, and for their domestic servants there was no rest. An increasing gloom burdened the heart and shadowed the brow of Menzikoff; but he bore his sorrows manfully, and tried, at times, to cheer Ulrica, who, as the empress predicted, felt this stroke perhaps as severely as her father, whom, in disposition, she greatly resembled. The unconscious child alone slept soundly; but such were the personal sufferings of its mother in consequence of the shock she had received, that she almost forgot every other trouble; for there are times in which the soul, even when most happily directed, and most earnestly called on for faith and fortitude, must stoop to the feebleness and partake the pains of its earthly suffering companion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Although the beauties of Russia's short summer had departed, in the eyes of our banished family, thus forcibly driven from their paradise, Oranienbaum never looked so beautiful as now; and those of the princess, notwithstanding all her self-control and heavenly resignation, filled with tears as she looked once more from the windows where she had sat so often with the royal donor. She was roused from her revery of grateful regret by her sweet infant, who, in imperfect words, called her to a different prospect.

The princess and her daughters, though all deeply affected, and nearly overpowered by the troubles of quitting a home so dear, obeyed the summons of little Catherine, and were astonished to behold such a cavalcade of carriages and horsemen entering the *porte cochère* as they had never seen before; it immediately struck the princess that the emperor had come in person to claim her daughter, and reconduct her in state; and she felt that if she could see him—if she could plead her husband's cause, all would be soon forgotten, for Peter once had loved her as a mother; but no; the carriages were their own, the numerous body of attendants their own servants and serfs, dressed for the occasion, and, together with numerous grooms and led horses, swelling the train, and giving to the banished courtier the air of a triumphant conqueror.

"This is great—this is noble!" exclaimed Ulrica; "how admirably has my dear father rose victorious over his enemies!"

"Alas! how like a child you talk, Ulrica; these ill-judged proceedings will give your father's enemies new subjects for slander, and probably it may be the cause of prolonging his banishment from the court, or otherwise injuring him greatly. I grieve to see it exceedingly; it neither suits our circumstances, nor that which ought to be the temper of our minds under inflicted punishment."

"It suits *my* views and *my* means," said the prince, haughtily, as he entered the room while his wife spoke; "and I expect—nay, I insist, that yourself and your daughters shall go forth in your most costly apparel. Let the criminal hide his head, or creep through his path in obscurity—I have committed no crime, save fighting the battles and extending the civilization of my country. She has given me wealth—it shall flow for her benefit—therefore do I enter my principality with due splendour."

"But surely, dear father, it is possible to maintain your dignity without adopting additional ostentation, when your sovereign (however unjustly) has thought proper to degrade you? I greatly fear this parade will be reported, and do you no good," said the empress.

"I intend it to be reported to the Czar; and, thanks to the sovereigns who preceded him, I am enabled to do honour to Plescoff, and ask no assistance at his hands, though he has thrown his wife a beggar upon mine!"

Mary was about to say, "Though you desire no good, you should avoid provoking evil;" but the latter part of his reply, together with the expression of his countenance, which was terrible, and that of her trembling, almost fainting mother, prevented reply, and she suffered her attendant mechanically to arrange her outward clothing. Ulrica had taken possession of her royal ornaments and dress before this affliction had been announced the preceding day, and her distress had not prevented her from resuming it, a circumstance not noticed by the owner till she found herself wrapped in her sister's pelisse, when she said, with a faint smile, "What a bad time is this, my dear, in which to play the empress! all but externals are gone, most probably forever!"

"I shall be seen—perhaps pitied and admired; that is something to one who is bidding the world farewell."

"Yet we are making so grand a cavalcade, pity seems excluded, and only admiration invited. Alas! I fear—I greatly fear we are only taking the first step in degradation: God only knows what is before us!"

The empress checked her lamentations, for she saw too clearly that her mother's fears were still greater than her own, and that her heart sunk beneath its own predictions, which had now entirely banished her sorrow at quitting

Oranienbaum, and subdued the hopes she had sought to cherish on behalf of Plescoff. Places lose their hold on the mind when persons become the objects of our solicitude: her husband and her children alone filled the heart of the princess. However blameless, or even meritorious, the former might have been in his conduct towards his sovereign, still he was at this time under an interdict, which it became him to submit to modestly, as the subject of an absolute monarch, and which it was folly to resist in a country governed by the simple will of its ruler, amenable to no law, owning no restraint of justice, or shadow of remonstrance. An air of rebellious defiance to the governing power must be read by the most ignorant in this splendid display of wealth derived from recompense, not birth; and it at once reminded the *great* of what they deemed his unworthiness, and the *little* that one of themselves had been placed immeasurably above them.

When all was arranged, Menzikoff himself carried the princess to the litter prepared for her by his orders with the utmost care, and in which her eldest daughter had already placed herself at the feet of the couch on which her mother was laid. The gorgeous train proceeded slowly, agreeably to the will of the presiding mind, as if to awaken inquiry and comment; and, from time to time, Menzikoff would mount his charger, and, as his person was well known, thereby identify himself with the procession. *Avant couriers* had been despatched to secure horses the evening before, and every other thing which an active mind could foresee as necessary; but much inconvenience and discomfort must be necessarily encountered. Russia was not then what she is now; Peter the Great had made one excellent road between St. Petersburgh and Moscow; but it was not provided with inns, and the post-houses were mean and filthy cottages, into which delicate females could not enter. Their bedding accompanied them; and when they arrived at a village or town, where it was possible to find roofs that would shelter so large a party, every dwelling was put in requisition; everything demanded was paid for with a lavish hand, but exacted with that air of command which belongs to royalty and despotic sway.

On the first day of their journey, the princess, notwithstanding her apprehensions, experienced that relief in breathing change of air so generally bestows; and Mary, with that proneness to hope which the young experience, thought that Plescoff would be restorative, and expatiated warmly on the pleasure of meeting Madame Rocales, of visiting their old pensioners, and realizing many a scheme for philanthropic purposes. The following day nearly quenched these hopes, and she saw but too plainly that her exemplary mother, so beloved by all and so capable of benefiting all, would do little more than find a grave in the principality of her husband. To ease her pains by the most sedulous attention, to treasure up her instructive words as the guide of her future life, and guard, so far as it was possible, the deep-felt anguish which, from time to time, gushed in tears to her eyes from her mother's observation, was her sole and unceasing employ; therefore she saw nothing without the carriage, which was closely curtained, either of the surprise and admiration excited by their appearance, or the manœuvres by which the prince sought to increase its effects, when passing places of any importance.

Pleasant, though mournful, was much of their conversation to Mary, at such times as the princess was able to speak with ease, for it turned on the memorable journey which introduced them to Theodore Dolgourouki. From the time in which the young empress had quitted her father's house to become the wife of another, never had her mother ventured to allude to his life or death, or even name in her letters any circumstance which could, by possibility, bring him to the memory of one whose misfortune it was that she never could forget him, but for whose happiness it certainly was necessary to banish every recollection tending to injure, in her eyes, the husband and sovereign she was bound by her duty to love and obey. Thus renounced, and sent forth to fare as she might, without the shadow of a fault being laid to her charge, and when her late devotion to the emperor had risked her own life and saved his, the princess could not fail to consider her as once more a free agent, whose heart had a right to its own sad thoughts and tender sorrows. She knew there is a melancholy charm in dwelling on the excellent qualities of one to whom we have committed our happiness, and yielded the treasure of our early love and confiding tenderness; and in retracing, step by step, the nature of our first impressions, the development of a lover's character, his attachment and our own sympathies, there is somewhat of consolation to the fond and faithful heart, which, in such moments, can venture to look forward to reunion in a better and higher state of existence, and live, meantime, on memory of the past.

Every time when the prince held any intercourse with his wife, he, like the young empress, was struck with her increasing weakness; and his extreme anxiety to see her in her own dwelling, and under the care of that esteemed friend who had educated his daughters, made him very desirous to increase their speed; but this, it was found, she could not bear, and it would take nearly six days before they could possibly arrive. As the pride and *fierté* which possessed him wholly on their setting out had now greatly abated, his fears for her safety and pity for her sufferings had proportionably increased towards the wife he had never ceased to love, although he had often cruelly neglected; and he now determined to share her carriage and assist his daughter, although, from his tallness, he would be very uncomfortably situated.

Accordingly, on the third day, he contrived so to arrange matters that he could sit in the upper part of the litter, and vary the position of the invalid by sometimes supporting her head, or giving the medicines she might require, as directed by their medical attendant. His presence was so delightful, his little services so dear to the heart of the sufferer, that her spirits revived, and even her pale countenance seemed reanimated like a flower in the sunshine; and at the hour of noon she desired to have the curtains a little withdrawn, that she might look out on the country.

This could be best managed by Mary, who accordingly hastened to gratify her, but who, on looking around herself, was struck by seeing a number of soldiers advancing, and she instantly inquired if her father had expected them.

"Certainly not," replied Menzikoff, becoming as pale as the cheek reclining on his shoulder.

In another moment it was evident that they were surrounded by a numerous detachment, and a young officer presented himself at the opening, on seeing the situation of the princess, with an air of respect and compassion; he requested the prince to alight, as his mission was

immediately from the emperor, and of great importance.

"Was it a recall to the court? had a distant rebellion occurred? was the emperor conscious of approaching death, and desired to make reparation?" were questions rapidly passing the agitated mind of Menzikoff as he quitted the carriage, and followed the steps of this young officer and another (the Count Ramulakoff), both of whom had dismounted and walked to a little distance, evidently endeavouring to deliver their mandate far from the litter, and beyond the sick lady's hearing.

"Unquestionably there is a new war, and I am required to take the immediate command, for Lubitsch Dolgourouki is sick, and Ivan cannot be spared; I, the degraded, the insulted!" thought Menzikoff; and his spirit rising with the thought, he stepped hastily forward, saying rapidly and almost haughtily, "What says the emperor now?"

The tone in which the words were spoken banished the pity which the sight of the princess had inspired, and he was promptly answered.

"General Menzikoff, you and all your family are banished to Siberia; your property, of every description, wherever placed, is confiscated; yes, even your clothing and carriages. Two light wagons, now coming up, in which sheepskin dresses are placed, will suffice for conveyance, as every attendant must return: my orders are peremptory."

As the officer spoke he displayed the command by which he acted, and which was seconded by the count; but no doubt of their authenticity had arisen, or could arise to the mind of the astonished and overwhelmed exile. "Siberia! Siberia!" were words that murmured on his lips, but no sound proceeded thence. That word, appalling to every Russian, seemed instantly to have frozen him into a statue, alike incapable of resisting or comprehending the command which had thus crushed him to the dust.

The eye of the alarmed wife was upon him; she saw instantly that a new and terrible misfortune had befallen them, and doubted not that it was a consequence of that splendid retinue and air of defiance he had so unwisely assumed. By a painful effort she called to the litter Count Ramulakoff, and inquired what was the will of the emperor.

In the fewest possible words, and in a tone of the truest sympathy, the terrific mandate was revealed.

"But my daughter, count! my pure, my faultless daughter! she cannot be sentenced to Siberia?"

"I grieve to say, madam, every child of Prince Menzikoff's is banished with him."

"Be it so; none of my children will desire to leave so good a father, and so great a man."

The princess spoke with dignity, and essayed to rise and quit the carriage, but she was much too feeble to effect her purpose, and he who might have been termed her executioner hastened to assist her; but a great cry was now heard, the shrieks of women, the curses of men, the military word passing, the click of arms, and the trampling of horses. Amid all, the mother's ear distinguished the cry of Ulrica, and she dreaded that her child was suffering personal insult; but it was said, by a soldier near her, that the young empress had fainted, and restoratives could only be found in the litter.

The shock she had received and the effort she had made exhausted the princess, and she too became insensible, and was carried in that state to the nearest wagon, in which her medicine-chest was placed, and a blanket thrown over her. In this vehicle were found clothes of the same kind as the peasants use in Siberia, consisting of sheepskin waistcoats and drawers, with the wool inward, and outer cloaks of a coarse texture, together with visors, gloves, boots, and bonnets; all of which were now drawn out and placed in a temporary tent, into which Ulrica, Catherine, and her maid, were taken.

At the time when Mary saw that the officer was supporting her mother, and several females hastening to her assistance, she flew to her father, and, throwing her arms around him, besought him, by every term of endearment her overflowing love and pity could supply, to recall his senses, and in this hour of agony so to act as became a man capable of bearing alike the good or evil of temporary existence. She conjured him not to add to the misery of her mother's few remaining days that of believing he could not survive his misfortunes, but would leave his wretched children to perish in the deserts of Siberia; whereas nothing could be more probable than his recall at no distant period, when, like their friend Madame Balke, he would find life more sweet than he had ever known it.

The word *recall* acted as a spell on the mind of the bewildered man, and, suddenly resuming the courage of his sex and the pride of his nature, he stalked, in majestic silence, towards the wagon in which they were then placing his wife; but a new trial awaited him on being required to enter the other vehicle, in order to assume the rough habiliments prepared for him, and which his heart-broken son was now clothed in. The empress, dreading an explosion of temper, which might increase his cruel punishment (for she had perceived that iron fetters were dangling from the arms of a soldier near the wagon), by her piteous looks, told him to preserve himself, and once more induced his self-command, and then entered the tent for the same purpose. The subaltern, who guarded the place, said, "The young empress had compelled them to oblige her maids to undress her, but he hoped *she* would submit to that which, on his part, could not be helped."

The true empress saw, indeed, the necessity for submission, and it was more for the sake of others than herself that this humiliating decree was felt galling. A little recollection showed her the necessity of adopting the change of clothing rapidly, and with her own hands, since the more entirely they were stripped of property, the more necessary was it that she should retain that secret gift of the emperor's to herself, respecting which no demand was made, notwithstanding its great value. Much as she trembled, and greatly as she was agitated by the complaints of Ulrica and the cries of little Catherine, who was sorely annoyed by her uncouth garments, she was yet enabled to get on the sheepskins, and hide the jewels effectually. Having done this, and placed her costly-furred pelisse in the hands of the officer, she was soon seated on the floor of the wagon, with her mother's head in her lap, her father sitting opposite, motionless, tearless, like one horror-stricken by her affecting appearance; and, though suffering in every nerve, on the very rack of misery, yet determined to endure in silence.

But there was again a wailing and lamentation that rent the air, and which no command

could control, all-powerful as was then the power of man over his weaker companion in Russia. The princess, kind and considerate to all, was beloved to adoration by the females of her household, most of whom had been long in her service. Torn thus suddenly from her and those idolized children whose first wants they had supplied, whose first steps they had guided, they were wild to madness in grief, and howled like very maniacs in their desire to look once more on their "angel mistress." Their request was denied in pity to its object, who was evidently unequal to enduring more, and whose soul drunk the dregs of the cup of sorrow, as she faintly waved her handkerchief in token of the only farewell, the only thanks she could tender to their love and their sorrow.

The long file of carriages, servants, and horses; the vans filled with clothes, bedding, and quantities of costly plate; the weeping and ruined servants, both high and low, under the guardianship of a body of soldiers, now returned the way they came, being, indeed, for the most part, as slaves confiscated with other property. The physician and other gentlemen who had made part of the retinue, most of whom were foreigners, considered themselves ruined by the change thus suddenly forced upon them; but compassion for the greater sufferers superseded self-commiseration, and indignation swelled in every bosom, though silence sat on the tongue; for never had despotic power wielded its iron arm with more terrible efficiency than now. The voice of a feeble boy, influenced by one insidious enemy, thus doomed to instant destruction and lingering misery a man who was one of the best generals in Europe, a persevering legislator and civilizer; a man whose immense wealth was dispensed with liberality and splendour, and whose genius, manifested in all the details of government, both at home and abroad, reflected honour on his country, and would, in time, have bestowed even on her lowest children those blessings she is only receiving now.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THERE are some sorrows of so heart-rending a nature, some afflictions so distressing and complete in the suffering they inflict and entail, that when we look back upon them in our own lives, or observe their descent in the lives of others, we are apt to wonder how human nature could possibly bear up against them, and to feel surprised that life did not give way beneath a blow so severe or reiterated. Young people are constantly heard to say (and they sincerely believe what they assert), "such and such misfortunes would certainly have *broken their hearts;*" and they appear to infer from these premises, that there is a deficient sensibility in those hearts which remain unbroken. Let them live on a few years longer, and the poor victims will probably learn how much they can endure and yet live.

When Mary lost Theodore—lost him under such dreadful circumstances—she thought *her* heart was broken, yet she lived—lived! to behold this total wreck of all to which that heart still clung with such fond affection; and she now felt certain that, weak as she yet was from her late disorder, she must still live. Not yet eighteen, she was called upon to be a veteran in suffering, and to sustain the spirits of those who, in the common course of events, should have supported hers.

Perhaps the very extremity of the case, the utter hopelessness and increasing misery of the time, compelled her mind to that exertion which matured it by calling alike her affections, memory, and judgment into action—to sink into utter despair would be to desert both parents in this hour of extremity—it would be to find the ease of apathy to the mind, the death of cold to the body, at the expense of leaving them to unmitigated sufferings. Mary could not do this; horror-struck and trembling for the future as she must be, her generous, unselfish nature could forget all personal ills for the present, all fears for the future, appalling as that future was, in the one great care to manifest a daughter's devotedness and unutterable love.

Mary at length spoke, and her father listened. She inquired what route they were taking—what country they were likely to be dropped in—and expatiated on the happiness of escaping condemnation to the mines, and the relief she had experienced when the fetters held by a soldier were deposited in the other wagon. Menzikoff shuddered, and the princess devoutly "thanked God," in a low, but fervent aspiration. Mary, glad to receive from either any symptom of attention, again aroused herself to speak on every subject which could act encouragingly on their spirits. "Herself and Ulrica," she observed, "were young and healthy, and could wait on their parents; her brother was advancing towards manhood, most amiable in disposition, and would be able to assist their father; while sweet Catherine would be the solace of her mother's solitary hours, and, indeed, the charm of all their lives."

"Mary! Mary! you talk yourself like a romantic child," said the prince. "Siberia never had, never will have, anything like a charm: it is a desert of eternal snow, a hell upon earth, which fiends people with victims."

Terrible groans succeeded his words, and he covered his face with his hands, as if fearful that its expression should be witnessed. Undoubtedly he now remembered, in the bitterness of remorse, the persons he had sent there in the days of Catherine, for trifling censures of his conduct, or deprecations of his pride; and, although they were in many instances recalled, and even now were returning, how many of their dearest ties might be broken—how many, ruined in health and circumstances, would wear out the remainder of a long life among a people who would curse his memory, and might prevent his recall—the agony he now suffered shook his very frame convulsively, and Mary dared not to speak again.

They were still on the great road to Moscow, which it would take three days more to reach, though a soldier was sent forward to procure relays of horses. Having stopped for a change at a post-house where the princess, with great difficulty, procured a little water, Menzikoff somewhat roused himself from the state of morbid misery from which he had suffered many hours; and Mary, who had watched him as a mother watches a sick child, took courage to say,

"Dear father, cruel as the emperor has been, we are not left to poverty; for he gave me, with much secrecy, and an injunction to tell no one, a brilliant necklace of great value; it will be riches to us all in Siberia."

Both parents eagerly told her neither to mention nor show these diamonds to any human

being, as they would answer no other purpose than that of tempting the cupidity of some poor wretch, who, in his turn, would find them useless. A small quantity of the lowest coin would be far more valuable in Siberia, and this the government would furnish on their arrival in Moscow.

"Not," added the princess, "that I have been robbed as the rest were, for my purse (which is tolerably filled) is yet in my pocket, and I have a diamond brooch which fastens the collar of my shoobe: remove it, Mary, or it may catch the eye of the soldiers, and they may deem it their duty to put me also into sheepskins, which would be hard to bear in my weak state."

Mary saw that so soon as they were able to converse on their desolate condition, and contrive the means of softening its horrors, a great point would be gained; and silent tears coursed down her cheeks as her heart ascended to heaven in prayer for blessings on her parents. She felt that her mother understood and thanked her for every mark of self-conquest her filial tenderness suggested, and this was a motive for perseverance. "Surely," thought she, "my father will struggle through the darkness that now settles on his bosom and threatens his reason—he has seen the folly of resistance, and will do nothing that will increase his punishment. Oh! that I alone could bear the infliction caused by his angry passions!"

A long, weary night ensued, in which they were not removed from the wagons, ill as the princess was. Salted provisions and liquor were brought to them, which at this time they could not eat, but which were accepted courteously by Mary. Low sighs, indicative of suppressed suffering, sometimes issued from the lips of the princess, but no words were spoken; for the prince continued silent, and they both hoped that he slept. Alas! his torn, remorseful, and indignant bosom harboured far different guests to those which "steep the spirit in forgetfulness."

At last Menzikoff began to speak; and to the great relief of his apprehensive wife and daughter, it was not to curse. He descanted very naturally on all he had done for Russia. His hard-fought battles; his successful manœuvres; his inexhaustible activity in the building of St. Petersburgh and Cronstadt; his difficulties with Peter the Great; his success in placing Catharine on the throne, in which she governed so mercifully and so well; his love for the present emperor, whose health he had guarded with parental tenderness, and whose mind he would have imbued with the noblest patriotism, had his views been seconded, and for whom, even now, he felt pity and contempt rather than anger and indignation, since he considered him to be the tool of another and far more malignant spirit. He protested that, from the time when Peter the Great called him, a merry, unambitious boy, from a happy servitude, thereby awakening the aspirations of pride, vanity, and self-love, and plunging him into the excitements of war and the intrigues of courts, he had ever been faithful to the sovereign he served and the country he loved. "For that love of learning," said he, "which has made me repeatedly a successful diplomatist, and enabled me to avert the horrors of war, I was indebted to Brukenthal, who first taught me to read and write, but all else was communicated by Peter himself, who loved me, and listened to me, as many know who were doomed in his moments of rashness and ferocity. He taught me to love my country, and to labour for it; to seek the glory of its name in war, and the happiness of its people in peace; and never have I swerved from that principle, nor will I! tortures such as I have been compelled to witness, and tremble to recollect, should not induce me to tamper with the fidelity of a soldier, or—"

"Dear, *dear* Alexander," cried the princess, "thank you for this welcome declaration; it makes me happy, even here." Menzikoff continued:

"In placing Catherine on the throne, perhaps I did use my influence somewhat farther than I ought, and certainly to my own injury with the old nobility; but I well knew that what she promised she would perform, and abdicate when Peter was of age. I also knew her husband intended her to reign. I was right, as she has proved by her conduct—the annals of her short sovereignty show what I could do, and what I did do, for my country—the annals of the present reign will show what I can suffer. Certainly, Peter's reign of one year has effected what Catherine's reign of two years never dreamed of. Let future ages tell my story; and, while they relate his injustice to me, his ingratitude to the wife I gave him, his folly in obeying young Dolgourouki, when old Dolgourouki would—"

The very name, in a moment, destroyed all the calmness of him who uttered it; yet, from the highest motives, he forbore to utter the invectives which laboured in his breast, and sprung instinctively to his tongue. The sacred presence of his suffering and patient wife; the beseeching eyes of his injured daughter, to whose ear the name of his enemy and her own was still sacred; and, perhaps, the deep, *deep* scorn which even exceeded his anger and hatred, contributed to impose silence upon him at this juncture, and, after a few groans, which might be considered as bitter execrations smothered in their birth, he relapsed into a silence so gloomy and profound, that, like the preternatural darkness of Egypt, it was a silence "that could be felt," and his companions dared not to break it.

In the accompanying carriage sat Ulrica, Alexander, and little Catherine; the former unceasingly weeping and lamenting the fate which had cruelly cut her off from all that made life desirable, just as she was entering on its pleasures; while her brother, who was somewhat recovering from the blow which had stunned him, endeavoured to soothe her sorrows, that he might be enabled to collect his thoughts and obtain fortitude to meet the fate before him. The poor child, annoyed with her uncouth clothing, disgusted with the strange food which even hunger could not induce her to eat as yet, and crying incessantly for nurse or mamma, yet found refuge in sleep. When looking upon her, all of the man in his nature, which poor Alexander had tried to call into action, vanished; to see so young and innocent a sufferer condemned to endure privations love could not relieve, nor reason soothe, completely overcame him, and he wept over the sleeping child in the very extreme of misery.

The second night they stopped at a miserable dwelling, resembling that where Mary had last beheld Theodore, and well remembered that an act of humanity, on his part, towards the serf that inhabited it, had drawn her attention to the graces of his person and manner. Here some bread of a better quality was procured by the officer who was their escort, and partaken by all save the princess, who vainly endeavoured

to eat, in order to comfort those around her; but Mary hastened to make her gruel of prepared materials accompanying her medicine-chest. The officer and his men slept on the floor, save two, who, with presented arms, stood over them, and appeared so ashamed of their office, that the empress and her mother exchanged looks which said, "now is the truth of your father's profession seen: how soon might those men be prevailed on to turn their arms against their fellows! and, were we once more in Petersburgh, the very sight of Menzikoff in sheepskins would rouse the blood of his own veterans, and make a revolution in the empire." "Oh! keep thy servant from presumptuous sins," was the fervent prayer of the Christian wife; and truly thankful did she feel when she saw the head of Menzikoff drop on his folded arms, and, as she trusted, saved by slumber from temptation. She knew not that a cordon of peasants were even then drawn round the cottage by their careful guardian.

The close of another day of wearisome misery brought them to Moscow, where they were lodged in the public prison, and closely guarded. Here they expected some days' rest; but, on the contrary, were hurried away before the morning light, and placed under the guardianship of another but smaller body of soldiers, and another officer.* They regretted parting with the first, who had been uniformly humane and considerate; and Mary again trembled lest the fetters should be brought forth, having learned in the prison that it was when setting out from this place these dreadful badges of criminality were applied and riveted; but this trouble she was spared, and from the number of horses fixed to the wagons, it appeared an object to send them out of the country as speedily as possible, and with an air of great secrecy, as they had not been left alone with their jailers for a moment.

It was well for Menzikoff that he could not behold the towers of his native city, nor recall the pleasures of his infancy in passing by its fields and gardens—that not one who had gazed on his elevation with envy could look on his degradation with satisfaction—but, beyond this relief, every lamentable circumstance in their journey was dreadfully increased. The roads, at all times execrable, were rendered worse by the falling snow; and, although the vehicles in which they were placed were better calculated for encountering them than heavier carriages, they were necessarily subject to perpetual concussions, and there was no possibility of saving the invalid from severe suffering.

The sight of her reiterated, indeed, continual sufferings, drew frequent cries from Mary, who viewed her mother as on the rack, and curses ill suppressed broke from time to time from her father. "Why did the detested wretch not wreak his malignity and cruelty on me? I am a man, and could have borne his tortures, and he might have glutted his eyes with my writhing agonies; but thus to torment her—to aid disease, and make the last sands of life run out in lingering misery—to do thus to one who never hurt a worm, who has healed and cherished so many in their sickness and poverty—oh, God! I cannot bear it! All else, all else, but not this, not *this!*"

As such exclamations burst from his lips, his wife would blame herself for having suffered a groan to escape, and assure him it was the effect of her own weakness rather than the pain she experienced. "To be sure," she would say, trying to smile, "Peter has paid me in strange coin for the *bonbons* I used to feed him with when I was his pretty *woman;* but I will not name him again, lest I should not forgive him."

Day after day, and, when horses could be procured, night after night also, they travelled on, the cold increasing as they proceeded, and the brilliant aurora borealis supplying light to their guardians. For the first week or ten days Mary constantly expected her mother would scarcely survive for another hour, but, alas! she still lived to suffer. On reaching Nishnei Novogorod she had become so weak that she desired rather to remain than be carried into the house where they were to stop during the night; but, as it was only here and at Vladimir that inns which had the slightest appearance of comfort had been seen, Mary prevailed on her to remove, and she found great relief from obtaining an easy couch, and seeing her dear children around in health; and to a certain degree recovering the power of resistance to sorrow natural at their age, she expressed herself thankful to God, and earnestly besought her husband to improve and cheer his future solitude by religion, which hitherto the business and grandeur of life had hidden from his view.

Deplorable, indeed, is the situation of those who are compelled even by their love to desire the death of those who are inexpressibly dear; to whom the heart fondly clings, and on which the eye gazes as the dearest object upon earth. Yet on again setting forward, every one of this wretched family felt that for her it would have been far better to depart, since again the same cruel joltings, the same piercing air, the same soul-sinking objects were to be encountered; but she was still patient and almost cheerful, trying "to comfort her comforters."

In this state the two next days were passed with little change, their guard having been changed at Nishnei, and they were now slowly making their way up the mountains which divided them from the dreadful country they were doomed to inhabit. In the course of their long journey, Menzikoff, with the officer's permission, had frequently changed places with one or other of the young people, but Mary never left her mother. On the third day after leaving Novogorod, the princess expressed a great desire for seeing her son for a short time, adding, "go to your children, my love; the little one will amuse you, and dear Ulrica find comfort in seeing you."

The exchange was soon effected, for Alexander was now walking, which his father would have preferred, so slow and jolting was the motion of the wagons; but he obeyed the summons with all the alacrity of affection. The sight of his mother was, however, too much, and he took his place in silence, endeavouring to assist her position in the manner recommended by his father: a faint smile played on her features indicative of love and approbation.

"You complain not, dear mother," said the youth; "indeed, you never did complain; would

* Criminals sent to Siberia now are allowed a week's repose in the prison at Moscow; after which, the men have fetters put on their legs, and walk all the way, whether intended to work in the mines, to which murderers are condemned, or to colonize in the country: the women, who are criminals, walk also in a band, but wear no fetters. The wives who accompany their husbands do it by choice, and they can take their children by permission of their parish; these travel in carts, into which they are bound, the roads being terrible. It takes six months, within a week or two, for these wretched people to reach their destination; and must be a great infliction on the soldiers who guard them.—See an admirable work on Russia, by Robert Bremner, Esq., 1839.

that you could communicate some portion of your patient firmness to your children in this time of trial!"

"Receive this dispensation as coming from God, my love, and then doubt not that the chastening (grievous as it is) will be made a blessing. We are all humble when we receive affliction from our heavenly Father, and rebellious when we consider it the infliction of man, who is but a worm like ourselves. If you do not look to second causes, Alexander, you will have by prayer nearer access to that throne of grace in which you can put your trust without doubting. Remember your mother (that mother who is on the very threshold of eternity) told you to do thus."

There was a pause, for the fast flowing tears fell on the thin hand he was pressing to his heart, but after a time, his sobs subsiding, Alexander said:

"What else has my precious mother to leave as her command?"

"Comfort your father, by showing him you can do your duty cheerfully in the state to which you are reduced, and be cheerful, not only in seeming, but in heart, my dear boy, for youth comes to man but once, and it is life's season of joy, in which care and labour are easy, and simple existence sweet. Show your father that you are happy, and it will enable him to forgive the enemies who injure him through you. For your sisters I need not bespeak your love, but have especial regard to Mary, your sister and your empress; take her to your heart of hearts, my son; you must be the world to each other."

The princess stopped, overwhelmed with those feelings which drew her soul earthward, even when it most desired to take flight to those mansions where alone it could find repose; even now, in pain and sorrow, want, and often blindness,* she felt desire to live, and, by sharing their miseries, prove to them the undying, unalterable love of a mother; but she lifted the heart to heaven in prayer for resignation, and this, its latest agony, passed away. When she could again speak, she said to her son, "Kiss me, my love, and depart. I wish to have your dear father with me."

The youth obeyed in silence, for his sorrow was suffocating; and Mary, who saw that the hour so long expected, dreaded, and desired, was almost come, eagerly sought to receive instructions from those lips about to close forever.

"I have no new commandment for thee, my Mary, for all thy life thou hast read my heart, and knowest all it could tell thee. I commit to thy love thy dear, *dear*, suffering father, and my sweet babe, to whom thou wilt be a mother. And oh! Mary, be not less a sister to poor Ulrica; strengthen her mind by precept, by example, by employment; it is the idle only who in misfortune become entirely miserable."

Menzikoff now entered the wagon, and the sufferer found relief from being placed in his arms, and reclining her head on his shoulder.

"Thank you, my love," said she; "I shall manage very well; but yet I hope we shall stop somewhere in a few hours. Did you see anything in the distance like a village when you were out?"

"I saw nothing but snow—everlasting snow," he answered, with deep emotion.

"Then most probably we have entered the confines of Siberia. Well! well! remember, dear Alexander, your wife was willing to have lived with you and laboured for you even there. Yes, she could have shared with you a mess of pottage, gladly; but I cannot say much—only, I am thankful our enemies did not part us. There is a God over Siberia—remember that, my love—yes, a God of mercy."

"How clear your mother's voice is become! How well she speaks!" said Menzikoff to his daughter.

"It has been so for the last two hours. She spoke in this way to my brother, and appeared no worse for the exertion."

"Yet the air is much colder. I begged hard that we might stop at the first place where there was a stove, but I know not whether my request will be complied with; these men's hearts are as rugged as the rocks we travel on—ha! what a shake was that; this road is worse than ever. Were you not hurt by it, my love?"

A short soft sigh was the only answer.

"Dear mother, we fear you were sadly shaken?"

There was no answer save another soft sigh, and all was silence.

"She sinks more heavily upon my breast. Open the curtain, Mary—look upon her face—the lights are abroad."

Mary did look, and saw that death had set his seal on that face, which was still calm and beautiful; yet she listened as if her very heart were all ear, to catch the recurrence of that last faint sigh: it came not, and in tremulous accents she exclaimed,

"Father! dear father, surely this is death!"

Gently as a mother moves her sleeping child did Menzikoff remove the now stiffening arm that encircled his neck, and lay the head upon the pillow of straw they had begged for her at the last resting-place, that he might ascertain whether Mary's conclusion was right, and if a swoon affected her mother.

This was no swoon: the king of terrors himself had welcomed them to Siberia, and claimed for his own the dearest and the best. Menzikoff had beheld his ravages in many a plain of blood, and seen many a fair youth, with the blooming features of early manhood, show beauty even in death; but a countenance like that of his once adored bride he had never beheld, so perfect were its lineaments, so saint-like its expression. Gently closing the eyes and mouth, he arranged all things around as well as he was able; then, kissing the marble forehead repeatedly and covering his face, seemed wrapped in meditation or prayer.

Mary, convinced that all was over, that she must never again listen to that dear voice, fulfil those requests it was the only consolation of her life to obey, wept as the young only can weep, with the full gush of passionate sorrow; nevertheless, she lifted not her voice in lamentation, she suffered no sound or murmur to escape her lips beyond the narrow space in which they were immured, or disturbed the sacred cares of her father, who, approving her self-command and participating her feelings, continued in darkness and silence to meditate on the dead; to own in utter prostration of spirit that she had been released from a terrible existence in mercy, but yet she was to them a loss as great as it was irreparable.

That other thoughts would rise in the breast of him who deemed her murdered—that the thirst for vengeance, the curses of a proud and almost phrensied spirit, would seek for vent in impotent yet natural imprecations, was Mary's fear, now that the wife he respected could no longer be afflicted by such vehement outbreakings of the tor-

* Historical.

tured spirit; but no! the presence of death is sacred, and the bereaved husband, the pitying father, felt its power.

He was, in truth, humbled under a deep sense of the chastisement of God towards himself, as a creature who might claim thanks from man for his zeal, his intentions, and in many cases his actions, but knew that before Almighty goodness he was a proud, sinful, erring creature, who could only in dust and ashes deplore the faults he had committed, the ambition he had fostered, the ingratitude he had evinced towards the providence which had elevated him, and the deaf ear he had turned to the conscience which had forbade undue exercise of power, and to the virtuous wife who had so often tenderly and humbly remonstrated with him. Full of deep remorse and cutting self-reproach were the thoughts that passed through his mind, yet, if the departed spirit could have witnessed them, perhaps it would have deemed that many a heartfelt prayer, many an hour spent in bitter humiliation on behalf of a husband fondly loved yet justly blamed, were about to be answered.

CHAPTER XXV.

How long Menzikoff and his daughter had remained absorbed in painful meditation neither of them knew, but about midnight the driver of their wagons stopped and informed them that they had arrived at a village where it would be necessary to remain some hours; they might therefore take the advantage of rest and refreshment, though the place was, of course, exceedingly poor.

"Father," whispered Mary, "we cannot part with our dead!"

"Certainly not, my child—where we go thither shall she go, and at our home shall she be buried. But the poor children know not of their loss, and they had better take the advantage thus offered."

"Go to them, dear father. I will remain with my mother."

"Mother! thou hast no mother," said Menzikoff, and the long pent-up anguish of his heart burst forth in a flood of tears.

Alexander now came up to their wagon to inquire after his mother, and assist in carrying her to the post-house. Mary told him that she was not to be removed, and that she would herself remain with her, but urged him to go and take care of his sisters.

"You cannot remain alone; we are now in a fearful country; the wolves are abroad, and often visit these small villages; and the soldiers are so wearied none would engage to watch you, even if we had the power to reward them, which they know we have not. Let me come in and help to raise my mother."

At the word "wolves" Menzikoff roused himself, and suddenly darting from the carriage, he addressed the subaltern, under whose *surveillance* they were now placed, in a voice agitated by various feelings, yet heard distinctly in the stillness of the dreary plain around them.

"Young man, you have, I trust, a mother, or perhaps a wife; in either case, you can feel for these unhappy children, who have lost a tender parent, or for me, who am bereft of a beloved, an invaluable partner: as a man, I ask your pity; as a soldier, whose steps some of your men have, perchance, followed to victory, I entreat due observance to the remains of Prince Menzikoff's wife."

Not one rough soldier in that wearied train but crowded in silence round the miserable vehicle, while the tears swelled in every eye; and the leader pressed eagerly forward to render personal assistance; but Menzikoff himself drew forth the light and wasted form of her who had been the grace of Peter's court, and with slow steps proceeded to the post-house, from which the inhabitants, with lights, were now issuing. Every soldier, with arms reversed and head dejected, slowly followed, while Alexander and Ulrica, thus suddenly informed of the fatal event, loudly bemoaned the dear mother whose corpse they closely followed. The lovely child, but half awake, was carried in the arms of the captain—the most innocent* captive ever doomed to the sufferings of an exile, and increasing the sorrow of all by her incessant inquiries for mamma.

The moon, hitherto obscured by clouds, heavy with snow, shone out upon that pallid corpse and the mourner who bore it; and he looked up to heaven, as if thankful for a single gleam of light on one so burdened with accumulated sorrows. The superstitious soldiery held the circumstance to be indicative of divine acceptance of the soul of the departed, and through her intercession to the degraded prince, whom they honoured as a brave man, and remembered as the generalissimo appointed by their greatest emperor; and they hastened to find the best dwelling in which to lay the body of the princess, and procure all of ornament the miserable village could produce wherewith to hallow the spot.

Thus to honour the dead will always be found grateful to the living, by whomsoever it is offered, and under whatever circumstances it is performed; and the warmly-expressed thanks of Menzikoff, his son, and even of the weeping Mary, were perhaps as welcome to the rough villagers and the weary soldiers as if they had been received from them in the palace of Oranienbaum, for they knew that they came from the heart. Every one considered the princess as a martyr to the fatigue and cold, from which she had so long suffered, and foretold that the bereaved husband would soon be also the bereaved father; and "God help him!" was echoed from heart to heart, and from lip to lip.

The officer's first care was to seek the village carpenter, who, with the celerity and ingenuity for which the Russian peasantry are remarkable, soon constructed a coffin and a bier on which to lay it, and attach it to the wagon; and, when completed, several matrons gathered round the door offering their services.

But the hands of her two fair daughters were sufficient to place the worn and shadowy form of the late princess in its last resting-place; and gladly would they have taken from their own persons grave-clothes, had any such remained; but they were thankful that her person had been held sacred; therefore the thin face was covered by the finest lawn, and her form wrapped in Genoa velvet; nor lacked there any accustomed rites in the absence of her train.

* Condemnation to Siberia divorces a man from his wife, but if wives request to accompany their husbands, they are permitted: and their children, in some cases, accompany them. Prince Menzikoff's whole family were *condemned* to accompany him.

At this place they had much longer time allowed for rest than heretofore; and a sympathy soothing to the heart, if not healing, was found in the humanity of all around them; but their physical evils were found to be greater than ever, in the intense cold, the darkness occasioned by the falling snow, and the utter dreariness of a wide, uninhabited country, offering no other view than a desolation that rested as a palpable burden on the stricken minds and weakened frames of our travellers. But Mary remembered her mother's words, and, in her love (that intense affection which was all that appeared not frozen in her system), she sought to sustain all, from the babe that slumbered in her arms, to the stricken father who now seemed subdued and helpless, as if the spirit which had once commanded millions had fled with that of the meek wife for whom alone he had exerted it.

Alexander tried to imitate Mary, and prevailed on his father to walk, which was found beneficial to them both; the snow becoming deeper, and yet not frozen, the difficulties of the cattle were extreme. The females lay huddled together, often innately wondering at their own tenacity of life, but suppressing complaint as much as possible, and trying to calculate when they should reach another station. As poor Alexander could not walk so far as he wished, he was obliged to return to the wagon in a few hours, and then the father tried to attend to him and comfort him; but he gazed at him mournfully, for he was very like his mother; and, as he read her lineaments in his face, he thought his fate would also resemble hers. When, however, they arrived at a station, food and rest seemed to restore him; and he became eager to learn where they were to be placed, and at length prevailed on his father to inquire of the officer, who could no longer have a motive for refusing to satisfy a curiosity so natural.

"I will inquire," said Menzikoff; "indeed, I should have done so before, but that I feared to learn the painful information that we should not go near Tobolsk; and, in this day's journey, I have become certain I was right. My enemies will not allow me to find a friend even in the desert."

"Is it then possible, father, that you should have friends in Siberia?"

"I have friends in it, Alexander; and, thank God, have been the means of drawing many wretched persons out of it, after the death of Peter the Great! Would I had never sent one into it: the axe, the knout—ay, the rack, would have been more merciful."

"Say not so, dear father, because we shall all, I trust, come back alive, save my dear mother. But who are your friends at Tobolsk? they are certainly not the people you sent."

"No; they were the people I saved, when, after the terrible battle of Pultava, which was the best ever fought for Russia since it ruined the army of Charles of Sweden, the greatest enemy she ever had, and the greatest general the north of Europe has produced, I pursued the fugitives, and drove them to the banks where the Volga receives another river; they knew not the country; and, though falling in numbers, would not yield, till I found means to inform the officers of the utter destruction before them, on which they laid down their arms. These prisoners were sent to Tobolsk, and proved as good citizens as they had previously been soldiers, for many of the officers became admirable schoolmasters, and the men were good builders and mechanics. Since then a treaty passed, which enabled them to return to their country; but many had married, and were become thriving men; they had conquered the evils under which they suffered at first, and are living there at present: they would be my friends, for they were brave men and good men."

"It is a precious memory, dear father, to your own heart; I feel as if it warmed mine even here. Perhaps, when we are settled, they will permit us to visit Tobolsk."

Menzikoff was silent; the power of farther converse passed away; and, in the depths of his own heart, he was probably considering how far the action to which he had alluded could compensate for the sins of pride and ambition, in which he had unquestionably indulged. His mind, uninstructed in religion, and feeling, for the first time, its importance, wandered about, vainly seeking repose, yet forming resolutions for the future, which were continually checked by the burning hatred, the prayer for vengeance, which perforce rose to his heart, and which this recollection of the past supplied. He believed it was his duty to subdue it, for his wife appeared to have done so; and she was, at this time, his sole example of all that earth held excellent and Heaven approved.

But from this short conversation a sweet hope and holy ambition arose in the bosom of his son. "Who knows," said the amiable boy, "but I may, by degrees, get him thus to inform me respecting the past, and so win him from the present! Oh! if I could lighten the heart of my father — if I could chase the gloom from his brow, the sorrow from his wounded spirit, I should be happy even in Siberia; and I am sure the blessings of my mother would be upon me, and Mary hold me to be the best of brothers."

On Menzikoff inquiring where they were destined to stop, the officer answered that Berenzof, on the banks of the Obi, was the nearest town, but that the exact spot could not be ascertained until they arrived there. "I doubt," he added, "you will find your habitation to be ten or twelve versts beyond that town; but there is a village very near in which an officer resides, who will pay to yourself and each of your family the money necessary for your subsistence monthly or quarterly; your dwelling is near a fresh stream that falls into the Obi, I have understood, but I must procure a guide at Berenzof."

With this scanty information onward they went, and three days after arrived at the town, where they slept, and would gladly have remained, for they deemed it the last spot in which even a glimmering of civilized life would ever be found to cheer and assist them; and they had now a yearning after the society and even the sight of their fellow-creatures, such as those only who have been similarly situated can conceive; and it was with increased dejection that they left a place in which there was not a human being calculated to converse with them, nor one dwelling but of the rudest and most comfortless description.

About the middle of the day, which was nearly five hours long at this period, they reached the village which had been mentioned, and were duly examined by the functionary, under

whose superintendence they were placed. He was a homely man, stupid, but not supercilious; and he passed onward, in conversation with the officer, until he arrived at a spot to which he pointed, saying, "the house was in good condition, and had been inhabited very lately."

A dark spot, which was an extensive plantation of firs, was their guide to the house, which was evidently of the humblest description, but was neither small nor dilapidated. There was a large stock of firewood piled up near the door, a well-sized barn stocked with fodder, and a small, square erection, meant for a shelter to cattle, placed within an enclosure, intended for the purpose of a fold, and nearly enclosing the cottage. On this the eyes of Menzikoff immediately fell, and, on alighting, he went towards it; and being apparently satisfied with his short survey, was returning to speak to the officer, when that gentleman, as if intuitively acquainted with his wishes, gave orders to his men in a few low words, and the coffin was instantly brought forward, and deposited in the shed.

Menzikoff knelt at the entrance, his children knelt around him, and the soldiers encircled them at a distance, while the officer proceeded to offer up prayers, such as are used in the funeral service which, under particular circumstances, it was his duty to perform. He spoke with solemnity and feeling, but the advancing night, the piercing cold, caused him to cut the ceremony short; after a kind farewell to Alexander, which were all the words they uttered, the whole party had wheeled round, and were out of hearing, and almost sight.

Menzikoff arose from his knees, and saw himself alone in the world—*alone in Siberia!* that horror of every Russian. Alone! ah, no: at this period he felt that the sufferings of his children gave tenfold anguish to his heart; for himself, he could have borne it; but these young, fair girls, so delicately nurtured; that sweet child, the last gift of her departed mother; that promising boy, now rising into manhood; he who should have carried the name of Menzikoff down the stream of time*—for them, for *them* his agonies became greater than could be borne.

With a passionate gesture he waved Alexander from him, and signified a wish to be left alone, as he cast himself prostrate by the sepulchre of his wife; all withdrew save Mary, and at her instance they hastened to the cottage, where the man who had shown them the way from Berenzof had already gone. They found him busied in lighting a fire for them, and he was not long in pointing out what he considered the many comforts of their habitation. Either moved by the circumstances of the princess's interment, or hoping to find employment from exiles appointed to inhabit a place so important in his eyes, he seemed willing to remain and be useful; and, sunk as they all were into the abyss of despair, and worn out by the fatigue of travelling more than fifteen hundred miles, no wonder this poor man's presence and attention afforded them some degree of relief and consolation.

It was so evidently a blessing to them all that their beloved mother had not reached this awful termination of their journey, that Mary had one undeniable claim on her father for gratitude to God; and, so soon as he was capable of listening to her, he arose, and, placing his hand on her shoulder, prepared to enter the miserable dwelling assigned him by that emperor to whom he had been a faithful servant and devoted friend, and who had torn him from the splendid palace given by his predecessor.

Bad as the hard, uneven floor and rough walls of the dwelling certainly were, yet they had seen many such on their journey; the fire burned cheerfully, and its warmth suffused with a sense of life the benumbed limbs, and seemed even to reach the oppressed and leaden heart of the wretched exile. His son placed him the only chair in the cottage, and little Catherine, taking up a low stool, seated herself at his feet.

After sitting some time with his eyes closed, as if to gather support from within, or to exclude the sight of what was appalling around him, Menzikoff looked earnestly at the man who was drawing forward a rough, unplaned table from the wall, and inquired "how he came thither."

"I am Peter Feff, who came as your guide from Berenzof, an please you."

"You should have returned thither with the wagons."

"I have no great call there, or anywhere—wife and children are all gone—yes, *all! all!*"

Every child instinctively pressed round their father; the action said, "to you we are all left"—and the father smiled through his tears.

"Then, Peter, it seems you are willing to live with me even here? but, alas! I am poor, exceedingly poor; I can give you no wages."

"The wages of a houseless serf are a roof and food."

"Food!" cried Menzikoff, starting on his feet, and first remembering those wants of nature which overwhelming misery had suspended; "food, said ye! I have not even *that;* my children will perish in the wilderness."

"Not so, dear father," cried Mary; "I know that bread and salted fish were put in the wagons at Berenzof, and here are cooking utensils on the stove; if Peter will look for them, I will prepare our evening meal."

Peter was able to bring these, and a small cask of brandy also, which had been placed by the kind officer at the side of the medicine-chest. Homely as the provision was, since they had tasted none better for some weeks, all found themselves refreshed by it, and poor Peter gratefully blessed them for what he thought a feast. Menzikoff now inquired "what provision was made for their sleeping."

The ground-floor of the dwelling was divided into two unequal parts, in the larger of which the family had dwelt, the outer door being in the smaller, in which was convenience for a vapour-bath, that great and common Russ comfort. Over these rooms were two chambers, in each of which were two mattresses with coverings. The roof, though not ceiled, was well protected from the cold; a ladder and trapdoor was the mode by which they were entered.

To one of these chambers repaired Menzikoff and his heir—that prince so well known in many a European court as the most splendid ambassador that ever represented the Czar of

* Dr. Clarke became well acquainted with Princess Menzikoff at Moscow: he calls her "the granddaughter of Peter the Great's favourite," and speaks of her wit and beauty. She was undoubtedly the descendant of Alexander; but, we should think, a granddaughter of *his*, as this was written in 1799. See vol. i., chap. v.

all the Russias; to the other went the beautiful and virtuous empress, the wife of him on whose dominions the sun never sets.

Yet they both slept as they had seldom slept before, for sorrow must have intervals, and exhausted nature seek reprisals. Both Mary and her father awoke refreshed; but Alexander complained that "he could not sleep at all, and often wished he had never gone to bed."

And, alas! it was only corporeally that strength was given; for, as the mind grew sensible to the circumstances in which they were placed, it shrunk from meeting the fate assigned them. Who among us, that has lost one near and dear to the heart, but must remember their sensations on awaking from sleep, when, by slow degrees, consciousness of their bereaved situation is revealed, and their loss brought home to the feelings by recollected circumstances? Thus did the banished family recall the memory of the past: their mother was dead! their father proscribed—banished! his property confiscated! his rank forgotten! and even now they were in Siberia!

Poor Ulrica, as she rose shivering from her bed, dilated on each particular of their miserable situation, but at length paused, and looked to Mary for reply rather than consolation, for their case seemed to admit of none. The kind sister eagerly began to assure her that, great as their trial undoubtedly was, yet it was their duty to be thankful that it was no worse. "Our house," said she, "is weather-proof, with glass* in the windows, which is here a luxury; for, in general, the windows are filled with blocks of ice. We have abundance of fuel, and are sheltered by the neighbouring trees, which are very rare in this country. We have fresh water near us; and, before our food is consumed, my father will be able to look out for more, which he has the means of purchasing. We are all here together, which is surely a great comfort; and our dear, long-suffering mother has escaped from our distress, which ought to be a greater; our very necessities, by inducing continual exertion, will enable us to forget our past situation, and in doing that we shall be enabled to bear the future. Think, dear Ulrica, how much worse things would have been if, in his rage at that ill-judged parade, the emperor had condemned our dear father to the mines!"

"Oh! that is very true; the bare idea makes one shudder with horror. I can see, dear sister, that if you (who have been, who still are an empress) can endure these awful changes without murmuring, I certainly ought to do so; and, indeed, it is my intention to obey my blessed mother's injunction, and follow your example in all things; but my hopes are so blighted, my mind so appalled, that I feel sick with fear and sorrow. I think I have not courage to live, yet to die in this miserable solitude seems dreadful—surely I shall lose my senses!"

As Ulrica spoke she clapped her hands upon her forehead, and Mary was struck with the paleness of her countenance and the heaviness of her eyes. Her inmost heart was smitten with the deepest pity for this sweet sister, thus cut off from all the pleasures of life before she had tried their vanity, and while imagination clothed them in their brightest hues. Her spirits high, and her heart proud by nature; conscious of the beauty and accomplishments she possessed, and the advantages of her situation in life; from the rank and talents of the father she fondly loved, and for whom she alone had never been apprehensive, misfortune had fallen upon her without any previous grief or anxiety, which might ameliorate its power by preparing the soil for its reception. In comparing the feelings of Ulrica with her own, Mary, while she clasped her fondly to her bosom, praised her good intentions, and sought to whisper comfort, might truly say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

On descending, they found the day was advanced; Peter had supplied the stove upon which he had slept, and was now beginning to look up the materials wanted for breakfast; but Alexander, heavy and languid, sat stooping, as if incapable of exertion, though he had lately been so alert and desirous to walk. He appeared fretful and wayward, a disposition entirely new in him—complained of his father for lying long in bed, and said "he was uncomfortable from heat, yet the cold destroyed him."

When Menzikoff came down, his first care was to visit the shed where he had laid his wife, to see that the temporary door made the preceding night had resisted the cunning hyena or the prowling wolf; nor did he leave the spot till, with Peter's assistance, he had walled up the entrance, for which he found abundant materials at hand, having been collected by his predecessor probably to build a second cottage. The labour had somewhat roused his jaded spirits, and given him a sense of power to endure, to which, ever since the death of his wife, he had been a stranger; and, on entering the house, he kissed all his children, and declared himself ready for breakfast, and that he should do the cooking of Mary credit. "But why," added he, "are you not assisting her, Ulrica? we are all servants here, and must help one another!"

"My sister is unwell, and I have desired her to remain quiet," said Mary; "I also fear Alexander is suffering, though he does not complain."

"What is the use of complaining—the climate admits of no alteration?" said the youth, in a querulous tone, and with a husky voice.

"Little Caty very bad," said the sweet pet, as she sought a seat on her father's knee; "her forehead hurt all over."

Menzikoff laid his hand on the child's head, and found it was indeed of a burning heat; he looked from Alexander to Ulrica, and saw in each the same symptoms of alarming fever. Hastily calling to Peter, he inquired "if any such disorder were stirring in the country."

"We have that pestilence the smallpox on every side of us; in the last ten days you have passed through many places likely to infect you all."

A cry of agony that would not be suppressed burst from the breast of Menzikoff; the last drop was now wrung from the cup of misery, and the last vial of wrath (human and divine) seemed emptied on his devoted head. But yesterday, the presence of his children to his distempered mind appeared new sources of sorrow, but at this moment he felt that they were his heart's "manna in the wilderness," sources of delight and motives for exertion. Were these dear and innocent creatures to be thus afflicted, far from all medical help, all friendly attention! were they to sicken and die, unaided and un-

* A beautiful mineral production of the country.

pitied, for whom so lately all Europe might have been ransacked for alleviation!

The cheek of Mary had blanched at the name of a disease from which she had so lately suffered; but the remembrance that she had also seen it in all its stages and phases reassured her, and she eagerly sought to convey this assurance to her father. She reminded him also that, notwithstanding all their losses, her mother's medicine-chest remained, together with some preparations of food for the sick, and said that, with his assistance, she could nurse them through a disorder with which she was so well acquainted. Neither Menzikoff nor the patients could at this time listen to the words of Mary, for the very name of the disease had struck terror to their hearts; nor could they conceive that it was possible to preserve life in a situation so utterly destitute of the means of help, knowing how frequently it was forfeited where all the aids of science and civilization were exhibited in vain.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Perhaps the wretched Menzikoff was not aware of the deep, fond, overweening regard in which he held his son until the present time, when he feared to lose him; yet, till their long and sorrowful journey, he might be said to have been almost a stranger to him. Handsome, though delicate; intelligent, sprightly, and yet gentle; courageous, but pliable, there appeared in him the elements of all things good and great; and it would have been possible for the afflicted father to have endured many years of exile, while the hope remained that his son would one day emerge from it to obtain the approbation of a repentant court, and the respect of an admiring world.

But the agonizing suspense, the distressing commiseration, and the intense fear which, by turns, afflicted him under this terrible dispensation, might be said to subdue the man within him, and strike at the very germe of life; and, although Mary, like a ministering angel, not only watched each sick-bed with almost supernatural power of endurance, but continually tried to cheer him by pointing out favourable symptoms, still—still despair sat heavy at his heart. If he prayed, it seemed to him as if his prayer returned to his own bosom; he felt that he was an alien from God, and given over for punishment, and for the first time he believed the infliction to be just.

As the disorder had been taken at the same time, in a post-house where they had spent the night, so the progress was the same in each, and the poor father believed that all would die within a few hours of each other; but his indefatigable daughter soon perceived so many desirable circumstances in the child's case, that she had no doubt of saving her, at least, from the wreck. The father was thankful for this; but it unfortunately induced him to believe that the child escaped because her mental dejection had not increased the ravages of the complaint, and from thence he drew the heart-breaking inference that his sorrows, his situation, were the destruction of his two affectionate children.

The severity of the season and climate added greatly to the danger of the disorder, and both in Alexander and Ulrica Mary perceived the same symptoms which had been pronounced fatal in the case of the emperor, and, of course, endeavoured, by every means in her power, to communicate the relief he had experienced. At length the superior strength of the male subject prevailed, and Alexander became covered with pustules, when his breathing was relieved, his pulse more tranquil, and Mary requested her father to sit by him through the night, moisten his lips with water, and speak to him cheerfully.

Far different on this eventful night was her own severer task, for poor Ulrica had been long delirious, and was now fast sinking into that state of exhaustion which precedes dissolution; and it was her especial care to keep the low moanings of pain, and afterward the actual sobbings of death, from meeting the ear and alarming the weak spirits of her brother at this critical period. Bitter were the tears that coursed down poor Mary's cheeks as she beheld the altered countenance, and watched the ebbing life of that lovely creature, whose society she had looked to as the solace of her exile; but, conscious that she must not dare to indulge her natural sorrow, she turned to gaze on little Catherine, and offer thanks to Heaven for the calm sleep into which the sweet sufferer had fallen, and which promised life and health.

Towards morning Alexander also slept, and heard not the departing groans of his beloved Ulrica, respecting whom his inquiries had been incessant, for they were warmly attached to each other; they had been all their lives together; and, although his own disposition accorded far more with that of his eldest sister, the gayety and ability of Ulrica had for him continual interest and amusement. Anxious to save him from the shock he must receive until he had more strength to bear it, when Mary had indeed received the last sigh of her sister, and fervently commended her spirit to the God who gave it, she descended, and, awakening Peter, despatched him to the village, which was only half a verst distant, to procure a carpenter, who should bring a coffin with him, and who would perform his sad business humanely and in silence.

"And is the beautiful young empress really dead?" exclaimed Peter.

"My sister is dead: God rest her soul!"

"Poor lady! poor lady! just so my Iwanowna died, at the same age, of the same complaint, and they are both alike now, though one was the Czarina, and the other a peasant's daughter."

Peter's words were spoken in soliloquy, as he walked towards the door, and Mary returned to the chamber. She doubted not that Ulrica had been pointed out by the soldiers as the empress, from one company to another, until the mistake reached their poor guide; and, as she was taken ill the very morning after their arrival, it had not occurred that any of the family had addressed herself by her title, or Ulrica by name, in his hearing. The incident was totally immaterial in the eyes of Mary at this momentous period; nevertheless, it had an influence on her after-life, and the lives of others, of the most painful importance.

Poor Peter sped in his mission, for all the means of the village were strained to procure a coffin fit for royalty; and it was settled that in the middle of the following night it should be

brought to the cottage; and a young woman who had lately passed through the disorder volunteered to assist the princess in her arduous duties. Long ere then, Menzikoff had wept over the corpse of one daughter, and gratefully blessed the other for those manifold cares which might yet preserve his son from the wreck; for he had seen, with sincere thankfulness to God, the promise of amendment in Alexander.

All things succeeded to their wishes as respected the safety of their patient: the body was removed, the sepulchre reopened, and, by the light of the torches of the country, the lately-blooming Ulrica was laid by her mother, while Menzikoff, as well as he was able, repeated the prayers of the Church, and then returned to his charge, now more valuable than ever.

Before Alexander could leave his bed, Catherine was so far better that the young woman proposed taking her to the village for change of air, and that society with children about her own age so necessary for enjoyment and health; and, as she had rendered herself not less their friend than servant in their late distress, her offer was thankfully accepted. Painful as it was to lose sight of her, Mary saw that it would be for the best; and when the remaining invalid came down, he understood the new friend from the village had removed his sisters for change of air. He rejoiced in this circumstance as a relief to Mary, for whose health he was under the most lively apprehension, as his father had been, for some time; for the last vestige of the rose had faded from her cheek; her form was attenuated and stooping; her appetite unequal to taking their only food; and, although she still spoke with a smile, and endeavoured to answer with a cheerful voice, the effort was evidently painful; and Menzikoff saw, with a pang, such as a father so situated alone could feel, that unless relief of some kind was given to her constitution, *this*, his most precious jewel—she who had found head and heart for all—would perish also.

One morning, as he sat by the delicate Alexander, turning over in his mind the best method of breaking to him the death of Ulrica, and poor Mary, on her part, was silently revolving the sad news that their flour was gone, the whole family were surprised by the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle. Peter flew to the door, and his master quickly followed, and beheld, with astonishment and delight such exceles alone could experience, a number of sheep and goats, two fine cows and a bull, recently driven within the enclosure; while against the wall were reared several fowling-pieces and canisters of powder, together with fishing-nets, which were hung on the door. Peter hastened out to see the persons who had driven them hither, but they had most probably hid themselves in the fir coppice, as no person was visible; and such was the state of the air at that season, it was easy to elude observation.

On approaching the fishing-nets, the prince perceived a letter addressed to him from one who sincerely pitied his misfortune, and desired him to receive these presents as the gift of a friend.*

This was indeed a boon; never had Menzikoff been possessed of wealth so welcome, since it promised immediate sustenance to his family of the precise nature their weakness required, and which money could not purchase even if they had possessed it. From the circumstance of the barn being found stocked with fodder, it struck Menzikoff that the animals had belonged to the late owner, and been removed, for a time, to some place within a short distance, with intention to present them when he should have suffered all the inconveniences of impoverished exile; or, perhaps, the death of his wife had occasioned pity to touch the heart of some rich Kneser who resided near the confines of Siberia, and knew the especial value of such property to a banished family. This appeared the more likely conjecture, since the time necessary for such an arrangement from the court would not have been possible, unless his degradation had been settled a much longer time than he could believe so young a person as the Czar capable of concealing so terrible a design.

How to place in safety these living treasures, since the winter was now exercising its general severity, became so much an object, that Alexander earnestly desired to lend a helping hand, and Mary could not forbear to go among them. When she had received a brimming pail from the hands of Peter (who certainly rejoiced as much as any one, having augured his own dismissal from the state of the stores), Alexander, while he eagerly drank of the sweet salubrious fluid, exclaimed, "Oh! I hope my sisters will soon come home to share our good fortune. I feel it almost wrong to rejoice so much while poor Ulrica, who has suffered more than any of us, I really think, should not have a share in our happiness."

The father felt that this was the moment in which to inform his dear convalescent of the sad chasm made in their diminished circle; the youth, grieved and surprised as he was, could not forbear a passionate burst of tears; but, as the sudden shock subsided, he saw so clearly the kindness of his father and sister in hitherto sparing his feelings, that for their sakes he determined to act with fortitude, and second their endeavours for his restoration, that he might be useful to those who had done so much for him. He had often been struck and grieved by seeing the tears spring to Mary's eyes, which he supposed to be the consequence of her illness or her lamentation for their banishment; but now he was aware of the true cause, he became more reconciled to their situation, and full of hope that Mary would recover soon, and continue to be their blessing.

The return of little Catherine, much improved in health, and very slightly disfigured, was a source of pleasure to them all, more especially as she not only received food suitable for her full restoration, but enjoyed companionship with the young things around her—more especially the kids which had accompanied their dams, and were playful as herself. In her pleasure, Mary and her brother became sensible that they also were young, and still capable of being gay; and although, in the absence of their father, they often wept over all they had lost, yet, at times, they could also smile together. In early life the heart may suffer severely, for then it feels most acutely; yet the power to rejoice is not therefore extinguished, for its elasticity is wonderful; such is the merciful provision of Nature to secure for us that which is designed to be

* This friend remained unknown, probably from a fear of drawing on himself the anger of the emperor; but it has been thought by many to have been his own gift.

the best portion of our existence, a certainty of some enjoyment despite the ills of fortune.

Young Menzikoff, although considered very handsome, was hitherto delicate and *petite* in person, with the air of a youth who had studied too closely; but from this time he grew tall and robust in health, and soon became adroit in the practice of shooting, to which he was tempted by the great quantity of game found in these desolate regions, and which afforded nutritive and delicious food, of which his father was fond, and which he taught Mary to prepare in the way he had been used to. As their stock of every kind increased, they were able to assist their poor neighbours; and to Mary, as the dispenser of medicines, they all looked for help in case of sickness. Though winter now reigned in all its horrors, yet, as the ground was perfectly hard from the frost, she would frequently wrap herself in the many coverings adopted in the country; and, protecting her face by a visor, go forth to visit and comfort the afflicted, walk with her father to inspect the sheds he was providing for his animals, or bring some young thing into the house, lest it should perish of the cold. She also entered warmly into the plan her father had adopted of building a chapel, which would enshrine the dead, and become also a place where the living might, with due solemnity, offer prayer and praise to the Most High. When speaking of his future exertions to this end, Menzikoff was cheerful, and had somewhat of his old energy lighting up his fine features; but, at all other times, despite of the cares of his affectionate children, his spirit seemed bowed down to the earth, less, as he assured them, by the sorrows he had endured and the losses he lamented, than by the deep penitence and remorse which filled his heart. So changed was his demeanour, so humble and pliable had he become, that Mary was frequently overwhelmed with pity for those crushing woes which had bruised so deeply that proud, ambitious, and once haughty, unyielding spirit. Often, on bended knees and with streaming eyes, would she most fervently beseech Almighty goodness to grant a sense of mercy and pardon to one whose faults had been so sincerely lamented and so severely punished, and who, so far as he was able, showed to all men the sincerity of his repentance.

There were times, indeed, when Mary's compassion led to observation on her father's extreme misery and unceasing self-inflictions, which awakened suspicions of the most terrific nature, and which she hastened to banish from her mind by every medium in her power. When she looked at his shrunken form, his hair now streaked with lines white as the snows around them, and observed the deep furrows already ploughed over his noble brow, she feared that some actual crime, some deeper moral stain than the sin of a rebellious heart and intriguing head, sat heavy on his soul, and stung his conscience beyond endurance—could this be the murder of Theodore?

So dreadful was the agony arising from such apprehensions, that Mary felt she could not sustain them and retain her senses. She flew to prayer, to business, to the lowly tomb of her sainted mother, to seek relief for the maddening anguish of such dreadful suggestions, and, by degrees, obtained the power of recalling circumstances connected with that distressing event. She knew that her father, proud, passionate, and tyrannical, less by nature than by fortune, whose spoiled minion he had been till now, was yet open and honourable in his enmities; incapable of dissimulation as of cowardice; and that although, like all courtiers, he tried to disguise his thoughts and command his countenance, yet there never had been a time when his wife and even herself could not read them. The manner in which he had sympathized with her when first she told the sad story; his continued kindness, in which no shade of his present trouble was mingled; and the sorrow for Theodore's sad fate, which she really believed was an alloy to the satisfaction he felt in her marriage, though he held that marriage to be the end for which he had laboured so long, the crowning glory of his successful life. All tended to prove that this could not be numbered among his sins, more especially as he was in attendance on the empress at the period when it took place, or afford cause for that bitter regret, that slow but certain self-immolation, which, by continual fasts and ceremonial crossings and prayers, by solitude and tears, sought to reconcile himself to an offended Deity, or purify himself from the baser dispositions and corruptions of his nature.

In point of fact, Menzikoff might have been taught, by either of his elder children, those truths of Christianity which would have benefited his "soul's health" without destroying his body, and thus adding to his errors. Having never given religion a thought, save as connecting it with the conduct of his wife, or being compelled to listen once in many years to the exhortations of Brukenthal, and in consequence of his ignorance conceiving that the outward ritual was *all*, he bent his mind vigorously to the task of self-punishment and unceasing labour in the rites and ceremonies of the Church, as the only means of acceptance with God, whom he was sensible of having deeply offended, and whose power to sustain his own people he had seen exemplified in the life and death of his wife. That wife, as well as her children, had received instruction from a Lutheran minister, who put into their hands that holy book, the New Testament, from whence was derived the precepts which guided them, the knowledge of that redemption which consoled them; but did not, therefore, divide them from the national Church, which held no doctrine with which they could not coalesce, although it had degenerated so far from the simplicity of an apostolic church as to have little influence on the lives of its members, who rested on the performance of its ceremonial enactments, in lieu of those duties to which they pointed. To the pure all things are pure, and the princess often found comfort in the performance of those rites the national Church ordained; but she looked *beyond* them, her husband looked *to* them.

Often did the anxious brother and sister earnestly desire to place before their father the source of their own hopes for eternity, and seek to show him that despair was a sin, and dependance on his own vain efforts presumption; but their habitual awe and their native modesty prevented the attempt. Even his present humility increased their fear of offending, by appearing to take unwarrantable liberties with one so fallen; and should they, by imprudent interference, again awaken the passions now dormant, would they not produce incalculable mischief instead

of good? Every such consultation rendered them bewildered and unhappy, afraid to proceed, yet reproaching themselves for hesitation, where so much was at stake.

When Menzikoff saw the uneasiness visible in Mary's ingenuous countenance, and that Alexander appeared dejected and abstracted, he became alarmed, yet sensible that his own extreme self-denial, and the weakness consequent upon it, was the probable cause. He saw that such infliction on himself was cruelty to them, therefore he abstained from the rigours of an anchorite, and permitted himself to cheer and encourage his children. He took necessary food, interested himself in the cattle, taught Catherine her letters as well as he was able, and with more success improved Mary's cookery; and so evident was the amendment given to every individual, even the youngest, by the master and father of the little household, that, after witnessing his own power of benefiting them, Menzikoff could never afterward withhold it, however great and even distressing to himself might be the exertion required. Who can benefit his fellow-creatures, especially the children of his love, the companions of his cares, and not be sensible that he is blessed in his labours?

The long, long winter still reigned in all its horrors, and so intense was the cold, that it was only for about an hour in the middle of the day that Alexander could assist the occupations of Peter, or go out with his gun, and their neighbours in the village were prevented, by huge snow-drifts, from offering or receiving assistance. The more delicate of their young animals were housed in the first compartment of the cottage, where the benefit of the stove reached them, and their mothers were brought in by turns, they being also sheltered in the neighbouring barn, where the diminution of provender awoke the cares of the faithful Peter, and compelled him to lessen the number of the consumers, and place in the cellar provided for that purpose provisions to freeze for future use.

When not actually engaged, this true Siberian had the faculty of sleeping like a dormouse, in any corner of the dwelling, until after supper, when he lay down on the stove. It was the custom of all the family to retire soon and lie long, because their stock of materials for light was much reduced, and they had only four hours of daylight. Nevertheless, when the evening meal was over, they sat round the stove on their low stools, and endeavoured, by conversation on the immediate objects of attention, to deaden the memory of the same social hours spent under other different circumstances, in splendid mansions, where cheerful music, gay company, rich perfumes, and dazzling chandeliers charmed the senses and soothed the spirits.

Mary at this time tried to mend their rough garments, a task ill suited to the hands of the empress; while Alexander would pluck the birds he had shot, or form rude letters with bits of firewood for the use of Catherine, for often would they all lament the want of books as their greatest privation; and each devoted much time to restore the memory of the dear child with the prayers of their own infancy, and verses learned in the nursery from the lips of that tender mother who was never distant from memory.

Menzikoff, conscious that he ought to be able to reveal much that had occurred in his own eventful life, of the battles in which he had been engaged, the courts he had visited, the countries he had traversed, and the celebrated men he had seen, would sometimes arouse himself from the brooding fears and sorrows which oppressed him, and begin to relate anecdotes, or pursue memoirs and memorable actions. With such evident delight did Alexander listen to his details, with so much gratitude to Heaven did Mary's mild eyes sparkle, when she saw him capable of this exertion, and willing for their sakes to pursue what was indeed a labour of love, that it soon became the regular treat of the evening, to which each looked as a solace for the labour and hardships of the gloomy wintry day.

Within Menzikoff's time, or immediately preceding it, the world had indeed beheld great changes, but none so singular and important as those projected rather than effected, but most patriotically planned and heroically pursued by Peter the Great. Of course his information related chiefly to that extraordinary man who had taken him from the lowly occupation of crying pastry in the street, discerned his natural talents through the veil of his ignorance, and educated him to become a general in his armies, the inspector of engineers and architects in the foundation of his new metropolis, the legislator of distant provinces and barbarous tribes, and the ambassador to polished nations. While the father of our exiled family dilated on his various employments, the difficulties he had encountered, the power he had exercised, and the grandeur he had exhibited, he yet observed "that he was a much richer man at this time than he had expected to become when he begun life, industrious and aspiring as he was by nature, and that he unquestionably enjoyed a degree of freedom he had never known before in the whole course of it." Proof, alas! that although liberty is man's choicest blessing, it is not sufficient for his happiness.

He recalled the person and manners of the Czar to their memories, for, though he only died five years before, yet he had been long ill, and they remembered nothing of him beyond their own fears of him, or their dislike of his rough jokes and convulsive motions; nevertheless, they heard now with deep interest of all he said and did, and his labours in the dock-yards of Holland and England; their hearts delighting in every trait of magnanimity he displayed, sympathizing with every disappointment he had met with, rejoicing in his triumph over Charles of Sweden, yet often marvelling how he could destroy so many subjects for the sake of building a city in a marsh, when he might have founded one at Nishnei Novogorod, in a finer situation than Constantinople.

On the sad differences between Peter and his blameable, but most unfortunate son, Menzikoff could not bear to speak. Though he decidedly condemned the conduct of Alexovitch, and considered his life forfeited to the laws of his country as a subject, he durst not turn his eye upon his own dear son, and feel the strong, the endearing, the indissoluble tie between them, and justify the parent who condemned his child to a violent though private death. Alas! where hatred exists in the human breast, it is never so inveterate as between relations; and the nearer the tie which should bind us in love, the more terrible, when reversed, becomes the aversion. Peter was the disappointed, unhappy fa-

ther of a son who neither honoured his person nor approved his designs, who was a bad husband and a worthless man, and in his disgust the ties of nature were not only forgotten, but he became a malignant persecutor, and, in giving himself credit for Roman firmness of character, abandoned the mercy a better creed would have inspired.

That wonderful warrior, Charles, was examined from his cradle to his tomb; and after him the wars of the Dutch for the independence they now enjoyed were discussed with due admiration. Thence Menzikoff diverged to Great Britain, an island where the nation had obtained a government, giving extraordinary privileges to the great body of the people, but which only served to render them discontented and unhappy, insomuch that within half a century they had publicly beheaded one king and deposed another, placing a foreigner upon his throne. This information astonished the young Russians exceedingly; they could readily conceive that a conspiracy might be formed and a sovereign murdered, but how a people could arraign a king (let his crimes be what they might) was incomprehensible to the subjects of a despotic government.

"All right must emanate from the great body of the people in the first place," said Menzikoff, "who elect rulers for the advantage of the mass; these rulers, whether they are many or one, march against their enemies, construct for them laws, which laws should be binding on all, and constitute the true power of the state, which ought henceforward to be governed by the written record rather than the body or the individual appointed to enforce it. But as rulers and lawgivers are men, not angels, it will happen, and has happened in countries variously situated, that the abuse of power has originated bad laws, instituted for selfish purposes, and that which was designed to protect and advance the many has become effective only for the few, and the love of power and of progeny has caused those few to gain for themselves and their successors still more, so that, in the course of ages, a certain portion governed the laws, instead of the laws governing them."

"But surely, dear father, it would take many ages to make a fixed code of laws, and there always ought to be a set of men, from time to time, who were empowered to revise and improve them; for it seems quite plain to me, that the same rule could never properly apply to a body of ignorant savages, which ought to guide an intelligent community of well-informed men."

"That is true, Alexander; yet if new laws are made in every age, the immense increase and the complicated nature of such a code would be a perpetual detriment to the ends of justice. The highly civilized people of whom I have just spoken are said to find their own in this condition, and to my own knowledge, France and Austria are in the same position."

"Dear father," cried Mary, "you cannot call the English highly civilized! In murdering their sovereign, surely, they proved themselves barbarous!"

"They were wrong in murdering him *judicially*, for they had no precedent for such a proceeding; they had no law to justify them, for who could foresee such a case? Besides, what man in his senses would accept a throne subject to such a possibility? With regard to the general character of this people you are wrong, for they are a generous, humane, and well-instructed nation; but they are proud and stubborn, and, being free, think much of preserving their privileges. Hence, parties arise and disputes run high, which occasionally lead to terrible consequences, as in the case before us, where for years the country was afflicted with civil war, which was concluded by placing the son of the decapitated monarch on his father's throne, under this extraordinary circumstance; that the king they slew was a good man (who might do a little wrong from valuing his position too highly, but whose virtues and abilities were acknowledged by his enemies), and restored monarchy in the person of a son who was altogether worthless, a profligate in the beginning of his time, and a tyrant in the latter part of it."

"I am sorry when free men do wrong, because it renders despots very jealous of their subjects, and the mismanaged liberty of some draw tighter the cords of slavery in others. My tutor had told me much of England as a brave and intelligent nation of great enterprise, possessing numerous colonies, and spreading herself from a small island all over the earth; and he imputed her prosperity to her freedom and her laws; he talked much of her trials by jury, and said a serf could arraign his master and punish him merely for assault; but that no persons, however poor, were slaves as our serfs are. He even said that the people pay a tax which maintains the aged and sick poor, so that no one perishes of hunger and cold throughout their country."

"He told you truly, my dear boy, and he might have added that it was the consequence of their admirable laws—the security of property, the certainty of justice, the ardent love of their country, have made them what they are, while the want of these blessings keeps us what we are. Remember, Alexander, if you should ever again enter the world, that your father for the last twenty years has been silently labouring to aid the true greatness and happiness of his country, by *enfranchising her bondsmen*, and although he did not live to see the time when they could receive liberty, you may."

"If I had ten thousand serfs," said the youth, warmly, "I would emancipate them all to-morrow. But, alas! I have not one, I never may have one, for poor Peter is not ours. I would he were, that I might say 'be free!'"

"At your age, Alexander, enthusiasm is becoming, not less than noble; but, my dear, such changes call for time and prudence; for the effects of education (which impart knowledge slowly to those who labour for bread), by which means the mind is disciplined before the hands are unfettered. The man who has lived from his cradle under the government of another, must be taught how to govern himself, or he will manage the matter badly. Another evening I will tell you what I have thought on this subject, and the plans I have formed for the happiness of my country—a country beloved so fondly, regretted so deeply—a country I shall see no more."

Such were the desultory, but often interesting conversations by which their solitary hours were beguiled. On the mind of Alexander they left an impression of gratitude to his father, in taking pains thus kindly to instruct him, and a full belief that he was the wisest, the best, and

most injured of men, and who could not fail to be soon recalled to the country he had benefited so much. But the father grew less and less hopeful on this subject, and his heart often sunk into bitter anguish, when he lay down on his mean mattress, to think that a son so promising in the sweetness of his disposition and the strength of his intellect should be not only lost to the world he would have adorned, but subjected to feel with advancing time his faculties themselves producing a keener sense of his isolated situation, and the injustice under which he laboured. Would the man submit to that which moved the indignation of youth? Would he, like the imprisoned bird, vainly beat his breast against his prison walls, or by useless flight increase his penalties, or lose his life and his sufferings together?

Mary's cogitations were different to either; she was truly thankful to see her father restored in any degree to his family and to himself, but she had known him much better than Alexander, who was three years younger; and she heard with surprise of his plans for liberating the whole of his countrymen, recollecting, as she could not fail to do, that he was stern and haughty to his domestics, and, until the period of her own illness, indifferent to his children and neglectful to his wife, and that the show and glitter of life were always preferred by him to the society of friendship and the intercourse of affection. That he had not sought aggrandizement for selfish purposes alone was evident; and she herself had wronged him in days past, yet had he also wronged himself by assuming supercilious manners, and grasping at every means of power. Did the excellence of his intentions hallow his actions? or, in this his time of affliction and real humility of heart, soothe his reproaching conscience by persuading himself that he had entertained views so philanthropic, that however chimerical, they merited the thanks of myriads? Perhaps, in desiring to give freedom on a scale so vast, he had entirely lost sight of that good which he really could do in his own vast estates and extensive establishments. How much better would it have been if he had done what he could, rather than have waited to effect that which he wished?

Mary remembered her joy when he did really effect one important boon to the people, and her own account of that pleasure to Theodore—it appeared to her as if a life had elapsed since then full of changes and sorrow; and, monotonous as her present existence was, since every day brought with it inevitable novelties of sensation, arising from privations, recollections, contrivances, and regrets, she seemed to look back through an incalculable vista of time on the past. She almost wondered how the voice and features of Theodore were so present to her senses—so vividly painted; how her hated marriage could yet dwell on her memory, as if her long, wretched journey, and the deaths of her idolized mother and beloved sister, the danger of her brother, and the misery and prostration of her father, ought to have obliterated earlier sorrows. But no! the memory of her love and her loss still rose pre-eminent; she knew that she could never again feel as she had once felt, or suffer as she had once suffered; yet she could not repent that she had known what it was to love, and be beloved by him she still held to be the first of created beings: it was like a gleam from heaven shedding light on the darkness of earth—the one drop of sweetness in a draught of gall.

CHAPTER XXVII.

At length the winter passed away; cold, storms, and darkness, "the dread artillery of heaven," rolled to a still more distant hemisphere with a rapidity exceeding even that they had been used to in the climate of Petersburgh, on which they had so often gazed with delight. After a short period, the whole face of the earth became clothed in a robe of the liveliest green—one living, brilliant emerald. Everywhere a sweet asparagus covered the ground, alike delicious and salubrious for themselves and the cattle, which, released from thraldom, revelled in the joys of the season. The streams were unbound, and their finny treasures offered to the hand of man in abundance; and man himself, released from nature's imprisonment, strolled forth to seek "the human face divine," and rejoice in mutual liberation. Parties, resembling the caravans of the East, began to traverse the plains for the purposes of commerce between the noble rivers which intersect this wide extent of country, and upon which merchandise of every description has been borne to various ports, more especially to the great fair of Nishnei Novogorod, the mart where solitary pedlers, with a stock of humble freightage, obtain those goods with which they proceed to the scattered villages and solitary houses of Siberia.

Everywhere this class of visiters is received with welcome and entertained with hospitality, being not less buyers than sellers of property, as their trade is necessarily one of barter, coin being scarce, and the provision made for the banished, and paid in copecks, sufficing only for the barest subsistence. The great business of the inhabitants of these desolate regions is in furs, a certain number of which was in past times exacted as a tax to government, and collected by the officer appointed to receive them in the nearest village; the rest may be disposed of in such a manner as to add to the comfort of the exile who is so fortunate as to procure them, though their cost is more than quadrupled before they are bought for the lining of a prince's pelisse, or the muff of a royal matron.

Following the advice of Peter, his young master had been remarkably successful in procuring many skins of black foxes, which are considered exceedingly valuable; and Menzikoff, at such times as his energies were stimulated, had been little less successful in obtaining animals nearer home; and, whether he might think little of the gain or not, it is certain even now he desired his prowess to be known and his skill appreciated. In consequence, with two or three of these itinerant venders our family had gladly held intercourse; for they had not only furs, but feathers, and stock of various kinds to dispose of, which they could not feed, and they were grievously in want of summer clothing and vessels required for farming purposes.

Menzikoff was surprised to find himself treated, even in bargaining, with a courtesy and consideration he could not have expected in such a country and from such a race. He was not aware how ill and truly pitiable his appearance had become; and, happily for his children, the great alteration in his person had come on daily and imperceptibly, and appeared to them merely

the result of his sheepskin clothing. Certain of these men, who collected in Petersburgh once in two years the goods they disposed of in this country, had probably seen the handsome, portly Menzikoff in his splendid chariot, or mounted on his prancing warhorse; and the change from that appearance to the gray-haired, emaciated man, eating from a wooden vessel with a horn spoon, while his beautiful daughter sat milking her goats at the door, touched the heart and checked the tongue of those who approached the fallen, yet unchanged exile. He found but little trouble in the exchanges he desired to make; but that which he desired still more, "news of the court," was sparingly given by those who knew that he had once, and but lately, shone there as the brightest star. All he could learn was "that the emperor had with great difficulty lingered through the winter, and was probably dead at that time; and that Ivan Dolgourouki still reigned triumphant, but was the only one of his family resident in Petersburgh at the time of their departure."

The summer was near its meridian; every hour was devoted to secure, from a wide-spread surface, the herbage necessary for fodder; but even labour was exhilarating, and all were enjoying a degree of contentment or resignation they had not hitherto known or even dared to expect. The labours of the preceding day had been somewhat too fatiguing, and they had remained till nearly noon in the house, when Catherine, who was looking through the window, exclaimed,

"Oh! there is another pedler. I see a man, indeed I do; and a boy is coming with him."

Of course the approach of a stranger was important to the child, situated as she was at that period of life when the love of companionship seems a want of nature, more especially to the isolated. In fact, not one of the family could be indifferent to such an arrival, which was at once a surprise and pleasure. "There is a pedler coming," cried the empress to her brother, who was mending a fishing-net at the door, and he re-echoed the words to his father, who was loading a cart with firewood, in preparation for a far different, yet not far distant season.

All proceeded towards the door; but the youngest, who were there the soonest, were alike persuaded that the approaching stranger was not a pedler, for in truth he carried no wares, and, instead of driving a donkey or light cart, he was accompanied by a peasant-boy as a guide, and held only a booshe over his arm, and a light bundle in his hand: besides, he was, though travel-soiled, arrayed like a gentleman, and walked like one; indeed, his step was military, though his appearance was clerical.

Had his dress been that of a soldier, hope would unquestionably have sprung up at the first glance they had of him, for it is a plant of quick growth in the breasts of the young; but they had no idea of royal clemency being extended through any other medium than the army, and therefore did not admit the thought any more than their father, who, not knowing how far the advancing stranger might prove a desirable guest, was about returning to his work, when Mary, in accents of delight, almost wild in its excess, exclaimed,

"It is Mr. Brukenthal! Oh, yes! the dear, good minister comes all this long, *long* way to visit and console us."

"And can there be, indeed, on the wide earth one man found who could do this for his friend? do it, too, for me?" cried Menzikoff, as, his eyes filling with tears, he yet looked more earnestly towards the stranger, so much affected that he clung to the door for support, as the other approached with slow steps as one overpowered by fear and sorrow.

But Mary had already bounded forward and flung herself on the good man's bosom, while Alexander grasped his hand, and the wondering child gave shouts of welcome. No doubt therefore remained as to the identity of the person of his friend, yet Menzikoff moved not; the excess of his joy, his surprise, his overflowing gratitude, arrested his shaken frame, and, while he felt that a new world was offered to his grasp, he had not a hand wherewith to grasp it.

"And how is your father, my children? How does he bear this cruel exile?" said Brukenthal, in tremulous accents, which he could with difficulty articulate.

"Oh! he is so good, so gentle—all pride and passion are subdued within him—he is, I trust, reconciled to everybody and everything," said Mary.

"And now he has got you, he will be quite, *quite* happy," cried Alexander.

"And so this is your dwelling. What servants have you?"

"Only Peter, and he is far away with our sheep; but we will wait on you—we can do everything for you now."

"Who, then, is the old man at the door? I thought men were scarce in this country."

"*Old man!*" said the youth, reproachfully; "it is our father."

Brukenthal started back, burst into tears, and turned from the path, that he might conquer his severe emotion before he approached his friend, and clasped to his bosom the companion of his boyish days—that friend had so far recovered from the shock of his joy and astonishment that he ran after him and fondly embraced him; but, for some minutes, both were speechless, for the tide which flowed in either bosom forbade control.

Mary took the young guide into the house, fed him and discharged him—then hastened to prepare the midday meal with more than usual care, employing little Catherine to pick the sweet asparagus, their only vegetable, while Alexander flew to seek the eggs of wildfowl for dessert. Meantime, Menzikoff's first steps were leading his friend to the grave which contained the ashes of that wife he had never ceased to lament, and of that daughter who perished under the first blasts of Siberia.

In the mind of Brukenthal the princess had been long loved and revered as one hallowed on earth and glorified in heaven; and, though her memory awoke a sigh, her removal was held an act of especial mercy. Turning soon to Menzikoff, he said,

"Did you then marry poor Ulrica to Peter instead of Mary, as being a year nearer his own age?"

"Oh, no! the empress would not have heard of it, for she wanted Mary about her person—the poor girl who met you is the empress."

"I live with a small congregation in a sequestered village, and news of the great world reaches us slowly; for even your banishment, which might be said to shock and astonish all Europe, had taken place, and did not reach me for near two months; yet, even in my village, some recalled exiles told the sad tale of your loss on the road, and said, 'The beautiful young empress and your other children were left in great danger.' On, therefore, seeing that sweet flow-

er flourishing in the wilderness, I concluded her sister had been her substitute."

"Oh, no! the empress, as I tell you, would not hear of it, for she fancied my eldest daughter more calculated to assist the feeble mind and narrow information of the prince; and well did my victim daughter fulfil the hard task to which my own ambition, and my desires to benefit my country, doomed her. Yet the empress had the cruelty to tell me, before her death, that I had given a *form*, but not a *heart*, to the successor of her title; and I have reason to think that she prejudiced the young emperor against me, since, although I placed him on the throne, and received new honours at his hands, I saw he no longer loved me, and often treated my daughter with contumely, as if on purpose to insult and tempt my resentment as a father."

"Did he do that?" cried Brukenthal, with a gesture of anger seldom evinced in one so self-subdued.

"Often; but she did not, therefore, relax in her endeavours to please him; in fact, she was all obedience, all gentleness—I may say all her mother; she nursed him through his disease, and, as I believe, saved his life, so far as human means were concerned in it, and the wicked influences of Ivan Dolgourouki were for a time suspended; but, when *he* came again, the infatuated boy gave way, and, despite of all her beauty, merit, and entire devotedness, she became crushed with all her family into one ruin!"

"You have, indeed, proved the worth of his advice, who said, 'put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man;' yet do I greatly fear that the love of them, or rather of their state and splendour, which you shared so long, still draws your heart, and binds it down to earth. The world, dear Menzikoff, may be loved when it is lost, as effectually for the soul's perdition as when we are surrounded by it gauds."

Menzikoff replied not for a considerable time; his eyes were cast on the ground, and he seemed to listen for farther observation or remonstrance with all the humility and teachableness of a child; but at length he answered,

"The heart is so deceitful, that I know not how much of pride and self-dependance may still lurk in my own; but, so far as I can judge, the haughtiness of my mind and the violence of my temper are subdued; and although it has been by sorrow so severe and self-inflictions so excessive that I knew not I could endure and live, yet I can sincerely thank God for all, and would not that he spared me one stroke of his rod, save for my children—my poor, afflicted children!"

"Then all is well—my anxious hours, my constant prayers, my long and lonely journeys for six wearisome months, are all, *all* happily repaid; thanks be to our heavenly Father, who hath given thee the victory, my own beloved sufferer!"

"Oh, my friend, I am still dark, still wandering in unknown paths; therefore your presence is not only the dearest gift Heaven could have granted me, but the promise to enlighten my darkness. But let me not be selfish in my joys or in my necessities; come to my cottage; if I have not a palace, I have yet a home much better than I ever merited."

On their adjournment to the dwelling, Brukenthal, who had so long been lodged in the loathsome hovels, where he had found shelter in his miserable journey, saw with surprise the order and neatness with which the young empress had disposed of their coarse and scanty furniture, and the pure pleasure which illuminated her beautiful countenance on seating at their homely board a guest so loved and honoured as himself. Deeply affected by all he saw and all he did not see (for where were the numerous attendants, the gay friends, the thousand elegances and comforts wont to grace their board!), Brukenthal was for some time too much affected to eat; but, by degrees, he controlled his feelings, and, when the meal was concluded, told them all he knew of the world they had left; and, however scanty his information, to them it had an interest the most lively, though mixed with that mournfulness a departed spirit may be disposed to feel towards the dwellers upon earth. To Brukenthal it became in a few hours matter of consolation to find they lived in a world which had also its interest, for the cares of a dairy, in its many concomitants, claimed attention from all at a given hour. The domestic animals fed by their hands, conscious of their presence, and answering with glad cries to their voices, had a power of exciting their affections, and, in some measure, supplying to them a companionship in their solitude; and since to Peter alone was consigned the infliction of death when necessary, which was always performed with secrecy, celerity, and humanity, their enjoyment of these dumb companions was unaccompanied by useless regret.

Brukenthal earnestly desired to learn the particulars of the princess's death, but delayed all inquiry until he should find Mary alone; and they also avoided inquiring the particulars of his journey, terrible as it must have been, since he had walked all the way, and set out in the middle of winter, lest it should bring on references to their own, and the grievous losses which attended it. They sought to avoid those memories which would grieve a guest so dear, and to whom they were so infinitely obliged, preferring his happiness to his sympathy; and fully was their forbearance rewarded when his small package was opened, which contained only a little linen for himself, and what they deemed a most valuable present of books for themselves. Two Bibles, a manual of prayers for families, a hymn-book, and a few volumes of history and poetry, were a prize of invaluable worth in their eyes, and with grateful hearts did they join in the evening devotion he proposed henceforward to establish in their family—it rendered the boon of his presence complete.

Mary was the last to seek her pillow, for her gratitude to Heaven was too absorbing on this eventful night to admit the composure necessary for repose. She felt as if the spirit of her mother might now hover round them and partake their adoration, and fondly hoped that she should never again see the mind of her father in so hopeless and dejected a state as that she had so often witnessed, and which it was now become evident had reduced him to early age and fearful decrepitude.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

When the ice was once broken, the proud spirit humbled to confession, as we have seen in his meeting with Brukenthal, it will be naturally supposed that from day to day Menzikoff spoke of his fears, his feelings, his imperfect faith, and his glimmering hopes, with the anxious humility and the obedient pliability of a young disciple; and anxiously did he inquire,

at the earliest opportunity, "if his many fasts—his prayers, breathed from the hard, cold ground—his repetitions of texts and recitations of hymns, for hours together, would propitiate the God under whose punishment he was suffering, and atone for the sins he had committed against many of his fellow-creatures, though his natural disposition was merciful and generous."

"The more you forced that disposition from its natural inclination, the greater was your sin; but as to your fasts and prayers, though they were good as far as they proved sincerity and increased the sense of contrition, it is my duty to tell you they were useless as a mode of reconciling you to the God you had offended, or the fellow-creatures you had injured. Nevertheless, cherish your humility and repentance, for they are your guides to the only true source of acceptance. We will read the New Testament together, my dear Menzikoff, and look at the great gift of man's salvation, not through the vain veil of man's inventions (which often obscures that which in his weakness he seeks to embellish), but read it in the written word, which is solace to the humble mourner, light to the ignorant mind, and shows us the only source of acceptance with God on which a sound understanding dare rely. He 'who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities,' having bought us by the precious sacrifice of himself, requires not the intercession of the saints, or the repetition of formulas. 'Give me thy heart, my son,' is the language of scripture, and 'an humble and contrite heart he will not refuse.' Remember, despair is sin."

"Then that sin I have also indulged, though, for the children's sake, I have at times subdued or dissembled it. Alas! I have feared to hope; I have laid weight on weight to crush down the aspiring spirit of ambition within me, and render myself more worthy Divine mercy, and now you say I have done nothing. Alas! my own heart re-echoes the truth; how, then, can I fail to despair?"

By slow degrees and many repetitions, Brukenthal combated the fears, the objections, the false conceptions, and anxieties of his disciple, who listened with the pliability of a submissive child, and the deep solicitude of a conscious sinner, who felt that his eternal happiness or misery depended on a transitory existence far advanced towards the grave. Often would he comment on his own former ignorance and obstinacy—blame the deaf ear he had turned to remonstrance, and the cold insolence with which he had repelled entreaty or instruction. The friend, who at that time had given plain reproofs, and met disdain with calm magnanimity or fearless rebuke, now led the meek penitent with tenderness "to the fountain of living water," having all the gentleness of pity, and the patience which was unwearied in obviating every difficulty, removing every impediment, and proving at once his zeal in the cause of his Divine Master, and his intense desire of speaking in all sincerity the language of comfort to one who now said from his inmost heart, "Save, Lord, or I perish!"

When the blessed book had fulfilled its mission of mercy, and opened on the mind of the exile the promise of eternal life, as given in the Gospel, Brukenthal became more sensible than he had ever been of the premature decay and infirmity into which his friend had fallen. His fine features no longer bore the character of sorrow; on the contrary, his pale countenance was calm as his bearing was gentle, and he returned from seasons of retirement with an expression of gratitude to God and good-will to man edifying to all who beheld it; but the struggle of the spirit had been so terrible, that his strong frame had sunk beneath the punishment; his form was comparatively shadowy, his muscles shrunk, and, though only forty-seven, the character of more than threescore and ten was written in lines on his brow and mouth, that told the story of his sufferings. His friend grieved for him, and dreaded the future fate of children so tenderly attached, so grievously situated, and so likely to be forgotten by a court to whom they had been hitherto incapable of doing service. He now as anxiously sought to restore health to his body, and, by inducing exercise, to renovate his appetite, which was very weak, and of rendering him at once thankful and cheerful. He told him that "God loved a cheerful worshipper, that the beauties of creation, the gifts of Providence, were given to be enjoyed, and that the austerity affected by some good men was frequently allied to the moroseness of temper it was their duty to conquer, rather than the seriousness they held it a duty to adopt." Wherever they went he took the little playful Catherine with them, encouraged her to gambol with the lambs, to hunt for Mary's favourite flowers, and, by all the endearments suggested by her age and her affections, to enliven dear papa.

His efforts were for a time effective; Menzikoff listened to the sweet voices of his children as they sung their evening hymn or the songs of their childhood, and entered by degrees on topics of general conversation with his friend; but the most effectual mode of restoring his energies were the forwarding his scheme of building a little homely chapel, as was formerly mentioned. The season was propitious, and Alexander set out gladly to call on the assistance of their neighbours, who responded to it with all the good-will of kind-heartedness, and the pleasure which belongs to a novel and interesting object.

Wood and stone were plentiful, youth and strength were found sufficient, nor could skill be wanted in one who had raised a city under his own eyes, and was vigilant in observation not less than command. The labours of Mary and Peter were called for to provide food for their voluntary helpers, and the long days facilitated their progress. Everything around gave a sense of life so exhilarating, they could have fancied themselves again in Petersburgh, where carpenters, stonemasons, bricklayers, and all other parties concerned in architectural erections, rendered the air redolent of busy sound, which had been many times annoying even in the palace, but was now welcome both for its object and its novelty.

Alexander's share of the toil was that of providing fish for the party, in catching which he was exceedingly adroit, and the river Gessi, about two versts distant, was not less fruitful in this respect than the Obi, into which it flowed near Berenzof. The Greek religion obliges its churches to observe numerous fasts, therefore the wealth of the Siberian rivers is eagerly resorted to in summer, both for present consumption, and in order to stock ice-cellars for

the winter, but never does the great reservoir of nature fail her children; and, since help in all difficult cases could generally be found, our young angler went forth with eager steps, dragging a rough kind of light car, constructed by Peter, for the purpose of bringing home his prize, whether great or small. Rarely did his keen eye, practised hand, and excellent tools fail to procure the royal sturgeon, the useful cod, and varieties of smaller but yet delicious fish, and every evening he was now obliged to procure a companion in dragging home his vehicle, when he assisted the empress in cooking a supper which might have tempted an epicure, and afterward in distributing to their kind neighbours what was a welcome treat to their families.

Unremitting labour was necessary to effect their purpose where the summer was so short, that every day and almost every hour was numbered as a gem too precious to be misspent, a cordial which was given to the possessor, drop by drop, to provide sustenance for its long and fearful follower, of which Mary had seen so much that she was now indefatigable in her preparations for winter; but her interest in the present object was paramount to all others; and her kindness, thoughtfulness, and activity in her own share of the task, contributed, doubtless, to the celerity with which the building was completed. "Inside finishing," Menzikoff said, "could be done in another summer, and certain ornamental portions be prepared during the winter:" but his first great object was getting his chapel consecrated by his friend, and opened for Sabbath worship by the preaching of Brukenthal, for he well knew the wants of an unlearned and simple-minded people, who already loved him.

Little do the inhabitants of cities, blessed with the abundant means of spiritual improvement, know how incalculably dear, how venerably important, is the gift of a church and a minister; the explanation and the promises of the scriptures, to a handful of simple souls in the wilderness, whose hearts are awake to their duties, but who, in their untaught ignorance, neither know the extent nor the nature of that which they sincerely desire to perform. To them, "beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings;" and those among whom our banished family were placed hastened, from every side of that thinly-populated district, with an avidity and gratitude for the boon of this house of prayer and praise alike gratifying to Menzikoff and Brukenthal, who might justly rejoice in the sense of being their benefactors, and lift up their own thanks, giving praise for the mercies they were, in poverty and exile, permitted to bestow.

The sweet, full voice of Mary; the deep, mild base of Alexander, led the hymn, which, rising from that lowly edifice, spread over the wide expanse, unbroken by one discordant interruption; and the calm air, the deep blue sky, the gliding stream, and the green earth alike reposed in the tranquil Sabbath which man sought to establish, and laboured to improve and enjoy.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Within eight or ten versts of the present abode of our exiles dwelt a Boyar of much local importance named Veronkesi. He was the greatest landowner in the country within an immense space, and a man whose generosity of disposition was commensurate with that wealth which the poor around him held to be incalculable. On the female side, he was a descendant of the celebrated German Timiofevitz, a Don Cosak whose conquests had extended over much of Siberia; and his fathers had been long held as governors or chieftains in their native land. Considering himself entitled to power from his birth, as derived from a long line of ancestors, he was yet fully aware that he could not resist any decree of Russia's, and therefore thought it true policy to hold himself aloof from all communication with her. He neither courted the honours to which his situation gave him a claim, nor ventured to thwart her views, even in cases which somewhat trenched on the freedom he loved. The situation of his mansion, and even his land, was favourable for his plans of peace and security; for one of the few risings of land met with in Siberia nearly surrounded his grounds by a kind of rocky ridge, and a great portion of the rest was completely hidden by a plantation of tall firs, which afforded shelter for various beautiful trees not often met with in the country, and which at once completed the secluding belt, ornamented the home-scenery, and greatly aided the agricultural promise of his fields.

From that class of persons who were condemned by the crown to exile Veronkesi had particularly shrunk, whatever might be their rank, or how much soever he might individually pity them, since he feared not only to be marked by a suspicious government prompt to revenge even fancied insult, but feared that his kindness might compromise their safety, and a removal to the mines be the consequence of his imprudence. Under this impression, he had so far taken no notice of any of our family; and the residence of such a person so near them would have been unknown, if Alexander, in his many rambles with the gun, had not stumbled on the young Boyar when similarly employed, and whose heart, naturally warm and unchilled by any worldly maxims, readily expanded to the attractive and intellectual stranger. The young man was brought up, however, with the deep respect all Asiatics pay to their fathers, and presumed not to push an acquaintance he knew to be inimical to his wishes, though he frankly related the meeting, and warmly extolled the personal qualities of the stranger.

The Boyar loved his people as only the ruler of a small community can love them. He knew their wants, their capabilities, their ignorance, and, in many cases, their desire of instruction; therefore the report of Menzikoff's little chapel, and of the holiness and eloquence of Brukenthal, rendered him so eager to secure his services for his people, that his scruples were subdued at once, and he became not less eager than his son to repair to the new place of worship, and see the extraordinary people of whom he heard so much. His wishes were the more likely to be indulged despite his prudence, because he found that all guardianship over the person of Menzikoff had been, for some time, withdrawn; that he had been long since endowed with flocks and herds, in accordance with the will of the emperor; and that, whatever might have been the ambition and assumption of his past days, he was now endued, in their conception, with the sanctity of a saint.

The Boyar, his son, and several of their de-

pendants were all in good time for public worship on the following Sunday, though, as yet, no bell (that dear object with all Russians) had been procured in order to send even a faint tinkling forth to call its widely-scattered congregation. Highly gratified and moved by all he saw, on the following Sabbath he attended with a more numerous train, whom he left behind as he made his way to the cottage, and, with equal frankness and dignity, declared his name, and professed his desire for the friendship of the pastor and the prince. After courteously accepting the cates of the country from the hands of the empress, he gave the whole family a pressing invitation to his house the following Friday, when his son would attain his majority, and there would be a meeting of all the country in the front of his dwelling.

Menzikoff looked distressed and irresolute: the invitation interfered most painfully to him with those thoughts and services to which the day was devoted, and jarred upon his feelings; but Brukenthal, who saw in a moment the pure good meaning of the Boyar, and how desirable it was that the young people should seize the only chance the whole year would, by possibility, present to them, readily observed that the prince was too much of an invalid to accept promptly an invitation with which he might not be able to comply; but, should that prove the case, he would himself have great pleasure in accompanying the young people.

The clergy, except those at the head of the hierarchy, are not generally held in as much respect in Russia as, from their office, they ought to be, but in this distant region a far happier impression obtained, and towards Brukenthal every heart was warm, and, of course, his offer was gladly accepted, and his presence counted an honour.

The invitation was not reverted to on that day, which was given alone to "remembering the Sabbath day, and keeping it holy;" but, when broached on the following morning, it is certain Alexander, Mary, and the child could talk of little besides; and with so much considerate kindness did the good minister enter into their wants and their wishes, that he proposed setting out to Berenzof the following morning to purchase suitable habiliments for them all, intending, out of his own almost exhausted purse, to purchase a dress for Mary, as the proof of his especial love; for he well knew that their stock of money and goods was by no means low. Alexander had obtained a quantity of those valuable furs which always command purchasers, and it had been Mary's especial pleasure to procure, by the sale of lambs, good summer-clothing for her father and the child, with coarse necessaries for herself.

It was not thought advisable that Alexander, as a banished criminal, should show himself in a town, therefore the reverend friend set forth alone on a mission for which he must be thought ill calculated, and which, it is certain, nothing less than a pure and beautiful principle of philanthropy would have induced him to engage in. Brukenthal had never taken the liberty of marriage, which his church allowed him; he had given himself, heart and soul, to his people, as not less his flock than his family; nor did he leave them at the call of ancient friendship and heart-rending pity till he had procured them a temporary substitute like-minded with himself; and it might be truly said,

"To them his hopes, his fears, his all were given."

They were the bride of his affections, the objects of his fidelity; of course, the sweetest and the strongest tie of nature had never gladdened his heart or charmed his eye. The "little strong embrace" had never twined his neck or hung to his lip; but, in resigning the pleasures of paternity, he did not divest himself of its privileges. In all its best, purest, most endearing characteristics, he was the loving father, the constant friend, the watchful guardian of those young creatures who must soon know no other, and who never, in days past, had known so good a one. His sorrow for their present solitude, his fears for their future difficulties, mingled with his prayers for their welfare, and the resignation he sought to obtain on their behalf; yet much of pleasure combined with his present sensations, and he stepped onward cheerily, for the sky was bright though the path was rugged; and steril as the country was, it now bore the promise of that small harvest which might be gathered from beneath the snows of winter.

A Russian can throw his wearied limbs in any place of shelter and sleep; therefore Mary was easy as to the accommodation of their friend, but all were sensible of the chasm made in their society even for a single night. How could they expect, or even desire him to stay with them? yet what would their father do without him through the long, dreary season, which might come sooner than they expected, much as they had been warned by the natives?

When he reappeared, the question all feared to ask was answered, for he was loaded with sheepskin clothing bought for his own future use; and, though grieved to see him heated and fatigued with the warm load he had brought on his shoulders, no part of his purchases were so welcome to the young ones as those habiliments which seemed to warrant his stay; and the eyes of Menzikoff were filled with sweet and grateful tears as he surveyed them.

When Mary examined the kind gift of her friend, she found it all which her own taste would have selected, and, from the exceeding novelty of the possession, had undoubtedly more pleasure in it than she had ever felt when decked in the trappings of royalty, ornamented with waving feathers and diamonds innumerable. Menzikoff smiled as he saw her intent on fashioning her finery, but a sigh followed; for he feared lest, after having found the insufficiency of grandeur for happiness while in the world, she should now learn to desire it when unattainable.

Brukenthal read his thoughts. "Have no fear," said he, gayly, "for our stitching empress, but rather rejoice in that one beam falls on her gloomy path, for it is not likely to mislead her. Every creature that lives has its spring-time of existence, and why should not man join in the general charms of nature while his heart is in tune for it? he adds the pleasures of intellect to those of sense, and is blessed with reason to control its excess; he feels his immortality in his enjoyment."

"And why, my friend," he added, "should not *we* rejoice in the fleeting amusement given to these dear children? If our hearts have lost their spring, they have not lost their sympathy."

"Alas!" said Menzikoff, "I am myself a child, walking in a new, and therefore difficult path. I dread, in any manner, re-entering a world which may offer temptation I cannot foresee, and may not be able to withstand. I can trust others, but not myself, for I know the turpitude of my own nature. Every day of my past

life offers a volume of warning; nevertheless, I will go with my children, for they would grieve to leave me. I will enjoy the balmy breath of our short summer, see more of the country which is now become my own, and the harmless mirth of its simple people. I may be weary as well as timid, but I will not be selfish."

They set out at an early hour, Alexander undertaking to be their guide, and stepping before them with the buoyant air of youth in his limbs, and the flush of expectant pleasure glowing in his handsome countenance. Mary, her thickly curling tresses bound in by a fringed handkerchief after the fashion of the Tatars, a manteau of pale green and a kaftan of white, had never looked more perfectly lovely, as she led by her hand the blooming Catherine, who was all happiness, and sprung over the short grass fair as a fabled fairy. Several versts were passed before they reached the bounding ridge of the Boyar's patriarchal domains, when the surprise and pleasure they experienced drew the steps of all the party together, to comment and admire the singular situation of the mansion, its many beauties and vast extent, for a large adjoining village lay so close under the walls, that from the present elevation they seemed to be all one edifice.

Curiosity being awakened rather than gratified, their steps were quickened and their pleasures increased by finding how well the valley was cultivated, and that the clear spring they were accustomed to call their own meandered thither. On arriving within the immediate precincts of the dwelling, the Boyar and his son, both splendidly dressed in the ancient costume of their race, met and warmly welcomed them. Leading them into the mansions, these welcomes were repeated, and the ladies of the family presented.

The large rambling castle on which they had been long gazing was to them unique, for in their long wretched journey, if they had passed any such, assuredly they had not seen them. It was only one story high, was built of wood, but flanked by two towers of stone, which gave it somewhat the air of a fortress. As these towers were considerably apart, and the intervening space filled up, in the first instance, by necessary rooms and galleries of state, those Boyars whose large families or numerous serfs required new accommodations, had obtained them by making abutments on either side the house, by which all regularity of form was completely forfeited, and a heterogeneous cluster of misshapen low buildings (which were not yet unpicturesque) presented to the wondering eye.

Few guests had yet arrived, and after our party had partaken of a slight refreshment, the Boyar desired them to accompany him to the southern tower in order to watch their arrival. For this purpose they passed through many rooms, in wh ch they saw furniture, which had doubtless been collecting for centuries, massive and rich with gilded ornaments; in others were seen little besides the divan of the Turks and the movables of the kiosk. Silken hangings formed the frequent division of the apartments, and in everything was apparent a mixture of the Asiatic and European costume, the former predominating.

Alexander, at the precise age when curiosity is most keenly alive, was delighted to gaze on a new scene, and meet with new people, who could point to him the routes to Tobolsk or Astrachan, the course of the distant Volga or the nearer Oby; while Mary gazed delightedly on the cultivated flowers which enriched the garden, and in some measure supplied the absence of a genial season to this ungenial clime.

The first care of the Boyar seemed to be that of assembling the family into a little knot, and explaining to them the wants of his people in a religious point of view, the avidity with which they sought instruction, their fears of losing the good minister so lately come among them, and his own desire to retain him by any act of settlement within his power. When told that Brukenthal was of the Lutheran Church, he answered that he had discovered it from the simplicity and devotion of his prayers, and the good sense and scriptural plainness of his sermons.

"Having been obliged to read and think for myself in this wild country," he added, "I have long since seen the vanity of many of our customs, and shall be thankful to build on a better foundation. Of course my people are more ignorant than myself, and I want, by any possible means, to secure the continuance of your friend among us. Surely at his time of life he had better abide where he will be so beloved and so useful, and can live with a friend to whom he is so attached?"

"He has long been the pastor of a people who reverence and love him, and to whom he must return. How do I know that the climate will not shorten his days, as I doubt not it will mine? No, my lord, though I hold his kindness to be unparalleled, indeed beyond what man ever showed to man, and his society to me is dear as that as a mission from Heaven, I feel that, so far from keeping him here, it is my duty to urge his departure. He is far too precious to be sacrificed for me."

As Menzikoff spoke, his eyes, though filling with tears, were lighted up with that brilliant flame which certainly indicates a fire within that is lighting its victim by slow but certain steps to the grave. Brukenthal, who was approaching the speakers, had never observed this proof of incurable disease so decidedly developed before, and he felt that he could never leave him. A new and sacred bond was between them that could not be severed, but the world was now around them, and demanded that attention all who live in it must occasionally yield to its claims.

They turned to gaze on the scene below, and beheld on every side troops of guests hastening to a meeting of festive diversion, rarely enjoyed in this country, but which the warmth of summer permitted to far distant visitants, who slept under light tents or on the open plains, and travelled many leagues for its enjoyment. Whole troops of strangers on horseback, in light vehicles of various forms, or on foot, but frequently making a gay and imposing appearance, advanced towards this palace of the desert with music and shouts of gratulation.

Many appeared as friends and connexions of the family whom they desired to honour; many as tributaries, who performed an act of recognised duty to their chieftain. The young and bold sought to exhibit themselves, their horses, and the rich trappings of both; the elder to renew the memories of past pleasures, and cement the friendships which had benefited themselves and families; the rich, to accept distinction; the poor, to partake hospitality. Everywhere they were pressing forward; and the Boyar and his son, leaving the prince and his party with certain relations of his house, now hastened to receive the numerous company, and assign to each party the quarters appropriated to them as shown in the various tables spread out, line by line, on

the wide lawn in front of the mansion. The master of the feast and the officers of his household held this to be a pressing object of solicitude, as it would not do for parties from nations or tribes inimical to each other to be placed in close vicinity.

On descending from the town, the Boyarini and her attendant damsels had conducted the daughter of Prince Menzikoff into the room of state, and given her the place of honour, notwithstanding the simplicity of Mary's attire, which was only enriched by that solitary gem which was the relic of her mother, and now shone on her fair forehead; whereas, several ladies of the land, who had been brought in litters by their attendants, were already seated, attired in all the Oriental magnificence of Persia and Tatary. Nor were there wanting, in this far-fetched assemblage, the higher gifts of beauty and grace. Several Georgian women were present of extraordinary loveliness, with such finished delicacy of features, such fine texture and tincture of skin, as to realize all the descriptions the young empress had at times received from her courtiers at Petersburgh. To the charms of person, these fair ones added open, ingenuous, pleasing manners, at once modest and free; whereas, many others showed ignorance veiling itself in haughtiness, or that awkward simplicity and extreme timidity natural to the servile; and several remained closely wrapped in their yashmacs, afraid to look upon the very entertainment they had travelled hundreds of versts to partake.

The sports now commenced, and a truly gallant display was exhibited by various tribes of youths from the Caucasus, the Circassians, the Tatars, and Cossacks, in many instances mounted on horses of immense value, the housings of which sparkled with gold and jewels, while their riders, dressed in rich silk, fringed with costly fur, and their caps ornamented with feathers, or the bushy tail of white and blue foxes, gayly curveted in mimic battle, or pursued Asiatic exercises of the most animating description. Throwing the jerrid or assaquai; practising with the bow or the pistol at a mark; engaging in pursuit or attack; carrying the hero of the day on a throne composed of their arms, after making him appear the victor in their sports, concluded this portion of the entertainment.

The most wealthy and accomplished of this class were the youth of Krim Tatary,* then a widely spreading and beautiful country, combining, with the pastoral character peculiar to many of its numerous tribes, freedom of institutions derived from ancient Greece, and a valour that belonged to her happiest days. They had repeatedly suffered from the inroads of their ambitious neighbours, but Catherine and Potemkin were demons to their land not yet in existence, and no soothsayer had arisen to damp their generous ardour by predicting their present state of utter prostration. As Menzikoff gazed on them, he rejoiced that he had not fulfilled much of that which he had designed against them in the days of Peter.

The son of the Boyar, Alexovitch, in whose honour these rejoicings were made, was well calculated to figure in this noble assemblage. He was singularly handsome in feature, and the expression of his countenance combined the intelligence of his mother, who was of Georgian descent, with the frank and prepossessing lineaments of his father, who was a Kirkuisan. The latter had taken great pains to render him perfect in the *ménage*, and give him every other instruction befitting a warrior, should he be called upon to join the Russian service, to which his allegiance bound him, when demanded. Having himself once served for a short time under Peter the Great, he had ever since affected the manners of the inhabitants of cities, and he now proposed that the whole of his party should dine at the same time, subject, of course, to the divisions alluded to; but many females shrunk from the proposition with so much horror, and their lords manifested such offence, that it was speedily settled to provide within doors for all the wives and daughters of the Mohammedans, care having been already taken to keep their husbands and fathers at due distance from unbelievers without.

The Christian population, both male and female (though at separate places), now hastened to the tables, where a most abundant meal was spread out by hundreds for the refreshment of about two thousand visitants, all congregated for the purposes of enjoyment, and delighted by the novelty of their situation, the hospitality of their host, and the claim for personal consideration each had, or deemed he had, in his own circle. The influence of the sun in such a country was alone a source of delight; and although few awnings were provided, and the heat was very great, many seemed to rejoice in his beams, as if they sought to absorb a stock for the coming days of his absence.

Young Menzikoff, at a period of life when society is especially dear, and with whom from very infancy the pursuit of knowledge amounted to a passion, was enraptured by the position in which he found himself, being especially gratified by the great variety of people from distant countries and various governments, who seemed gathered into one narrow circle as if for his inspection. He beheld around him the raw-boned, courageous Kalmucks, darting their small black eyes from beneath their Chinese formed sculls with a look of cunning good-nature; Tangusians, of whose sight and hearing he had heard most miraculous accounts, and whose handsome, manly forms seemed to give warrant of their abilities; gay little Vagouls, whose merriment offered an excuse for their ignorance, and showed (as more civilized parties have often done) that a gay fool may help a wise man to enjoy a gay hour. Then followed Kirguisians; generous, high-spirited fellows, whose horses he had envied (for where is the youth who does not love a horse, if he was born to the possession of one, and accustomed to its use?); and last, not least, were Tatars, Circassians, and Georgians, who, in their natural graces and manifold personal acquirements, seemed born to be rulers of every land; for where circumstances do not admit the display of intellectual attainment, those qualities which strike the eye, and are evident to all, must compel our admiration.

When the hunger of this large party was appeased, and the noble host had ascertained that the gipsy and the beggar, the houseless exile and the decrepit wanderer, had been abundantly provided, and an immense quantity of fish and flesh, wildfowl and pastry, the cranberry, which was the only native fruit, and the sugar brought from far, had disappeared, and liquors of every description had succeeded, something resembling conversation took place in the immediate vicinity of the Boyar. It appeared that every description of persons now assembled retained

* See an historical novel called "the Prophet of the Caucasus."

that respect for the elders of their tribe, family, or party, which is the distinguishing badge of Eastern nations, and the mark of simple, but not savage life. Jests and loud laughter had prevailed during the meal among the warrior, hunter, and nomade tribes; but it was now expected that the great and the grave, the Nestors of the land, would converse, and the young desired to listen to them.

Many among the company had been surprised to see the Boyar place at his right hand a man so coarsely though decently apparelled, and those who, from the nobleness of his form, and that indescribable something which, in his carriage, marked him as one accustomed to the manners of a court, thence concluded him an exile, were still more surprised, as such distinction appeared a defiance of those powers which, though far distant, had still an eye to recognise and a hand to punish.

But by degrees the name of Menzikoff was whispered round, and a name which had once been heard in every corner even of that vast appanage to the Russian empire, and resounded through every neighbouring country which had sought its protection or feared its aggression, had not lost its power to command attention. It thrilled the young with an electric vibration of horror, for how could they bear to believe that pale, gray-headed man, evidently broken down with sorrow, had been not only the generalissimo of Peter the Great, but him who had lived in the hearts of his soldiers, and through their means held the crown of all the Russias in his gift—nay, the man whose daughter was at this hour their empress in the belief of many, though a few recollected with emotions of compassion that his wife had perished on her terrible journey, and his daughter on its termination?

Several persons were present who had assisted in the wars of Peter the Great, who had often witnessed the exploits of him who first appeared as the brave and venturous young soldier, whose gallant appearance charmed all eyes, and afterward as the experienced general, on whose knowledge, not less than courage, every one relied with confidence; and such memories once awakened and inspirited by the juice of the grape in its most potent form, he became the all-exciting subject of conversation, and the speakers soon led from clamorous praise of the engrossing subject to indignant reprobation of his enemies. One who was now the chieftain of an important tribe had been present, when, by a masterly manœuvre, Menzikoff defeated General Creah at Pultava, thereby turning the fortune of the day, and obtaining Russia deliverance from the most persevering and courageous enemy she had ever known, and two others immediately declared themselves to have been among the defeated, and gave the testimony of generous opponents to his ability and bravery. They described him when pursuing their harassed, enfeebled, and flying troops (half conquered ere the battle began by cold, hunger, and damp) to the banks of the Dnieper, and by compelling them to surrender, securing the safety of a devoted band, whose courage he honoured, and to whose dead the emperor himself had decreed a monument that would last forever.

As these tales of past deeds went round, many pressed about him who was their object, and, by every mode in which they could manifest indignation towards those who had degraded him and respectful homage to himself, sought to draw his attention, and make him sensible that they were devoted to his service, generally finishing their eulogy upon himself by a recapitulation of their own warlike deeds, and the number of lances that owed allegiance to them. The eye of Brukenthal, with anxious, and, it may be said, holy jealousy, was on him, though from a considerable distance; for he trembled lest these demonstrations of a regard and admiration which were, doubtless, the sincerest he had ever met with (various as were the scenes in which he had figured as "the observed of all observers"), should awaken the pride of his nature, or lead him to advert in anger to the sad situation he filled in this hour of excitement, when it was evident the enthusiasm awakened towards himself and his fair family might easily have been stirred into rebellion.

Happily, there existed no reason for this fear. Menzikoff, while he received the courtesy of all around him with a thankful smile, and expressed his delight in companionship with the brave people who were willing to accept the friendship of a man under the ban of exile, evidently entertained no revengeful or aspiring thoughts; "nature had done with her resentments" in him; he had accepted his chastisement as from the hands of God, and into those hands he committed the issue; terrible as his emotions of vengeance, rage, and bitter regret might have been (and doubtless were), it was evident the struggle was over; for himself, it was enough that life should be devoted to warring against the inborn enemy of his soul's welfare, and in preparing to meet his Maker and Redeemer.

While they were thus situated in full and joyous converse, the Boyar was withdrawn from the table, as it appeared from the arrival of a messenger, and as he was observed to look grave on his return, those near him inquired "if there was any irruption from an enemy." After his assuring them to the contrary, he expressed a wish that the young persons would begin to dance. At the word the tables were deserted by much the greater part of the company, who betook themselves to a long temporary gallery open on one side, and ornamented with flowers and branches of trees, and where two bands of music were stationed: the whole could be seen to advantage from the table of the Boyar, and most of the others.

Mary Menzikoff opened the ball with young Alexovitch in one of the national dances, and, if her father had won admiration among those with whom courage is a virtue above all others, so did she among the young, who are charmed by beauty or won by eloquence. For a short time, her spirits elated by the gayety and novelty of all around her, her heart gratified by the attention paid to her beloved father, she did justice to her own person and accomplishments, but there was a something in the peculiarity of her situation that reminded her of that eventful evening when she danced with Theodore, and all the sad train of sorrows and disappointments which had followed since then rushed in succession to her mind, and charged her with happiness as if it were a crime (rarely as it was committed). She became suddenly pale, her steps were less animated, her looks indicated abstraction of mind, and, when seated, she declined engaging in farther exertion for the evening.

The Boyar and Prince Menzikoff had been gazing on their children with those sensations which reward a parent's many anxieties, and each read the other's feelings by their own, as they approached in silence to the young couple.

The feast was intended to continue for three days, but the considerate host concluded that the banished family would deem it prudent to sleep only under their own roof, as their obedience might compromise the welfare of the kind keeper who permitted their visit, and he therefore informed them "that horses for the gentlemen and a litter for the ladies were now awaiting their commands." It was with great difficulty that the good father prevailed on his son to forego the pleasure of attending on his late partner to her humble home, but the laws of hospitality at length induced him to return to the many bright eyes which desired his presence.

Menzikoff, mounted on a beautiful charger, accompanied by a friend who had rode by his side to many a gallant field, saw his son proudly curveting near him, and forgetting, like most youths of his age, the past in the present, felt for the moment that swelling of the heart which says, "am I not, even yet, a man among men? one whose actions have ensured fame, and whose name shall descend with glory!" Alas! he soon felt how different was his arm from that which was wont to curb the most impetuous steed, how fragile was the tenement of that spirit once so enterprising; and, casting his eyes round on the midnight twilight, he sought for a similar gentle radiance from within, which should illumine his passage to that tomb to which every sensation told him he was hastening.

CHAPTER XXX.

When the family reassembled the following morning, every one naturally descanted on the hospitality, the wealth, and the power of the Boyar, save Mary, whose great object was to learn how far the excursion had been capable of amusing her father, or whether it had been in any degree injurious to him.

"I could not fail to be pleased with the extraordinary interest so many brave, kind-hearted men took in me," said Menzikoff; "and as to the Boyar himself, I hold him in the warmest bonds of friendship; nor do I find that my health has suffered; I have no weariness beyond what is natural. If you thought I looked more serious than usual, you, my dear Mary, were the cause of it, and not any personal source of trouble."

Mary replied only by a deep blush, and a look of confusion and distress.

"You are, my dear child, become a widow: a messenger brought to the Boyar this information from Tobolsk, therefore the news has been long in reaching this part of the country. The emperor has been dead ever since the beginning of January. Our host will not reveal this information till the departure of his guests, not liking to mar his entertainment by imparting anything which would cast a gloom over the meeting; and at such a distance from the court, and even the country, such a ceremony seemed to me uncalled for. Beyond ourselves, no one knew the late emperor either in person or action; we, unhappily, knew him too well."

Mary sat down in silence; her hands were folded, and tears welled up into her dovelike eyes; but, as her very nature was all truth and simplicity, she thought not a moment of affecting sorrow. Equally free was she from permitting the risings of anger towards one who had treated her and all she loved with such tyrannical injustice, for she regarded him as the mere tool of another who was all demon. After a time she thus spoke, as if in soliloquy:

"I would have been as much attached to Peter, poor boy, as I am to my own dear brother, if he would have permitted me, and all the information and the faculties God has given me should have been exerted for his benefit. I can truly say that, when he suffered from disease, my whole heart sympathized in his affliction, as I fully proved, for he found his wife was his only friend. My reward is before all men, and must exonerate me from lamenting the loss of one so weak and ungrateful; nevertheless, I never have blamed, never will blame him for sending me hither, since I was thereby enabled to tender the last duties to my dear, *dear* mother, to fulfil her requests as to my father, and exert every effort in my power for help to each of my family."

"My child! my own Mary!" said Menzikoff, tenderly folding her to his bosom, "you have, indeed, been everything to us all; and, in so far as we were concerned, the decree was an act of mercy, though to you most wicked and unjust. Nevertheless, had you been left to pine after us, in ignorance of our life and the relief which, in fact, bestowed life to the remainder of us, your sufferings would have been greater than they have been. It is over; I war not with the dead; and, indeed, I know too well that to the living alone I owe my misfortunes. Dolgourouki, by subtlety, and in pursuance of a fixed purpose, usurped my place in the Czar's councils by pretending that affection for him which I alone of all around him really felt. He held your place also, my daughter, and excluded us alike from a due share of a weak boy's regard. Enough; let us recollect it no longer, since we must suffer from our remembrance. I have other matters of great moment to talk upon."

Mary looked wistfully in her father's face, but spoke not.

"My friend, the Boyar, more than hinted that his son Alexovitch has formed an attachment for you, my dear Mary, and from my own observations I am convinced he was right. Notwithstanding Siberia is a divorcer by the laws of Russia, yet I could not yesterday have listened to a proposition of that kind; but now—"

"*Now* and forever, dear, *dear* father, turn a deaf ear, I humbly, earnestly implore you, to all such overtures for your poor Mary. To you, *you* only, save as concerns my little Catherine, is the remainder of my life devoted. Boyars and emperors are alike indifferent to me. I will never, *never* marry. I have taken one husband as an act of obedience; surely that may suffice for the most submissive daughter, seeing the suffering it cost her."

"You forget your situation, my child," said Brukenthal.

"No, father, no! Alas! I remember it too well; my heart holds itself affianced, and breaks not its engagement even with the dead, if I am at liberty to perform it. 'Tis true I am yet a minor, but I am no longer inexperienced; though young, sorrow matures the heart and the understanding, and it hath taught me that, without love, wedlock is captivity. My heart can love none other than Theodore Dolgourouki. The obedience, the duty, the kindly attentions of af-

fection I should have paid to the Czar as life advanced—*more* I could not have done; and so dreadful was my sense of the bondage I owed to him, that I fully forgave his injustice in consideration of the gift it included, and hence, I doubt not, attained that strength of mind which enabled me to sustain such terrible and successive trials. That my liberty is now fully ensured by Peter's death is a blessing to me, because the same caprice which dismissed might have recalled me. Surely my earthly father will not render the gift of my heavenly Father of no avail?"

Mary spoke with a rapidity new in her, and with an agitation that was extremely affecting to her father, and Brukenthal relieved him by saying, "But, my dear, you must consider your own situation, should you be so unhappy as to lose your father? While his life is spared, it may be more agreeable to your own sense of duty, because it is evidently more for his happiness that you should be devoted to him exclusively; but if he should be taken?"

"Have I not a beloved brother, who will protect me, and whom I will serve? have I not a young sister, who was especially confided to me by my mother in the hour of death?—that angel mother! Am I not (despite my ignominious situation) a widowed empress, whom every true Russ is bound to honour? and will not the shadow of the Most High be about the creature who seeks to do his will, even in her faithfulness to the memory of his servant? My devotedness to him whom I have lost is not that of rebellion unto God's will, but of constancy under his dispensation."

The tears, the deep, yet broken tones of a voice which, moved by the heart, had power to reach the heart, rendered both her hearers for the present incapable of reply, yet they alike grievously lamented the persuasion she had adopted. In the handsome, open-hearted Alexovitch they beheld a generous and devoted lover, who could not fail to be fondly attached to a wife so intelligent and endearing; and, in the wealth and power of his family, she would not only obtain that means of helping others which was her heart's dearest wish, but that of removing to some more genial climate, and establishing those she loved in circumstances far more consonant to that of their birth than could be hoped for under any other circumstances. How could they fail to contrast her usefulness and happiness, not less than the riches and sovereignty she renounced, with the prospect of wearing out her days in the miserable hovel where she now dwelt, neither solaced by society, nor capable of imparting joy? for they now saw only the miseries and isolation of their banished state, and forgot the ameliorating circumstances of which they were wont to boast as comforts for which they were truly grateful.

Menzikoff was not unmindful that his daughter was in possession of a dower which entitled her to high consideration, and could, in the hands of the Boyar, undoubtedly be converted into money, while to them it was utterly useless, and, indeed, a subject of anxiety, as, if either seen or suspected to be in their possession, it would be too great a temptation for some of their neighbours to resist. Their unavailing and painful conversation at length wound up with a declaration from the prince "that, in case of a direct offer being made from the young Boyar, and a direct refusal given, both himself and family would henceforth become their enemies, and their power to annoy them was such that he trembled to think of it."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Mary, warmly; "Alexovitch is of far too noble a nature to injure her he cannot win. He will be my friend, should I need one, for his heart is excellent. He is unpolished and uninformed, little calculated to be my guide and companion, even if I had known no one to whom (as such) I must have involuntarily compared him, but yet I can honour the sincerity and goodness of his nature."

These words induced Menzikoff to hope that in time his daughter might be induced to listen to one for whom he had a strong predilection; and as she had left them, and, taking Catherine by the hand, gone out to visit the lambs and inspect the corn, he mentioned the idea to Brukenthal, saying "that he intended to encourage the young man to persevere in his suit, though he would, on no account, insist on his daughter's compliance."

"You are wrong, my friend, depend upon it; for, although Mary, notwithstanding her remonstrances this morning, will eventually submit to your wishes, it will be as *your* victim, not with the feelings *he* merits. I have rarely seen the love of women under twenty very stable in its nature; but, since that of our sweet young empress has not only survived the temptations of a throne and the humiliations of a cottage—has survived her banishment and her lover's death, I must consider it of so permanent and sacred a character that I dare not disturb it. The matter had better be settled at once, and even by speaking of her as being not only attached, but engaged, for thus she holds herself. At present his love is a wandering flame, capable of changing its object, but farther intimacy would render her to him what the memory of Theodore is to her, a tie which after-life never can sever, and yet one which bare union never can satisfy, for the heart demands the heart. The young man cannot merit your daughter (I have not seen one who could), but certainly his candour and his courage in preferring an exile's daughter call upon us to guard him so far as possible from the evil consequences of his unfortunate passion.

"Besides, surely there are hopes of your recall now Peter is dead, and you would infinitely prefer seeing your children in their own country than here, however humble their station, since the means of life are with you, and the fear of God has happily subdued that fear of man, which is at once the most common and contemptible weakness of man's heart. What think you? Though it is nine months since Peter's death, so many things, after one so helpless ceased to hold the place he could not fill, would necessarily arise, that it is very possible you might not be thought of, nor your talents wanted, but yet the time may have arrived ere now when you are recalled."

"If," said Menzikoff, "the true heir is on the throne, the Dolgourouki are more triumphant than ever, and I ought to hope—I trust I do hope—such is the fact. For myself, it is far better that I should remain proscribed, and die forgotten, seeing that all who love me are around me. Who can say that, recalled to a court, and distinguished by a sovereign, excited to revenge from being gifted with power, and awakened to

pride by the possession of wealth, I might not forget the chastisements of my heavenly Father, and become again the vain, ambitious, overbearing, worldly-minded being I have been? If even my bodily weakness forbade me engaging in the toils of war or the intrigues of politics, should I not, in my pride of my son and the rank of my daughter, seek to regain for them a high position in society, and nourish my own innate sin through the medium of objects so justly dear to me, and worthy the distinctions I aimed at? Truly does the blessed book say, 'the heart is deceitful above all things,' and truly do I think my own peculiarly liable to the weakness of self-deception, and the sinfulness of falling back. Being not born to splendour, I was dazzled by it to the positive blinding of my understanding, and every accession of greatness which was bestowed upon me awoke new consciousness of personal merit; and, as I stood on high, looking round on the eminence I occupied, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, my proud heart said, 'Is not this great Babylon which I have builded for myself?' No wonder that, like him, I was driven forth from mankind!"

"But even he, my dear friend, was brought back when the days of his madness had ceased."

"True; and, like his, my madness ceased in solitude. Heavy and cutting have been the blows by which the evil spirit was crushed within me, therefore I would not that they should have fallen in vain. Otherwise I should be thankful to see again my own country (for, with all my faults, I loved and laboured for Russia), and to a certain degree live with mankind, and for them, though in an humble state of life. I do not renounce the world, dear Brukenthal; how should I while you are with me, the truest friend, the best pastor ever man was blessed with! I only fear for myself, and shrink from temptation: nevertheless, *His* will, not mine, be done."

During the time this conversation (or, rather, various conversations) had been taking place, Alexander had been visiting the village, and joining various parties who were going to the Boyar's, and he learned from them that, contrary to the regular order of succession, the Princess Anne, in consequence of some popular or political movement, had been placed on the throne, and appeared exceedingly beloved by the people. Having always understood that the immediate heir was inimical to his father, hearing of the emperor's death had in no way affected him; but this news was altogether delightful, for Anne had always been fond of his mother, and especially attached to his sister, and was (so far as he could recollect her) amiable, sensible, and every way the reverse of Peter. "Surely she could not acquiesce in their banishment? No; release must even now be on the road: soon he should be free as the many whom he had envied yesterday for their possession of liberty and a country—all other things he felt capable of acquiring for himself."

Had Alexander heard his sister refuse his friend Alexovitch in the morning, anger and grief would undoubtedly have filled his heart, and the very excess of his love for her induced him to reproach her; but the dear hope of seeing her restored to her country, her rank, and her friends, absorbed every other feeling; and so fully had he persuaded himself such must be the case, that, on his return, he prophesied a recall as positively as if he were promulgating a royal mandate. His enthusiasm carried his hearers along with him, and even the two grave men of the world, accustomed to weigh and consider, allowed themselves to believe that which he foretold, and anticipate his visions for the future; nor, even in points where they felt his reasoning was fallacious, could they bear to expose it, for in the illusion there was a pleasure which cheated him into happy forgetfulness of past sufferings and present difficulties.

Well did the dear youth merit all the indulgence parental tenderness could bestow, or his own imagination suggest; for, on the following morning, the last day of the feast at the Boyar's, and to which his father had consented he should go, he resolutely set out with the dawn to search, far and wide, for cranberries, the only fruit of this steril region, and the only substance which assuaged his father's cough. This was love indeed, and can only be estimated justly by the lonely inhabitant of a solitary region, imbued with that love of society, that keen relish of pleasure, and that consciousness of meriting it which is natural to every human being at eighteen. It was also unprompted, for Mary had not known that her father's complaint had now returned, in consequence, most probably, of his ride at midnight; and, on rising, she concluded that her brother was willing to make the most of a day so delightful and so little likely to return, for the air was even now turbid, and the beauty of summer evanishing every hour.

When he returned, clothed in his humblest apparel, hungry and fatigued, yet smiling under a large bag, gathered in the course of many a weary mile (for their own immediate neighbourhood furnished none), the countenance of Mary shone with a pleasure and confidence not exhibited since the conversation with her father we have recorded. "Is he not a glorious boy?" she exclaimed to Brukenthal; "how could I forsake him for my husband?"

"My kind, my noble son! what a present is this! what a sacrifice it includes! It grieves me to think you should have gone to-day."

"There was no time to lose, and few berries remained to gather, for the Boyar's people have scoured the country. Mary will give me food, and then prepare your conserve, and if you have a better night, all will be well, dear father; for, depend upon it, I shall sleep too sound for dreams to disturb me—even dreams of barbs and jerreeds, music and fair maidens."

Soon was the young man in the happy condition of which he spoke, but his father sat long meditating upon him, while Mary busied herself in preparing the sedative medicine her brother had procured. Brukenthal took the opportunity of impressing on the mind of Menzikoff the belief that their mutual attachment would conduce more to their happiness than that union he had contemplated with so much complacence; and, as the subject necessarily led them to a retrospective view of her heart's early engagement, he not only drew from Menzikoff a particular account of what was deemed the death of Theodore Dolgourouki, but wrote it carefully down, with due dates, and a close description of the men who had so unfortunately engaged in the transaction, and caused Menzikoff to sign the paper. Ever since he received the sad story from the repentant father, as they walked alone together, he had determined on doing this, with

a full intention of laying the document before the proper authorities on his return, provided he could secure friends in authority to interfere in behalf of the hasty but well-intentioned men who might be arraigned as assassins.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It is common for the winter to set in suddenly as well as early in Siberia, and certain indications led them daily to expect a change. Menzikoff often felt that it was his duty to urge the departure of his friend, since he believed that the clothing he had purchased was intended as much for his journey as his stay, seeing that from two to three months of it must inevitably be in the winter. When, at length, he attained courage to speak on the subject, to his great relief, Brukenthal professed an intention of staying over Christmas, hoping that he then should, after passing Nishnei Novogorod, obtain occasional relief from sleighs when the snow had become thoroughly hardened.

Every day soon became one of toil to the young people, their beloved guest, and the faithful Peter, as they were called upon to stock their ice-cellar with provisions for the winter: again the snow hurtled in the air, and again vast flocks of birds traversed the arctic circle, numbers of which escaped the miseries of a lingering death from the fowling-piece of Alexander. Brukenthal applied himself to the repairs of the cottage in every crevice where the cold winds might enter and increase the sufferings of the invalid; nor was he less anxious, by employing his mind and keeping alive his faith and hope, to preserve him in the exercise of his energies and affections as a father and friend, or prepare his soul as an acceptable offering to the God who gave it.

Thus, while Mary was in her dairy duties or her cooking avocations, he was employed in teaching Catherine to read, or contriving materials with which she could hereafter write, or in penning short aphorisms on subjects of religion or practical morality for his poor neighbours, to whom they might be read in the little chapel long after its present instructers had ceased from among them; and, when he had once begun to exercise his mind in this occupation, he found interest and amusement in essays on government and plans of legislation, which he pursued for the benefit of his son. He had seen much and observed closely different men in different countries, existing under various governments, which, in some cases, controlled them to a happy end, and at once protected and improved them; while, in others, all that was great in human nature was debased and enslaved, yet by a pressure little felt and seldom resisted. To sift the wheat from the bran, to show where the strong leanings of national individuality should be permitted, to point out the political soil in which they would flourish most, was a task for which his past life had well educated him, and which his religious views alike prompted him to engage in, for the love of God leads to the love of his creatures, and the legislator is closely united to the theologian; but, alas! he had little power to pursue such designs. Very scanty had been the stock of paper brought by the travelling pedlers, and the dealers in the village numbered no such material among their wants.

Besides, the winter had set in with a terrible storm, such as, even in that region of horrors, was not remembered by the oldest inhabitant; and so severely did Brukenthal experience its effects in the first onset, that for several weeks he appeared the worst invalid of the two. It will be readily conceived how much this affected Menzikoff, who mourned over him as a martyr to his love for him, and a victim to that cruel decree which had rendered him, virtually, the destroyer of all who loved him.

Nor was sorrow for the afflictions of the good pastor confined to the house of his friend, for such was the love and veneration inspired by his instructions, his philanthropy, and that profound sense of approbation and honour an act of true heroism like his awakens, even in the most rustic minds, that sorrow prevailed in every dwelling, and prayers were offered up from every heart in his behalf; and, so long as it was possible, inquiries were made as to his progress, and offers of all possible (though unavailing) service were added; but even this degree of intercourse with mankind was soon over: the last woman who ventured was so nearly lost, that the man who followed was forbidden to come again, and commissioned to threaten all his neighbours against attempting it, on pain of the minister's displeasure. This was rendered necessary, because the rescue of the poor woman was attributed, by all around, to the sacredness of her errand; and nothing could be more probable than that others would tempt their own destruction in the hope of a miraculous interposition, so closely does superstition ally itself with the highest motives and best actions of the ignorant and well-disposed.

Brukenthal's attack was that of rheumatic fever, in which incessant bodily pain was so constant as to suspend, in a great measure, the mental faculties, or, at least, call for the exertion of their extremest powers, merely to endure its inflictions in silence. We all know that

> "Sighs and tears, by nature, grow on pain;"

and, when they are uttered in consequence of bodily agony, let no one presume to suppose that the sufferer is deficient either in the resignation which is a Christian's duty, or the fortitude which becomes him as a man. It is much more possible to endure well a dreadful operation than an abiding torture; and, should the best-regulated mind, the most sanctified Christian, succumb under it, let not his fellow-worm arraign him. "Who art thou, O man, that judgest another? To his own master he standeth or falleth."

Brukenthal endured his affliction well, as might be expected; but its severity was so written on his countenance, that every one who beheld him suffered the painfullest emotions compassion could inflict, together with the constant fear that they might be seized by the same cruel disorder, or behold Mary seized, which would have been to each nearly an equal trouble, for she seemed to all the one source of comfort, the animating mind, the ministering hand that sustained them. While Alexander had been actively engaged in beneficial pursuits, his spirits were good; but now, closely confined to the dwelling, rendered crowded and dirty by the number of animals they were obliged to admit, with the sights and sounds of sickness constantly before his eyes, in the persons of

those he loved and honoured with such tender and venerating affection, he became completely overcome by fear and sorrow. Mary had been aware that, ever since the day he had spent at the Boyar's, he had pined for the society by which he was then surrounded, and how much he had deplored his present situation, as one which precluded him from worthily pursuing the best ends of existence, and repelled the best energies of mind. She had then feared he would sink into a gloomy despondency, which might at once ruin his promising faculties, injure his temper, and destroy his health; and without him how could she sustain her languishing father? how rear that fair flower in the wilderness which now, in its artless beauty and infantine gayety, wiled away many a thought of sorrow and many an hour of weariness?

The evil she had dreaded for him seemed now to have arrived; the praise of his father, which ever nerved him to exertion, and rewarded him for it, had ceased to cheer him; for his whole attention was given to his friend, by whose couch he might be said to grow, yet wither. Brukenthal's voice was also silent, save for half-suppressed groanings; and how often had that voice, by many an anecdote of magnanimity, courage, and endurance, cheered him in his thorny path, and led his thoughts to heaven as the sure resting-place! How often, when the labours of the day were over, had the books he brought and the conversation he induced kept his mind from preying on itself, and given to his affections their happiest exercise! All this seemed fled, now the wise, kind friend was doomed to suffering it was misery to witness, and to helplessness none of the family save Peter had strength to relieve.

Perhaps, however, this humble follower had one quality still more efficient than his power of lifting the invalid, though no one accepted its benefit save Mary. Peter was knowing in the direction of the wind, the course and the continuance of storms, and by no means a stranger to the disease under which the good minister suffered, for which, he said, he could have prescribed many cures had his reverence been a common man. As Peter's first prescription was a charm, it was rejected with a rebuke by his master; but, as time passed, and no relief was obtained from the directions of Brukenthal himself (who, like most Lutheran ministers, had studied medicine for the benefit of his flock), Mary now listened patiently to the poor serf's predictions and nostrums, and, culling the wheat carefully from the chaff, which was abundant, saw the possibility of good being obtained, at least in some degree, from his prescriptions. Though the patient smiled, despite of his pain, at the various medicaments she offered, and her father expressed surprise at her folly, yet, when she said it would at least be good for herself that they should be tried, there was no resisting the appeal, and Brukenthal made over his frame to the will of Peter and his empress, wishing it had been better worth their trouble.

A bath, heated beyond all former heatings (and for which the cottage offered that convenience* esteemed beyond all others to a Russian), was the commencement of Peter's operations; and, once in possession of his subject, he took care to exhibit all his nostrums, kneadings, rubbings, rollings, and nippings upon him to the extent of his power, and returned him to a bed trebly heated, in a state of such perfect exhaustion that Mary trembled for the result. It so happened that a considerable reduction of the cutting cold took place; the snow fell heavily, but calmly, during the whole night, and every one of the family was sensible of a change for the better, especially the master of the house; therefore, when at length poor Brukenthal, in a voice feeble as infancy, once more spoke, demanding refreshment, all crowded around him, declaring they had no longer any fears for him; the weather was changed; in a short time he would be well again.

The patient ate as he had never done before, and, to his own astonishment, sat up, and held in his hands the food and the cup they gave him, for his memory did not appear cognizant of what had passed beyond that of having drunk some bitter infusion. Mary claimed his approval of Peter and herself, and he thanked them both; but rest and sleep were necessary before he could be sensible of the extent to which he was helped, and several days elapsed before he could join them in worship, or be seated at their board. When, however, this happy event took place—when Peter had received due praise and thanks, and been alluded to in the pastor's prayer as the instrument by which mercy had been granted, their humble follower was not only the happiest, but one of the greatest of men in his own estimation. Alexander said Peter had received a diploma which would hereafter extend the fame he had earned, the circuit of many European kingdoms. In the recovery of one patient, the anxious youth foresaw that of the other; and his spirits, once aroused from the dejection into which they had sunk, he now became the helper and enlivener of all; reproached himself for a pusillanimity which had laid all the burden of their late trial on her whose patient activity had never failed any of them, and who would have been justified in rousing him to his duty by bitter words and scornful looks, since she could not fail to see he was as much the object of blame as pity.

"I am not much of a scold," said the young empress, "but there were times when I felt a little angry with you, undoubtedly, dear Alexander; if I had spoken at all, I should have said too much, and given myself cause for repentance, and truly there was no need for that; one drop more, and the cup would have overflowed—the heart so charged must have broken."

"Dear, dear sister, how wise and good you always are? Why were you not indeed an empress? Why are you not on the throne at this moment, dealing happiness to millions?"

"Because I am wanted at home, where I am sure of doing a little good, whereas there I might have done great harm. There are always a few women in the world well calculated for such a state, and I sincerely trust our beloved country will enjoy the benefits they are capable of conferring; but, depend upon it, I could not have been one. My extreme anxiety to do right would have amounted to misery, and in that state I should have lost my temper, injured my judgment, and have gone from the extreme of humanity (to which my original nature prompted me) to deeds of violence and injustice, which I shudder to think of. Oh! my brother, if there

* See Dr. Clarke and many other travellers.

were no other alternative, welcome Siberia rather than a life of tyranny and a death of remorse."

"And to that unquestionably I doomed you, my child," said Menzikoff; "but little did I reck of your sufferings or your errors, so I might govern in your place. God has been merciful to us both; he has given to me a child I could not deserve, and denied you the crown you did not desire, and which unquestionably would have been lined with thorns to one so humble and conscientious as you."

"Yet surely, father, such a disposition is more calculated for rendering a people civilized and happy than any other, and if a person does her best to perform an arduous duty, I cannot see room for self-reproach. We must have a head for our overgrown empire, and—"

"It requires many heads," interrupted Brukenthal, "which may be usefully represented by one, but that one should be limited by the laws—*laws* the protectors of all, and to which all might apply. Absolute monarchy is a greater power than human hands can manage; even limited monarchy generally finds a good man as much to do as is consistent with his happiness and his virtue. Mary has seen enough to render her a judge of her own capabilities for such a state; and, as I really believe it to be incompatible with her happiness, I am glad she lost it; but there is a situation in life which has much power of benefiting others, and ensuring happiness to the possessor also—a nobleman's wife, residing on her lord's estates, surrounded by his people, encouraged by an enlightened and generous husband to increase their happiness, improve their situation, educate their children, become the fountain which supplies—"

"My friend, my friend! spare me, spare my father! such pictures cannot be thought on *now*," cried Mary, as she sunk pale and nearly fainting into her seat, and covered her face with her hands. The heart of Brukenthal was wrung with pity.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The first severe snowstorm having subsided, that which fell afterward, and soon became frozen, enabled the inhabitants of the neighbouring village to go forth as pioneers, and dig through the vast snowdrifts a road to the dwelling whose inhabitants they loved so well, and for whom they had reason to fear so much. Those only who have been dwellers in the wilderness, and have felt that "a great gulf" was placed between them and their fellow-creatures, which neither party could pass, can imagine how pleasurable were the sensations of each member of our family when the masked faces of two rough peasants first entered the cottage, and, with kind solicitude, inquired "if the pastor lived, if the family were well?" and eagerly offering dried fruits, brought from Astrachan, the produce of Turkey, and tea brought from China by the Tatar tribes who traverse regions beyond the Volga.

When their sheepskin booshes and bonnets were removed, they saw with joy the most lively and sincere the recovery of the minister, though he was much reduced; but, in their eyes, which were more faithful judges than those around him, Menzikoff was more altered for the worse. Having succeeded in opening a path to the cottage, they now proposed, with Peter's assistance, to clear a way to the chapel; but, even after this was effected, it was agreed on all hands that it would be unsafe for the convalescent to venture thither; and as the weather admitted removing their animals to the neighbouring barn, this was done to the relief and comfort of the family; and it was settled that, on the following Sabbath, the neighbours should assemble in the cottage. So completely had the late formidable storm separated the scanty and scattered inhabitants of this deplorable country, that fears were entertained for the safety of all around them, and nothing could, as yet, be known of the state of the Boyar's family or people, since the ridge of rock which in some measure protected them was utterly impassable.

"That it must be," exclaimed Alexander, "or my friend Alexovitch would have been here before this; he told me when the people were all gone he should come hither every day."

Mary heard this with pain, and a sigh escaped her, but she did not speak.

It was a day memorable to all when the villagers once more assembled for the purpose of public worship, since all met under the impression that they had been in imminent danger—that the "destroying angel" had passed over them, and shaken the very springs of life. There was fervency of petition in their prayers and gratitude in their praises meet for a flock so cut off from the great mart of humanity, and cast on the immediate care of Him "who willeth not that any should perish;" and when Brukenthal, commenting on their late danger, read from the New Testament, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows, yet not one of them falleth to the ground but your heavenly Father knoweth," every heart was moved with devout thankfulness and holy joy. When the service was past, these visitants were alike struck by the attenuated form of Menzikoff and the weakness of his voice. They remarked, also, the increased placidity of his fine countenance, the cheerfulness with which he welcomed them and received their congratulations on his friend's amendment. His anxiety for their improvement, his own warmth in devotion, his humility and sincerity, the happy tranquillity with which they saw he was approaching the grave, at a time when life is generally most stable and frequently most dear, made an impression on them of the most abiding character, as confirmatory of all they had been taught by their pastor. Many a blessing was mingled with their adieus—many a tear froze on the rough cheeks of these sons of the desert, as they retrod the snow to their humble dwellings, at once comforted and affected by their observance of the sacred day.

The time had now arrived when Mary's extremest care failed to tempt the languid appetite of her father; nevertheless, her efforts were ever rewarded with smiles and blessings; and when Alexander brought the warm goat's milk, which he mixed with the tea his neighbours so opportunely brought, the same paternal benedictions were poured on his head as that of the little Catherine, who had learned to watch his every look, obey the motion of his eye, and endeavour to amuse his weariness, or be silent as his meditations required. The

hand of disease now fell on him lightly, though surely; and often did he, with due thankfulness, advert to his own slight sufferings compared with those of his friend in the late attack, or the accumulated troubles of travel and disease which had destroyed the delicate frame of that beloved wife on whom he was continually dilating as the best of her sex—one "whom he had neglected and thwarted, yet never ceased to esteem and love, so far as love could influence a bosom absorbed by ambition." So happy and tranquil did he now frequently appear, that his children could not believe his illness continued to progress. Some miraculous interposition is ever expected by the young, who slowly resign the hope which clings like life to the heart, and Mary would frequently demand, by anxious looks and whispered words, from Brukenthal the confirmation of her suppositions. The slowly-shaken head, the look of pity glanced on both, forbade her to increase her sufferings by adding disappointment to sorrow.

The first day on which it was possible to overcome the impediments which divided them, a messenger of extraordinary strength and resolution arrived at the cottage from the Boyar. He was the bearer of a letter to Menzikoff, in which the passion of Alexovitch was declared, and the hand of his daughter entreated in the most respectful manner by the father, who expressed, in the warmest terms, his sense of her merits, and trusted that, in case of his own recall, which he hoped might soon take place (seeing that the empress was said to be just and humane), the princess would find in himself and his wife parents as kind and considerate as her own could possibly have been.

Mary was engaged with Peter in nursing a sick calf when this letter arrived, for which the friends were glad; for, although her father despaired entirely of the recall he desired on her account, and still felt the value of the Boyar's protection to all his family, he acquiesced in the opinion of Brukenthal, and determined to spare his daughter the pain of disputing his wishes, or the consequences of conceding to them. He was not only resigned to God's will as regarded himself, but he felt capable of trusting to his providence the future disposal of his family, seeing clearly how fallacious his own views had been, and believing, in the depth of his humility, that the child playing at his feet was nearly as wise and prescient as himself.

In the letter which he addressed to the Boyar, he declined the honour of an alliance in his daughter's name, and accounted for an act so unprecedented in a young female by informing him that she was the empress whose death had been falsely reported, and that, after solemnly tendering to her allegiance as a subject, he could not compel her to obedience as a daughter, more especially as he had long known that she had abjured all thoughts of marriage, and, if recalled, would probably adopt religious seclusion. He concluded by referring to his own weakness, and entreating the continued kindness of the Boyar to a family that must soon be orphans, and well merited his regard, notwithstanding the impossibility of a nearer connexion.

Mary saw this messenger depart with the letter, and could not fail to conclude she was herself the object of the Boyar's mission; but, as her father was silent on the subject, she did not doubt that he had complied with her request, yet done so with difficulty, for he was evidently much worse than he had yet been. Acute were the pangs this observation inflicted, for at this moment any sacrifice seemed too little; but Brukenthal, who read her every feeling, imputed the evident sinking of the patient to personal fatigue, saying, "they had both had great trouble in finding a little paper, and that the wind was become some degrees colder, as all were sensible;" and she ventured to comfort herself with the belief that the change could not justly be imputed to a daughter so devoted to her father, and so devoid of all other comfort.

But the following day, to her great surprise and dismay, both the Boyar and his son made their appearance about midday at the cottage, although their appearance indicated the difficulties and even danger of their journey. For the first time, Menzikoff had on that day declined rising from his bed; and although, from his letter, the friendly visitants had expected finding him very ill, this situation struck and affected them exceedingly. The circumstance of seeing Mary for the first time arrayed in the dress of the country, and engaged in performing menial offices, inflicted on Alexovitch a more distressing emotion still, beautiful as she appeared even thus disfigured, and he held her in higher esteem for the patient sweetness with which she bore her sad destiny, and thus lightened her father's burden.

The Boyar, led by Brukenthal, proceeded to visit the prince; and Mary, having disposed of her culinary preparations, sat down with her eyes cast towards the door, and the observation on her lips "that Alexander would soon be there."

"I do not wish for your brother just now, much as I love him. You have refused me, dear lady, and I did not mean to do more on this occasion than prove my good-will and deep interest in your father; but now that I find him much worse than my fears had depicted—that I see you on the eve of becoming an orphan, surrounded by so many heart-breaking circumstances, how can I forbear to avow my love, to offer you the comforts of a home—below (far below) your merits and your rank, 'tis true, but oh! how different to this, and how much better than that of courts, for it will be permanent! We can offer you all things except climate, and yet our situation is wonderfully better than this; and I swear to you that, should your health require it, I will wander with you over the wide world to find that where you could repose in safety; this promise my father will confirm to yours. Do not refuse me, dearest Mary; my mother will love you as she loves me; we will devote our lives to soothe your sorrows, and recall happiness to your bosom."

Mary only answered by a grateful but melancholy smile; and the young lover, with all the impassioned ardour natural to one agitated alike by love and pity, fervently continued:

"Think not for a moment I would divide you from your father! no, he is scarcely less the object of my love and veneration than your own; and I am well aware that the last sands of life must run out cheered and consoled by you. Doubt not I can wait for you as the patriarch of old waited for his bride, were it needful; and you well know our ample mansion hath

room for all; Alexander will be the brother of Alexovitch, who has long desired a partner in his sports. Catherine will be the companion of Iwonowna and Anna; you will be the idolized of all—the empress we honour, the darling we love; say but one word, one *little* word, to encourage my hope, and I will say not another till the good father Brukenthal again permits me."

Mary was exceedingly affected by this honest effusion of a heart whose sincerity she could not doubt, and whose powers to benefit herself and all she loved were as ample as his professions, since the Boyar lived but in his son. Nor could she suppose that any possible injury could arise to him from his kindness to an exiled family from the present empress, who might be forgetful, but would never be malignant. But one thought of the murdered Theodore put the leanings of the moment to flight; she could not by any self-sacrifice restore health, life, and enjoyment to her father—her brother. Neither would demand it, nor had the right. Who should say that, after the lapse of many years, they might not be recalled? or that another winter, so severe as this, might not lay her also a victim beside the mother and sister she had so tenderly loved; and enable her, in unsullied purity, to meet the approving spirit of her beloved Theodore? She replied in a calm voice, as her mind rose above the sorrows and troubles which had bewildered her:

"Kind, generous Alexovitch, I have not words with which to thank you, either on my own account or that of the dear family to whom I well know your protection would be a blessing. I desire no higher state than that truly noble one you offer me, but in truth I cannot accept it, for I have not even a heart to offer in return. You have a rival whom your love and goodness, however great, cannot displace; and though I must never see him more on earth, yet the fixed purpose of my heart is that of holding him as my affianced lord. Try, then, to conquer this unfortunate predilection, which cannot have taken in your mind any deep root—seek out in your dear mother's country some fair and gentle girl who will adopt your faith, win the love of your parents, and be dear to me as a sister, for I shall henceforth hold you as a friend and brother."

The deep melancholy and subduing tenderness with which these words were uttered assured the young Boyar that for his suit there was no hope, save that which would have been neither flattering to his self-love, nor desirable to one so generous and magnanimous. Little as he knew of the world or of the human heart, and suddenly chilled as his feelings were, he yet ceased not to pity and sympathize with one so painfully situated, and saw that it was his duty to be silent. Gently taking her hand, which he respectfully raised to his lips, and looking on her with eyes filled with tears, he followed his father's steps to gaze for the last time on the most remarkable man he had ever known, or could expect to see, in his native country.

When the good Boyar and his son had departed, Menzikoff desired that no other person might be admitted to his chamber. He yet expressed himself extremely gratified by the interview which had taken place with his friends, and spoke particularly in high terms of Alexovitch, saying, "that whatever might be the eventual result of his attachment to his daughter, the belief that he was of a constant nature, and likely to find no rival to her attractions in the country, was a comfort to his heart: his sincere desire was to leave all care of his children in the hands of his heavenly Father; and he received this circumstance of Alexovitch's devotedness to Mary and her family as a gift from above, granted in answer to his long-continued prayers."

Had his beloved child been present when he was thus speaking of his solicitude on her account, and his reference to many an hour of terrible anxiety, only conquered of late by the mixed exercise of this earthly hope with heavenly faith, she would, undoubtedly, in the melting sorrows of her heart, have promised full and unlimited obedience and compliance with his wishes—she would have purchased an hour of gladdened life to him by the sacrifice of her own long-cherished wishes for future life. In doing this she would have undoubtedly done wrong, for the most unselfish and devoted have duties to themselves, and many a promise made on a deathbed has compromised the happiness and the virtue of the surviver; but woman rarely reasons justly when she feels acutely; her nature is not only capable, but subject to self-abandonment, in which a moment of agony forges chains that may bind her to an eternity of suffering.

Happily for Mary, the personal conversation was held with Brukenthal, who rejoiced that she was not moved to say anything which could bind her to any future line of conduct, and who took care to represent to her father the necessity of leaving her free to follow the dictates of her own excellent understanding, in a case where its decision was so important. He still nourished hopes of a recall, thinking nothing more probable than that the consequences of the late storm prevented the arrival of messengers: he was by no means so persuaded of the death of Theodore Dolgourouki as Menzikoff appeared to be, and had adopted the belief that he had by some means become an inhabitant of that terrible prison on the banks of the Neva, to which the fisherman had professed an intention of conveying him. Who could say that a man like Ivan Dolgourouki had not rendered the name of Menzikoff subservient to the purpose of removing a cousin whose courage and conduct in a single campaign had thrown his own management of the war with Persia completely into the shade? He had evidently been the utter ruin of Menzikoff, with whom he had personally had no collision; and, in persecuting to positive ruin one so blameless and loveable as his innocent daughter, had shown a disposition of cruelty so positively demoniacal, that any possible plan of evil might be attributed to him, and expected from his abilities and his wickedness.

Should this conjecture be right, it was yet little likely that a high-spirited young man, in the very prime of life, could have survived for so long a period that soul-subduing, heart-crushing torture inflicted by close imprisonment—unquestionably the severest of all punishment in early life, and which would be rendered the worse to him by the knowledge of Mary's marriage, and the belief that he was a victim to her father's ambition. If he were indeed dead, whatever might have been his misfortunes, since she knew them not, 'twere pity

she refused Alexovitch; yet so pure and hallowed was her devotion to Theodore's memory, so well had she performed her painful duties as dictated by her sainted mother, that it seemed a sin to him to thwart her inclinations, and therefore he again pressed on his dying friend the necessity of leaving her to herself.

"I leave them all to him who will do better for them than either themselves or their father, and I doubt not the issue. Hath he not said, 'Leave thy fatherless children, and I will provide for them.' Why then should I doubt, though forgotten now, they will be remembered hereafter? and though far from the temptations of their father's unhappy elevation, they have now that freedom from both riches and poverty which ensures content and thankfulness."

As Mary was not only the cook of the family, but dairy-woman, and the concocter of her father's medicines, she could not always watch by his bedside, as Brukenthal did, to her great relief; but every moment, when she obtained a temporary release, she hastened thither, and by her presence evidently communicated to the drooping invalid the only earthly pleasure he could receive. Generally speaking, his mind was clear and collected, and his reminiscences of the past, his hopes for the future, and his reasonings on the present, betokened the most perfect understanding; but, after he awoke from the short and imperfect slumbers he now but seldom enjoyed, his senses often wandered for a little time, during which he would address her as his wife, and Brukenthal as his still venerated benefactor, Peter the Great. At such times he would speak of his early love with a tenderness and fondness which reminded her of days long past, when Theodore had uttered words of similar import to herself, or he would unfold to his royal master those ambitious plans which for so many years were perpetually floating in his mind, and have since been executed by spirits as daring and unscrupulous as his own. He often spoke at such times with an exulting air, as if enjoying some prospect offered by his imagination, and seemed again in idea the inhabitant of a magnificent palace, surrounded by the slaves of his will; but when the hectic subsided which had raised these temporary illusions, and he beheld himself an infirm old man, the inhabitant of a cottage in Siberia, with his daughter the empress, arrayed in sheepskins, standing by him, he was thankful that his senses were restored, and prayed earnestly that he might retain to the last those faculties which would enable him to estimate his situation justly, and enable him with clear faith and profound humility to obey the call which he every hour expected to receive.

This was granted, together with many other painful peculiarities of the disorder, which retired as death approached; and although such phases may be common to the complaint, they were received by him as peculiar mercies, and awakened that devout thankfulness it is the privilege of the humble, trusting sinner to experience. Often, when Mary's sweet voice, aided by the deeper tones of Alexander, rose to heaven in the words of his favourite hymns, he too would join them, to the astonishment of Brukenthal, who thought that his spirit would pass away at the moment; but the end was not yet.

Again there was a terrible storm, and poor Peter was so nearly lost in trying to collect his fleecy charge, that Alexander and Brukenthal were both injured in effecting his rescue; and Mary, distracted by so many claimants on her cares, was obliged to leave the principal object to the child. Menzikoff became instantly alive to the wants of all, and, by his judicious directions, all were assisted, though he vainly tried to rise from his couch and help the terrified females. Peter had been found by Alexander, apparently dead, in a snowdrift, and, despairing of effecting his release alone, he flew to the house, and called the kind friend whose reduced strength was little equal to the task. By dint of great exertion they drew the poor serf out, and, perceiving there was life still in the body, endeavoured to rouse him and place him on his feet; but, though they got him to speak, and even recognise them, this was found impossible, and they were compelled to drag or bear him to the cottage, which the new-fallen snow rendered a work of extreme difficulty, and which they were on the point of relinquishing every moment, as the piercing air in a short time rendered them more torpid and listless. Mary, alarmed for Peter, went to the door with cordials in her hand, but she could not proceed for the thick fall of snow; but her clear voice was heard calling aloud, as if in great distress, and it awoke the energy which alone could save them; they staggered forward, the gentlemen dragging Peter between them, who fell down the moment they reached the open door, and they too fell beside him, utterly helpless, and apparently either dying or dead.

"Drag them within, if possible, my child, and let the sheep lie down upon them; they will do so willingly on Peter and your brother, who feed them. Catherine, do not be frightened. pinch their noses and their ears, raise their heads, pour brandy slowly into their throats through my teapot—very slowly; use all your strength to get each within, and close the door, for the air is killing me also. Let the first who shows sense be compelled to rise, even by blows, dear Mary, that he may help the rest. Ah! how hard is it my limbs refuse to aid me at such a moment, when my son, my friend—"

"Father, take comfort—Peter is awake," cried Mary.

And Peter listened to the promises of his young mistress: he started up, he took the brandy she offered, dragged Brukenthal to the stove by a violent effort, and began to rub him lustily. The fleecy animals that were stretched over their yonng master had already warmed his frozen limbs; and the sweet child, that alternately kissed, pinched, and hugged him, rejoiced in hearing him groan under her innocent inflictions. Mary hastened to his aid; she had already raised his head, and she now found, with inexpressible emotions, that he could swallow, and, with Catherine's aid, she dragged him also to the stove, and at this moment she found her father standing beside her—a miracle seemed wrought in her behalf, or, rather, in that of the sufferers around them.

Its effect on Peter was truly wonderful; he seemed to consider the presence of his master supernatural, and he obeyed his dictates not only with the docility of obedience, but skill; he was now aware that the sufferers before him had become such from their humane exertions on his behalf, and had an indistinct recollection of their having carried him, and that therefore

they had toiled while he had rested. He had been in danger more than once from the same cause years ago, and he tried to recall the process which had saved himself and others, and lost no time in obtaining a basket of snow, with which he began eagerly to rub the face and head of the minister, calling aloud on the princess to follow his example with Alexander.

Mary obeyed his prescription, more especially on the ears of him who now lay like a log, but still a faintly-breathing log, before her, for she had perceived that they were frozen, and had heard from many, since she entered this wretched country, of the efficacy of the application. In a short time Alexander became sensible of her cares, and entreated her to continue them; and Brukenthal, who was better protected by his clothing, raised himself and looked wistfully around him. His eyes first fell on Menzikoff, whom his daughter had placed in his accustomed seat, and whose brilliant orbs, beaming with unnatural light, were bent on the ghastly countenance of his friend. It is certain, at that moment, Brukenthal knew not whether he was an inhabitant of this world, or had passed into another state of existence.

Alexander became animated—conscious; he too gazed on the beloved face he had never expected to behold in the accustomed seat, and suddenly exclaimed, "Father—dear father!"

Menzikoff fainted, and was falling on the floor, when Peter caught him. The loud, reiterated shrieks of Catherine painfully completed the restoration of all; though all were weak and ill, yet they became alive to the sad situation of that beloved one who, in the energy of affection, had quitted even his deathbed to administer to their wants and troubles. Brukenthal took his wasted form in his arms, and, assisted by Peter, bore him to his bed; and as Mary insisted that it was a swoon, and not the death she dreaded, which had seized him, the usual remedies were applied, and no long time elapsed before their apprehensions for the present were removed.

Many questions were asked, many explanations attempted to be given, but it could only be ascertained that fatigue and cold had placed the life of each person in the most imminent danger, and rendered it extremely probable that the man appointed to die should have outlived all the others of his household. That not one had perished, when all had been so perilled, was a source of the sincerest congratulation to each other, and of thankfulness to God; but none of the family appeared to feel it with such deep gratitude as Menzikoff. The whole of the ensuing night he spoke of it continually to Mary, who never left him for a moment, and earnestly advised the three late sufferers to give themselves up to that sleep which was likely to prove their best restorative. She listened with astonishment to his recital of his alarm, his efforts, and, at length, his success, in leaving his couch in order to assist her; and with not less interest as he spoke of her utter destitution had the sufferers been indeed taken at such an awful period, or of the great loss the rest must have sustained in the removal of any. As he spoke, his countenance glowed with holy joy; his pale, thin features, though sharp, were formed as by the sculptor's chisel, and the long beard, which had been uncut since his arrival in Siberia, descending like flakes of waving silk, and white as snow, upon his bosom, completed the picture of beautiful and premature old age he exhibited. "Could my father's enemies see him now," thought Mary, "in what a light would their actions appear to themselves! could my dear mother behold him, would she not 'see of the travail of her soul and be satisfied?' for surely it has rarely happened that more of heavenly resignation and earthly affections have ever mingled benignantly in any human being than in him so inestimably dear, and so soon to be removed. Yet who shall say he must die? there is still a germe of strength, or he could not have done what he did!"

Alexander was the first to appear at his father's couch with kind inquiries, and thereby enabled his sister to enter on her duties. He had slept well himself, and was conscious of the value of repose, and learned, with sorrow, that neither his father nor sister had enjoyed any. Menzikoff said it was the natural effect of the shock they had received; but, when Mary had prepared the morning meal, he might, after taking it, be disposed to sleep. He seemed to look with especial delight upon his son as an immediate gift from heaven, and said words were wanting to express the intensity of his feelings; nor were his expressions less fervid when Brukenthal presented himself, though he grieved to see him looking ill, and shaken exceedingly by the late misfortune.

When Mary appeared, bringing in her hand the fragrant infusion of the herb he liked so much, he dismissed them to their morning meal, saying that "one person at a time was as much as he had pleasure in conversing with." At his request, she read morning prayers from Brukenthal's book, and chanted, in a low tone, several of David's Psalms; and while she still knelt and held his hand, had the satisfaction of seeing him drop into a calm sleep, which could not fail to be beneficial, and which he had long vainly wished to enjoy. Truly happy in the circumstance, she flew down to announce the tidings, and recommend all possible stillness, and then resumed her station, kneeling by the mattress, and holding the attenuated hand that emerged beyond the bedclothes.

For nearly two hours the sense of pain and weakness, of true penitence, yet deep solicitude, thus found a sweet oblivion, when, gently awakening, he fixed his eyes upon his daughter, and said,

"Are you still watching me, my good Mary?"

"Yes, dear father; and most sincerely have I enjoyed seeing you sleep so long and so sweetly."

"My heavenly Father has been very merciful to me in granting this refreshing rest; he has answered the prayer of David to me, 'Give me a little strength ere I go hence and am no more seen.' I have also had sweet visions, my child: your mother and sister, and many spirits of the 'just made perfect,' have been around me—they are around me even now."

"My mother and my sister!" cried Mary, awe-struck, and casting a timid glance; "and saw you not another, dear father, also?"

"Methought I saw many, child—the angels of God are a mighty host."

"But you saw Theodore—my Theodore, father? Say you saw him also."

"I beheld him not, my love; and now all, *all* are faded away; nevertheless, my trust faileth

not, for it is fixed upon a rock, even the 'angel of the new covenant.' Mary, my beloved! true copy of thy excellent mother, thou hast fulfilled her bidding—say, wert thou not alone with dear Ulrica at the last awful moment?"

"I was, dear father."

"Then abide with me in silence. He to whom thy heart is now ascending will sustain thee. Let us kiss one another, my child."

Mary, in trembling haste, rose and pressed her lips to her father's, but she could not speak.

"Farewell, my love! thy father's blessing be on thee—on all of ye. Rejoice! thy father is plucked as a brand from—"

The voice ceased; the hand fell cold and lifeless from her own; there was neither groan nor breath.

Menzikoff, the once conquering general, the powerful prince, the ambitious statesman, the wily courtier, was no more!

Menzikoff, the self-abased, humble penitent, lives, as we trust, forever, through Him to whom alone he looked for acceptance and redemption.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The stillness above continued so long, that little Catherine, as being the lightest of foot, was sent to see if her father continued to sleep. She returned to say "she found Mary kneeling by the bed, but her face was hidden, and papa neither spoke nor slept."

They flew to relieve the weeping girl; they saw that all was over, and felt, as we all do when death arrives (however long expected), as if the stroke were sudden, and an unlooked-for sorrow had fallen upon us. Poor Alexander wept as he had never wept before.

Yet, as the passion of grief subsided, a deep sense of Almighty goodness pervaded all their minds; and so purified by suffering, so holy in aspiration did they deem the father and friend they had lost, that they might be said to partake the joys of angels, and to rejoice over the sinner who had repented. Yet his place was void on the hearth, his kind, weak voice was heard no more; there were no wants to supply, no thanks and blessings to receive.

If, in a wide circle, the head of a family is taken away, how large a space does he appear to have occupied! for how many purposes is he required! the affections of the heart and the necessities of station alike demand his love and his assistance; all wisdom and all kindness seemed to have had their centre in him alone. But how much more is this the case in a small and fondly-united family, especially a reduced, afflicted one, robbed of every comfort save the society of each other! whose privations were endured, whose energies were exerted, in connexion with that now severed tie.

But how invaluable was the presence of Brukenthal to the orphans of that friend whom he had loved so long, so tenderly, and with effects so happy! His every request was a dear command they hastened to obey, and his words of consolation were a cordial to their hearts. They saw, with a sorrow which drew them from their own more immediate trouble, that he had been greatly injured by his late trial, and every effort they could make for his relief was put into immediate requisition, for "was he not friend, father, *all?* If their father could speak, how would he urge them to a dutiful regard for his inestimable Brukenthal!" The good man saw their anxiety, and hastened to relieve it, by assuring them that rest alone was necessary for the relief of his over-taxed frame, and that witnessing their acquiescence to the Divine will would do much to restore his wonted equanimity; "nevertheless, my children," he added, "tears are nature's tribute to affection, more especially at your age, and I blame not those which, at this early period, so naturally flow for the father you love, the exile you pity; but I trust even now you feel the best consolation of mourners, you do not sorrow 'as those who have no hope.'"

The storm still raged; no human being could approach to tender service, and the late danger and present bereavement of the family were alike unknown to their friendly neighbours. Poor Catherine's heart-breaking questions concerning the dear papa who no longer spoke or looked at his "own little girl," told them the necessity of at least hiding for a time the long-loved form from her eyes, though they could not bury it. Peter, with difficulty, mustered a few planks when he went out to fodder the cattle and succour the sickly sheep; and, when his sisters and Brukenthal had retired (the latter occupying a mattress beside the dead), poor Alexander assisted the affectionate serf to construct a coffin for his last parent, tears often interrupting his melancholy task, and moments of terrible agony arising from the belief that, one after another, the whole of his doomed family would perish in the wilderness, as their parents had done before them. Under such terrible circumstances, it was indeed a difficulty for the faith or the philosophy of eighteen years to offer resistance adequate to the pressure of the affliction.

The body was, on the following day, wrapped in the habiliments prepared for the late summer, and, after receiving many a last lingering look, and many a tender kiss, placed for the present in their little bath, and covered with whatever the anxious daughter could procure likely to preserve it from injury or indicative of respect. There was, alas! no power of expending money, or procuring help to effect her purpose; they were now completely isolated, and the benumbing cold was a source of suffering to every member of the narrowed circle, although Brukenthal was the only one considered an actual invalid.

Perhaps this very circumstance might have its use to Mary, whose active kindness, being kept alive by his necessities, enabled her also to sustain the spirits of Alexander, who was subject to paroxysms of grief the most distressing. Three melancholy weeks had thus passed when the wind changed, the snow ceased, and a comparatively mild state of air succeeded, which had an immediate effect on all, but especially Brukenthal, whose power of joining their meals, of manifesting his love and approbation, and from the ample stores of his well-furnished mind exciting the powers of theirs, was a blessing none less forlorn, bereaved, and isolated can possibly conceive. The prayers again uttered in his voice cheered their sunken hearts, awaking hope and stimulating devotion; and when he was seated in their father's chair, with

Catherine on her stool beside him, they felt as if the chasm was in some measure filled up in their circle, the aching void in their hearts supplied with a father they could love and venerate.

From the time the snow ceased to descend so terribly as of late, Peter was indefatigable in clearing it from the fold, beyond which he was forbidden to go, much as his heart yearned towards his fleecy companions, numbers of which had doubtless perished. His first great care was to clear a path to the chapel, and, by Brukenthal's advice, Alexander partook his toil, in order to invigorate himself by exercise, from which he had now been so long debarred entirely; and, sorrowful as his task was, its utility was soon perceived. The little building in which their father had wrought so earnestly, and which he had bequeathed to his neighbours with prayers for their future welfare, was, to their great satisfaction, found to be less injured than could have been expected from the extraordinary severity of the winter; and the young man proceeded with renewed spirits to clear the snow from the roof, repair cracks and crevices which had admitted it, and render the building that which he believed his father would have desired to see it; and, to the great gratification of the family, he related his account of these labours for the first time in his accustomed voice, and with the air of one who would henceforth neither be wanting to them nor to himself, yet there was about him a something which said, "it was only by enterprise that he could battle with despair."

Now the road was cleared, the very first day in which Brukenthal durst venture to meet the external air, he proposed that they should inter their precious dead; and although all felt that, while they retained the loved remains, they had still something dear, yet they were convinced that it was right, and, in fact, more respectful to give them due sepulture, and of course consented immediately.

Alexander went forth to make the last preparations, and Peter and Catherine followed him. While Brukenthal retired to his room, and sought to compose his spirits for a task so awful by prayer and meditation, Mary seized the opportunity of doing for the last time that which she had often done before; she gazed on the rigid features long so dear, and still read there the same expression which marked them in the hour of death. The calm countenance of Menzikoff exhibited neither pain nor fear; no enmity had place in his heart, no regret pervaded it at the time of his decease but a holy, unpresuming trust, the result of true repentance; deep humility and Christian faith were still visible in the ice-bound face over which his daughter laid the only relic (save one) which she had saved from her mother's person, a handkerchief of the finest cambric.

When Brukenthal descended, he found Mary thus performing what she held to be a hallowed rite; and, taking her hand in silence, he pointed to some necessary wrappers in which she began to envelop herself, while he proceeded to spare the feelings of Alexander by closing the coffin himself. The sounds he was compelled to make drew the attention of those within the chapel, and though they shuddered, yet each party, however different in relationship, station, and perception, felt thankful that they had escaped the task, and repaired, when it was over, to do that which remained.

Brukenthal stepped slowly onward, and, Alexander at the head, Peter at the feet, followed with the coffin; while Mary and Catherine, hand in hand, each shrouded in her booshe, followed close behind. Brukenthal, in a low, but solemn, though broken voice, pronounced the exordium by which his Church, in all countries, so beautifully speaks of the vanity of life, the reality of immortal existence, and the hopes of eternal happiness. He prayed for like peace enjoyed by the departed under the same awful circumstances; and not only did every one breathe forth a deep Amen, but each, glancing around, saw sickness in the face of the other, and trembled for the future.

Having ceased to speak, Brukenthal rose from his knees, and, taking the hand of Catherine, returned to the house; but Mary waited to see the coffin in its last home, and look on those of the mother and sister they had lost. She lingered over her sad employment as if to do it honour, for how could she forbear to contrast the obsequies of Menzikoff as they were with what they would have been as Prince of Ingria and Plescoff, Generalissimo and Prime Minister of Catherine. Again the celebration of the emperor's funeral rose to her mind, the sonorous music rolled on her ear, and she exclaimed, "He is fallen! he is fallen!"

Alexander caught her hand, and, pressing it tenderly, said, "Yes, he is indeed fallen, but only to rise more glorious. We must now close the vault—there is room for one more coffin!"

The words fell coldly on the ear and heart of Mary. Alexander had outgrown his strength, his sorrow had been excessive, and he looked so pale at this moment, she felt as if he thought the place was ready for himself; but her sad presentiment was interrupted by Peter, who said earnestly,

"Yes, there is room for *one*; dear master, let that one be me. The good minister declares that rich and poor are alike in the eyes of God; why then should they not mingle in the dust? Promise me, good young master (for you are my master now), and you, sweet lady, promise me!"

"Alas! Peter, I know not what to say. I may myself desire to lie by my sister."

"But you will all die afar off! Did *he* not say so? Ay, even to his poor Peter would he say, 'It is meet I should be punished, but my innocent children shall return to the land of their nativity;' and he was never wrong."

The earnestness, solemnity, and perfect confidence with which the poor man uttered these words, had a happy effect on both brother and sister, and somewhat relieved them from the fears each had so lately entertained for the other, and with one voice they gave him a conditional promise that the place should be his if not wanted for another of the family. To Peter this was perfectly satisfactory, and he spoke of their removal, and how great would be his loss in them, at once with the sorrow of attachment and the confidence of inspiration.

Peter so seldom spoke more than the animals to whom his cares were devoted, that his words made a strong impression, and appeared to their weakened and long-harassed spirits really prophetic, and were eagerly repeated to Brukenthal, who could not damp their hopes by reason-

ing on the fallacy of such impressions. He well knew that they had need of every comfort, however transitory, their sad state admitted; and that it was only by raising the mind above the appalling circumstances which surrounded them that either their health or their senses could be preserved, especially now their strongest motive for exertion was removed. He was himself not less inclined than them to catch at any shadow which gave hope of removal from this howling wilderness, of whose horrors he had partaken so largely, this winter being far more severe than the last; but not for a single moment did he repent either his miserable journey or his present sufferings, for the memory of his heart's rich reward was with him a fountain of consolation and thankfulness.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

As the inhabitants of the village knew that the situation in which they had last seen Menzikoff precluded all hope of his life, so soon as it was possible a few of the more hardy made their way to the cottage, and testified sincere sympathy with the inhabitants, being especially grieved that they had not assisted at the funeral of him they venerated so truly. They had, however, the good sense to avoid awakening the sorrow of the survivers unnecessarily; and, on seeing the languid state of Alexander, urged him to go out with them on the morrow, in order to procure furs for their taxes, saying, "the snow was hardening, and old inhabitants like them would be to him not only guides, but protectors, in case of accidents like that which befell Peter."

"I had need do something," said young Menzikoff, "for many of our flock have perished during this terrible winter; and I earnestly desire to keep the evils of poverty from adding to my sister's troubles; therefore, if Mary will look less sad, I will join you to-morrow."

Neither Mary nor Brukenthal could forget the last danger, but, having great reliance on his associates, they consented, and were rewarded by the extraordinary success he met with, and the impetus given to his spirits and his appetite. So rapid was his improvement, that, for a short space in the middle of the day (which was now only three hours long), Brukenthal again breasted the keen air, either to assist Peter or accompany his young master, and the same benefit was experienced by him, and they all began to rejoice in their power of endurance and their hope of eventual relief.

The Boyar visited them soon, though at considerable risk, and brought them presents of whatever could add to their comfort. He had not only a sad story to hear, but one to relate; for his lady had been brought to the point of death by the cutting cold of the late storm, and, though now recovering, yet he felt assured that, as the native of a mild climate, she would never bear another winter in Siberia; and that, however painful it might be to himself, it was his duty to remove several hundred versts for her sake.

As he said these words, he looked earnestly on Mary, as if he were thinking how much she too might be benefited by such a change, under certain circumstances; but he did not advert to the past, nor mention his son, save to say how much Alexovitch desired the company of Alexander. Much also did those he addressed wish that the young men could have had unrestrained intercourse; and Brukenthal eagerly questioned the Boyar as to what might be deemed the privileges of an exile, who could not be deemed a criminal; but, as he had never held intercourse with any of these unhappy people, save the late prince, he knew no more than the good pastor himself; but was, like him, greatly impressed with the horror of the mines as a punishment, which, in case of irregularity, he had understood, might be inflicted by the governor of the province. The honest man who governed the village was not an object of fear, but of his superior, resident at Berenzof, they knew nothing.

When the good Boyar had departed, long and anxiously did Brukenthal meditate, as he had often done before, on the possibility of this innocent family escaping from this horrid country, crossing the Volga, and, as soon as possible, quitting the dominions of Russia. They had a horse and a mule on which the females might travel, for Peter could construct a sledge or two; and, as he was not only faithful, but mingled some cunning with much simplicity, he might so keep up the usual appearance of the cottage that no suspicion of their removal might arise for many days. But yet, where could they sleep in that wild, thinly inhabited country, save in the places of regular resort? and, during the short days, how short must their stages be! If they waited till summer, the usual number of pedlers would be traversing every path; the postmasters would be alarmed by their babbling conjectures; arrest would follow; and every one knew that escape from Siberia never failed to be followed by condign and perpetual punishment. If Alexander was sent to the mines, his sisters would be sent to their graves by the same sentence.

Brukenthal himself, then, was the only free agent; he could return to his own country; and surely, when there, he could make some effort for the liberation of these young and innocent creatures, whom the breath of slander had never visited, and whose father had suffered the last punishment tyranny could inflict. Though he had long lived far away from courts and camps, he had many acquaintance in both, some of whom might help him in gaining access to the empress: and he could not believe that, when she knew Mary lived, and her father was no more, she could refuse alike the pleadings of humanity and justice. Or, if she feared that mature life might awaken somewhat of her father's ambition in the widow of her brother, on that point he might be silent, and the two orphan daughters of that unhappy pair who had perished beneath the rigours of Siberia, the son of a man who had been the favourite of her father, whom he had served most faithfully, should be alone presented to her merciful consideration.

"I will depart," said Brukenthal to himself, "so soon as the snow is hard enough to bear me, and so soon as I have strength for the journey;" and he thenceforward sought the aid of Mary in preparing nourishing food, and every day, by regular exercise, sought to regain those powers which he had possessed in an eminent degree when he first appeared among them. Mary guessed his motives, and, to her utmost, seconded his endeavours, though her heart sunk within her at the thoughts of parting, and she dared not mention her suspicions of his intention to Alexander, lest the improving state of his spirits should receive a shock he was unequal to sustain. They therefore fell into their former

habits as much as possible, finding the reward of their daily toil in the wise councils and entertaining conversation of their venerated friend, sometimes diversified by a book, and not unfrequently by Mary's inquiries on the roads, the people, and, in fact, the possibility of flight, to which her brother always turned a deaf ear. At length he desired her never to awaken such ideas in his mind, or nourish them in her own; for so much had the possibility of such an enterprise alarmed their father, that he had exacted from him a solemn promise never to attempt it.

This sufficed for the submissive daughter, and she never again even hinted at the possibility of escape, well remembering her father's words to her mother on the outset of their journey to Siberia, also his consistent and self-denying conduct at the feast of the Boyar; but as she could not by possibility forget the horrors of the past winter, or conceive the possibility of enduring such another, bereft of her father and friend, so she looked the more earnestly to all she trusted that friend might do in their behalf; and now, in the absence of her brother, began to speak freely to him on the plans passing in his mind, and inform him who were the persons she recollected as most likely to forward his benevolent plans, either from natural goodness of disposition or gratitude to the memory of her father—for how many owed to him their all!

CHAPTER XXXV.

The snow again became hard, the air clear and wholesome. Peter again went out to inquire after the sick and the aged, taking such helps as Mary had the power to send, and relating to all the death of his old master, and the promise of his children to him, held to be as dear as honourable. Every day Alexander found full employment, and wandered far and wide to seek the game that might repay his toil, often encountering danger that excited his spirits; for the prowling wolf, the cunning hyena, and the fierce lynx crossed his steps, and sought the same timid animals with himself, but never scared him from his purpose. He was habitually, as well as constitutionally, courageous; but his father's frequent tales of the fields of slaughter in which he had been engaged made an impression on his mind, nurtured probably in those lonely wanderings, for he now resolved never to be a slayer of men, and he kept his promise to himself.

One morning, as Mary was adjusting his belt, and furnishing his pouch with the dried meat and homely cake he was wont to take for refreshment, and praising the good looks he had lately obtained, Brukenthal observed, "You also ought to go out, dear Mary, and visit those who have done their utmost in showing attention to you: poor Aishey is near her confinement; she was the first person who entered your dwelling and helped you in your trouble. Pray visit her, and take her a little of the Boyar's good brandy; it will be valuable to her now, and the sight of you not less so."

"Do go, dear Mary," said Alexander. "I will walk with you half a verst, and, should you feel weary, I will return with you; but I am certain the air will revive you."

Mary lingered as the nervous and timid linger: "perhaps Catherine might want her, or the good man could not manage the dinner;" other fears she had none; the hand of violence would not cross her path, nor the tongue of ribaldry wound her ear; and the lithe limbs, accustomed to daily labour, would doubtless bear her much farther than the village, if necessary; besides, she loved Aishey, and could take her two beautiful lambskins for her expected babe.

Soon was Mary herself so wrapped in the coverings of the country, that she resembled some unwieldy and formless animal: a deep hood of skins was drawn over her face, snow shoes on her feet, skin gloves, with the wool inward, on her hands, and a visor with glass eyes on her face. She looked around, and once more thought that, despite the cold veil of universal white, the face of nature was still beautiful. The sun rode high in the heavens, which were now blue as she had seen them from the gardens of Oranienbaum, as she remarked to Alexander, who tripped gayly by her side until he perceived a bird of prey hovering to the left, whom he called a poacher on his quarry, marking a victim whom he must see after, and turned away.

"But you will yourself kill the poor thing," said Mary, reproachfully.

"Yes, put it out of life and out of pain in a single moment, thereby saving it from being borne up on high by yonder tyrant, and torn alive limb from limb, to feed her eager brood. Believe me, Mary, I am as merciful as I can be. I rarely miss my prey, for my eye is practised, my hand steady; but, if I am so unfortunate, I spend hours in searching for my wounded victim, that I may end his miseries; I abhor cruelty of all things. When I am a Czar, Mary (which, thank God, I never shall be!), depend upon it, I shall send no exiles to Siberia, do what I may besides."

Alexander turned away suddenly, and, though he had assumed somewhat of a gay tone, it was evident that the iron of captivity rankled in his soul; nor could Mary look after him as he sprang away in his vile garments, and mark his manly beauty without a bitter sigh; but she tried to rally her spirits, and began to sing Luther's hymn, as Brukenthal had taught it to her. Her voice, sweet, full, and harmonious, floated far and wide on the clear air, but it awoke no answering response, or charmed one aching heart; a stillness "that might be felt," like the darkness of the Egyptians, sat on all things, and, despite of the cheering sun, spread a tender melancholy over the mind which would not be removed.

Between her own dwelling and that cluster of huts dignified by the name of a village, where even the home of its humble ruler was far inferior to the cottage, there was one small building hitherto uninhabited and dilapidated, which she might not have noticed but from recollecting that her father had said, "if Peter had not been taken in by them, he meant to have lived in that poor shed:" she looked at it, and suddenly ceased to sing; the wretched cabin must surely have got an inmate, for the broken door was closed, a smoke was issuing from a hole in the roof, and the aperture which served for a window had been filled up, according to the custom of the country, by a block of ice, but so imperfectly that the cold must penetrate. Mary shuddered as she passed: "How much better is poor Peter lodged with us," said she, "compared to such a shed! Well might he praise the cottage. Thank God, we have made that faithful creature happy, save in that he has shared our troubles! And how thankful ought we to be that we are not consigned to such a miserable dwelling as that! in comparison, we have a comfortable, convenient house, sheltered by the outward buildings and the fir-wood. We are even wealthy:

who could it be that sent the cows and the sheep, giving us riches in the day of poverty, and health in the time of sickness?—night and morn will I remember him in my prayers, to the latest hour of my existence."

Thus soliloquizing, Mary reached the village, and, after paying her respects first at the house of her keeper, where she was kindly welcomed, gladdened the eyes of Aishey, who had become a mother the previous day, and exhibited her newborn treasure with that proud delight which nature renders her recompense, and gladly did she swathe it in the soft snow-white skins brought by the empress. Meantime, the cottage was crowded with the inhabitants of the village—the young, that they loved to gaze on her fair open brow, and listen to her kindly words; the old, that they might benefit by her advice, as being skilled in medicine. All offered her food, though many had only a scanty portion for themselves, and all besought blessings on her head, but many revived her sorrow by inquiries after him they styled "the holy Prince Menzikoff," which others blessed with more native delicacy and sensibility repressed. After giving her most important gifts to Aishey, and lesser ones to those who most needed them, and finding she had stayed a full hour, which was as long as prudence warranted at this season, she set out homeward, followed by thanks and prayers, children running after her to the utmost bounds of their poor settlement.

Every human being is soothed by the sympathy or revived by the love of its fellow-creatures, however humble their condition or uncouth their expression; and Mary hastened homeward, sensible that her walk had been beneficial to her; her mind was invigorated, her step quickened. She had left those to whom she was dear, and she was about to meet those who were inexpressibly dear to her.

As she approached the hut of which we have spoken, she began to look out for her brother, as he had promised to meet her, unless prevented by something particular; but, far as the view extended over the white plain which spread around her, he was not within ken. She concluded that his sport had drawn him farther than he had intended, but this only induced her to observe with more accuracy the marks by which she must pursue her route to the cottage.

At the moment she passed the hut, a voice called out to her "to stop," in a thick guttural tone, which seemed to combine entreaty and threat. She looked, and saw the head of a man thrust from the hole in the low roof, covered with a bonnet like her own, and he now addressed her in piteous accents, which with her were always irresistible.

"Stop a moment, I beseech you. I came hither from Berenzof last night, a banished man, in great misery, and very ill. A serf was appointed to wait on me, and we were placed in this dungeon together, but he has deserted me. I am left without food or fire, and a cruel disorder racks my limbs and leaves me helpless, so that I have not strength to open the door and crawl to the village."

"Neither have I," said Mary, approaching it.

"Go back to the village, I beseech you, and procure help; I will give you money, for I have secreted a little; approach nearer, and I will."

"I want no money. I will send you help; take comfort," said Mary, looking earnestly towards the speaker; but who shall describe her astonishment, the mingled horror and compassion that smote upon her bosom, when she distinctly saw that the man who addressed her was Ivan Dolgourouki!

Yes! this forlorn exile, this banished and deserted sufferer, was the arch enemy whose cruel intrigues had slaughtered her parents, ruined every branch of the family, done that which he never could undo; his own utter helplessness was a guarantee for the continuance of theirs. She trembled excessively, and her heart beat so violently, she feared lest she should sink on the ground; but, rousing herself by a violent effort, she began to run as fast as she was able towards the cottage.

The man cried out after her in very agony, to entreat her return to the village, where alone he could look for help; and her hearing now seconded her sight—the voice was Ivan Dolgourouki's. Ah! how different a man from that near relative of his, who still held over her memory and her affection an influence never to be erased, or even diminished! How rapidly did a thousand tender reminiscences swell at her bosom! the wretched exile, her father's sufferings and death, her own disgrace, her brother's situation, all seemed for a moment cast into oblivion by the vivid recollection of Theodore, awakened from seeing Ivan.

She was yet at some distance from home when Alexander met her, and would have drawn her arm under his own had he not perceived that she was alarmed by something, and he eagerly inquired the cause.

"A new exile is arrived at that dilapidated shed; he has neither food nor fire; the serf has deserted him, and left him to perish of the same disease which so dreadfully afflicted our friend."

"Good God! what complicated misery! but I will fly to him this moment with Peter, who is bringing home my game; you will nurse him, dear Mary, and the good Brukenthal will—"

"Hold, Alexander! I must tell you who this man is before you proceed farther, since personally you know him not. It is Ivan Dolgourouki, the man who so lately governed Russia, and was the implacable enemy of us all."

Alexander started as if a terrible serpent had risen in his path, and reared its head before him; he recoiled a few paces, and stood silent and fixed as a statue.

"I promised him help," said Mary, "for his state is terrible; nevertheless, we had better see Mr. Brukenthal first, perhaps."

"No, no, dear Mary," said the young man, for kindly feelings resumed their sway, and deep sighs burst from his bosom as the emptiness of all earthly grandeur struck on his mind; "we have no time to lose; the sufferings of our fellow-creature claim commiseration, and we need no new lesson: 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink,' would be the language of Brukenthal, for it was that of his divine master."

So saying, he sprang to meet Peter, and, laying the game on the ground, led the way to the hut. Mary, loading herself with the spoil, proceeded to the cottage, her heart more burdened than her person. However sincere in her desire to relieve the sick man, and thankful that she had arrived at the time of his extreme distress, she felt a shrinking, and almost superstitious dread of him; a new cloud seemed to have fallen on her path, already darkened with so many evils.

When this strange and terrible story was related to Brukenthal, the first emotions he felt were anger with himself for persuading Mary to

go out, and thereby bring such an evil upon herself and family, which was succeeded by some degree of vexation with her, for having commissioned her brother to bring him thither. "Peter could have taken him food and skins, and procured firing from the village; it was right to help him—in fact, a positive duty, but not to place him in the very chair of Menzikoff, his victim. Well it is that he has departed before his faith and patience were put to so severe a trial in the person of his bitterest enemy."

"My father would have removed him hither, because he knew the place, which you do not, my dear friend; none of our animals have so cold a dwelling, and he is suffering from a rheumatic fever, like that in which you experienced such great torments."

"In that case," said Brukenthal, "I must pity him; so, if you will clear that corner, I will fetch the tressels down, and we will make him a bed that will give the full advantage of the stove; it will not do to turn him over to Peter's management in the first place, though I believe it was most beneficial to me, taken at the proper period in my fever. I will watch its progress, and do my best for him, but I confess it will be very difficult so to act, with the memory of Menzikoff full in my mind, and his children before my eyes. There is a something in my heart which says continually, 'leave him to retributive justice,' he has earned his fate."

"But you have often told us, dear sir, that, although certain crimes called for legal punishments in this world, and certain imprudences (like that of my poor father when he set out with so proud a train) are likely to produce punishments, yet we are not authorized in considering the common misfortunes of nature as the recompense of crime. Ivan deserved banishment, I really believe, but not the horrible destitution and painful disease under which he suffers; *you*, the noblest, kindest of human beings, the only *man*,* perhaps, who ever came voluntarily hither, endured the same affliction."

"True, my child, natural causes produce natural effects. I was wrong, Mary, and have perhaps, in other things, indulged aversion to this man beyond what justice demands; the sweetness of your temper reproves the indignation I have permitted to mine. Yet it is not in human nature to look upon you in this place, and clothed in that garb, and forgive him."

Mary had never witnessed such emotions as he now laboured under affect her venerable friend before, so holy, calm, and self-subdued had he always been; nor could she bear that he should reproach himself for allowing them to agitate him, seeing it was for the sake of his friend's family alone he felt them.

For a considerable time they remained silent, Mary becoming uneasy, as she thought Alexander ought to have returned some time ago, and, as she was in the act of listening, she heard his voice within a short distance calling her name. On mentioning this, Brukenthal darted from the house, earnestly entreating her to remain within, as his aid would be sufficient.

It appeared that, on reaching the hut and forcing the door, the wretched exile was found fallen on the floor, from which he had not the power to rise; his limbs being apparently benumbed by the cold, and his frame shaken, as in the very agonies of death. Laying him as well as they were able on a wretched mattress, which was the only furniture in the hut, and putting upon him what they could take from their own persons, Alexander and the serf set out to carry him; but his total helplessness rendered Alexander unequal to his share of the burden, and long had they found the journey too much when they began to shout for assistance from the cottage, fearing to leave him for a moment, lest death should ensue.

Mary followed with lights, which had now become necessary, and their task was soon completed; the stranger was laid in the warm corner, his limbs chafed, cordials held to his lips and dropped slowly into his mouth, and words of comfort offered to his confused and wondering ears by Brukenthal, who, with all the zeal of pure compassion, was now awake to every means of resuscitation and assistance. A sense of warmth stole over the wretched man indicative of returning life, but with it came excruciating pains and partial delirium, in which he bitterly reproached the present empress for placing him on the rack, denouncing the banished nobleman who had been, a few years before, held to be her heart's choice, and in other respects showing so much of what was likely to have given offence at court, that all of his hearers who paid attention to his words might account for his banishment as a consequence of his opinions.

To Brukenthal this *exposé* was painful, because, in the first instance, he had concluded that punishment to their enemy would be release to them; but he now thought Menzikoff and his children were alike forgotten; that new people and new interests occupied every avenue of the royal mind, and obliterated all which had been done or suffered by the strongest intellect and most active powers ever engaged for a country which required the highest possible efforts for her liberation from barbarity.

The good man did not the less earnestly seek the welfare of his patient; and, finding his fever run extremely high, he desired Mary to prepare a blister to be laid on his chest, and an opiate which might deaden his sense of pain. On applying the former, he found a small, flat parcel, carefully sewed in leather, tied round the neck by a riband, which, on removing, he gave to Mary, saying, "Place it in safety, as he may hereafter wish for it. I think it is paper, but whether treason or love-letters, it is nothing to us; he has a purse, too, in his girdle, which will hurt him; put them both into a safe place till he can use them."

Mary did as she was requested, and devoted herself to Alexander, who was weary and hungry; but these evils, being temporary, did not long prevent him from exulting in the sense of having saved the life of a fellow-creature, even though he had been to him and all he loved a ruthless, wily, persevering enemy. He felt assured that he had acted as his father would have done had he been alive, thereby giving proof of the great change religion had wrought in his own heart, and which he had communicated to his children.

When Peter also had fed abundantly, and professed himself no worse for an exertion which, to his hard and sinewy form, was no extraordinary effort, Brukenthal knelt down to family worship, and prayed with a sincere and softened heart for the sufferer before them, on whose exhausted frame the opiate had already taken effect. He was then committed to the charge of the serf, who was naturally a humane man (but,

* Sentence of banishment in the law courts liberates a woman from her criminal partner in Russia, but she may accompany him by petition, and generally does—such is the love of a wife.

of course, ignorant of all that related to his charge), with a strict injunction to rouse the minister if he were worse, or awoke with any proofs of returning reason. They all retired under the painful belief that a new trouble had come upon them, and one which might draw much greater in its train, since, if the government should take umbrage at their conduct, increased punishment must be the consequence. Nevertheless, though all retired to press a sleepless pillow for many hours, full of conjectures and fears for the future, and driven to contemplate the sorrows of the past, not one could repent the transaction in which they had been engaged, for each might say, "Surely my judgment is with the Lord, my reward is with my God."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The family were awakened in the morning at an early hour by a summons which roused Peter himself, who had not been disturbed by the stranger. The governor of the village had not been at home when the new exile arrived, under the care of two soldiers, who were anxious to return the same night to Berenzof; and, having given up their charge, together with a letter from his superior at his cottage, returned forthwith. One of the serfs of their keeper (Master Paul) therefore took upon himself to place the exile in the hut we have mentioned; and, at the earnest request of the banished man, engaged another to attend him, upon whom Count Ivan had vented all the anger he felt due to his miserable lodging, and the fretfulness natural to the disease with which he had been seized the day before, and which had rendered travelling a punishment more acute than the severest sentence could have contemplated. As the equality of condition rendered such language unknown in his native wilds, and the universality of poverty showed nothing very extraordinary in passing a night in poor lodgings, the man returned in dudgeon to his own home and the comforts of his own stove, willing to forfeit his expected wages rather than bear the temper of one he deemed an "insolent criminal," far inferior to an honest man like himself, and, in fact, ignorant of all which was most calculated to obtain compassion for one in the situation of the exile. Ivan Dolgourouki had consequently been left, as we have seen, to experience every possible evil belonging to the country, when sickness rendered him absolutely incapable of sustaining any.

Master Paul had returned the preceding evening, and, on reading his letter, which cautioned him against allowing his captive any indulgence for at least some months, or providing him with any assistance so long as his own money lasted, yet showed him at once the necessity of providing him with a more efficient lodging than that to which his representative had appointed him. Taking a pine-branch torch in his hand, he lost no time in proceeding to the hut whence the prisoner had been taken two hours before, and, finding it empty, sought the other dwellings, and severely remonstrated with the man who had forsaken him; but, in the course of his examinations, hearing that Mary had visited them, which was confirmed by his wife on his return, he went to bed contentedly, not doubting but she had found in the prisoner a friend, for whose safety she had provided.

As, however, it was his duty to ascertain the fact, as soon as he arose he proceeded to the cottage, and there learned, not only the security of the captive, but those circumstances which exceedingly surprised him, and induced him to determine on removing the exile as soon as possible; for he saw clearly that, however kindly all were disposed towards a work of Christian charity, every hour must recall to their memory those injuries they might be willing, but were unable to forget; and such had been his own full esteem and veneration for Menzikoff, together with that of his people, that they felt as if his dwelling was polluted by the presence of his enemy.

On this point Brukenthal, with considerate kindness, begged the keeper not to speak; for, as Count Ivan had made one enemy on his first arrival, should his past conduct be known, he would doubtless make more, and be subject to annoyances he could not guard against, but might not merit. "I will not tell of him," said the guardian, bluntly, "because, if I did, not one among them would let him sleep under their roof, and I should be forced to take him myself, or make him a stove in the hut he has left; depend upon it, I will do neither if I can help it."

The subject of their consultations awoke in great pain, and was evidently much too ill for removal, especially as snow was again falling, and the cold such as a stranger would consider intense. His senses were evidently wandering, but his features, which the preceding day were swollen and livid, had resumed much of their general appearance; and, as Mary glanced towards him, she could trace traits of resemblance to his cousin Theodore which could never be erased from her memory, and could not fail to be an hourly trial to her spirits. Her reason, therefore, seconded the wishes of Brukenthal and the visitant for his removal when it could be accomplished safely, yet, by a strange perversity, her eye continually sought to catch the lineaments of a face which offered the only record of Theodore's on which she could ever hope to gaze. Conscious this was a weakness she ought to combat, she hastened to her morning's occupations, and left to Alexander the rights of hospitality, and to their friend the consolations of medicine and encouragement.

It was by slow degrees that returning reason dawned on the mind of the bewildered and severely-afflicted man, but in the course of the day he became sensible of the comforts of warmth, the applications which procured partial ease, and of the kindness with which his wants were supplied. In a day or two more, indistinct recollections of his sudden sentence of banishment, his long, melancholy journey were present to his mind, followed by utter destitution, the flight of his menial, the pangs of a reproaching conscience; a hell within, aided by fierce pains without. He must have fallen, then, into a state of utter insensibility, in which he had been conveyed hither by charitable people. "Could they be a religious brotherhood? The elder of the house resembled a monk, and prayer or praise was heard occasionally from all, and none but fanatics could be thankful for existence in such a country as this.

"No; this conclusion was wrong; for a lovely child brought him warm milk, and told

him she robbed her pet calf to do him good, and a young woman moved about in sheepskin garments, but with light and graceful motion. He remembered, in agony of heart, crying to a woman who fled from him; this must have been the same, the very person who had sent the rescue she could not give, yet she evidently avoided him whom she had so laid under obligation. They all showed him benevolent attention, yet not one expressed curiosity as to his past or present situation, and conversed with each other rather by signs than words, as if checked by his presence. They were evidently not the boors of the country; if they were exiles, they must have been long resident before they could possibly have acquired the cattle they were possessed of: who could they be?"

When Brukenthal saw the proper time, he caused Peter to practise upon the stranger in the same way he had formerly operated on himself, after which he removed him up stairs; and his recovery became complete, though his weakness exceeded what his own had been, and his appetite became inordinate. Referring to the great kindness he experienced, and the preceding want he had sustained, he one day asked for his purse, saying "there was only a small sum in it, but what there was he begged of Brukenthal to accept."

The purse and the packet were handed to him, the contents of the former being declined, with an assurance that he would require all it contained before the governor paid him any allowance, especially as he would have a mattress and sheepskins to purchase when he removed into his own lodgings.

"Oh! do not, do not remove me! you have saved my life—preserve it."

"The governor will not suffer you to remain here, as you must be aware, since he comes so frequently to see if you can be removed with safety. The young people to whom this place belongs are willing to relieve your necessities, and they compassionate your sufferings, since they feel for all; but when you are better, they must rejoice in your removal, since they are much inconvenienced by your presence. There can be no pleasure in society where minds do not coalesce; and the artless, kind, and honest offer no proper companionship to Count Ivan Dolgourouki."

"So you know my name; of course, Master Paul revealed it. He might also have told you the state from which I have fallen, and then you would have pitied my misfortunes as much as the complaint from which you have relieved me."

"Others have fallen from a state as high as yours, and with far more innocence."

"For Heaven's sake, tell me where I am! My brain again swims; strange thoughts are again floating before me. Who saw me, and saved me? I conjure you to tell me."

"The daughter of Prince Menzikoff saw you and knew you. His son brought you hither; his friend addresses you."

"But where, oh where is Menzikoff himself?"

"He is gone to the true penitent believer's happiest home, for there 'the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary rest;' that home where assuredly the *murderer* who slew him by cold and hunger, degradation and solicitude—by the broken heart which wept over his wife's grave and his children's misery, will be called to a terrible account."

Dolgourouki groaned bitterly, and turned his face to the wall, but in a short time started up, exclaiming, in great agitation,

"Father, you have not enumerated all his miseries, though each is as a burning coal fixed in the centre of my heart. His fair and blameless daughter, the virtuous, beautiful young empress, died here, and is buried with that excellent mother whom all Cronstadt deem a saint."

"Not so; her sister Ulrica, a lovely girl of the same height, died here of the smallpox, which the little girl and her brother suffered from at the same time. A change in the dress of those fair sisters, and the more violent grief manifested by Ulrica (to whom sorrow was new), caused the mistake, which, of course, they could never rectify; *you*, however, cannot forget that Mary caught the smallpox from her husband, and had it in Russia."

"She lives! she lives! Banished, bereaved of rank, parents, friends, and fortune, still she lives! Oh, God! how inscrutable are thy ways!"

"Rather exclaim, 'Oh, man, how crushing and cruel are thine!' heaping on thy brother worm pain and sorrow, want and misery, as if the natural evils of existence were not enough, and as if thou wert not thyself the heir of disease and grief, the possible prey of mortification, poverty, and death."

When this conversation took place, both were seated near the stove, as Count Ivan was now able to descend to the midday meal; Alexander was helping Peter; Mary now entered, bending beneath the vessel she bore, which having set down, she filled a cup with warm milk, and put it into the hands of Catherine to carry to him.

Dolgourouki gazed earnestly upon the fair face which had often flitted past him, but never approached him since the first moment when she had recognised him, but was herself in a mask, and saw that the peasant, whom he had beheld as one remembered in his dreams, was indeed the fair young empress, the beautiful and gentle Mary, the pride of the Russian court—she who had never made a single enemy, though comprised in the destruction of her ambitious but meritorious father. Yes, there she stood, labouring as a serf, and clothed as one, whom he had seen so often beaming with jewels, and habited in costly velvets and royal ermine, on whose steps princes waited with pride, and the finest ladies of Europe surrounded with honour. It was indeed the same—the adored of Prince Theodore Dolgourouki, who was preparing food for her household, and smiling on the efforts of little Catherine to assist her.

Ivan arose pale and trembling from his seat; a thousand memories were swelling at his heart, a thousand words were struggling for utterance at his lips, but shame, sorrow, pride, and bitter regret combined to overwhelm him; he staggered forward a few paces, and, throwing himself at Mary's feet, burst into a paroxysm of hysterical tears, being able only to articulate "Forgive! forgive!"

"I have forgiven—I trust God will enable me fully to forgive—Count Ivan."

Mary spoke with a mild dignity calculated to restore his composure, but his agitation increased as he conquered the suffocating sensation which impeded speech, and he cried out vehemently,

"Forgive me, my empress—forgive me, daughter of the injured Menzikoff, for that I bring you news of Theodore—the murdered Theodore. He lives, but lives only to lament the death of his long-loved lamented Mary."

"Lives! Theodore lives!" said Mary, and dropped on the floor as cold, as pale, and lifeless as the snow around her dwelling.

Brukenthal, terrified by an effect he had never witnessed before, gathered her in his arms, and was proceeding to carry her into the air, when the screams of Catherine brought Alexander to his assistance. Though much alarmed at seeing his sister in such a state, he proceeded instantly to obtain those restoratives which his poor mother had so often required, and in a short time had the satisfaction of seeing life return to her blue lips, and her eyes slowly reopen.

When she had come sufficiently to herself to recollect the cause of her swoon, she cast her eyes around in quest of Ivan, who, shocked with the mischief his violence had perpetrated, was withdrawn. Not seeing him, she said to Brukenthal, who was supporting her, "Father, was it a dream?"

"No, my child; you heard that Theodore, your own, long-mourned Theodore, is yet alive, or was so lately; but I fear the joy is so abbreviated by the distance at which you are placed from each other, the little probability you should ever meet, and the circumstances likely to arise from his belief of your death, that I dare not congratulate you."

"I dare—I must! It cannot be that the wickedness of man would add to her sufferings by deception," said the brother, tenderly kissing her cheek.

Tears, salutary tears, coursed each other down the face of Mary, who, as soon as she was able, retired to her own chamber, followed by the frightened child, to whom all was incomprehensible. Indeed, Mary was as yet unable to analyze her own feelings. Joy, overwhelming, intolerable joy, which crushed out life in its first surprise, was now mingled with fears, and hopes, and anxieties, awakened by the alarmed and cautious old man, which, by tempering the violence of her sensations, and dividing the action of the mind, happily preserved her reason, which had else sunk beneath the lightning stroke thus flashed upon her brain in its unmitigated brightness.

Alexander, with all the tenderness of a sister, stood beside her couch, wiped her flowing tears, and spoke, as sanguine youth loves to speak, in the language of ardent hope and generous courage. The moment, however, when he thought he could leave her to the care of the fond infant, he descended, eager to inquire on what foundation Ivan Dolgourouki had ventured to assert the existence of that excellent relative, on whom so many tears had been shed by every member of his own family, and for whose sake (even in the belief of his death) Mary had refused the generous Alexovitch, whom he loved more than anything on earth save her beloved self.

The very first inquiry he made seemed likely to involve the history on which so much depended in oblivion, for the answer of Ivan evoked a shriek of anger and horror from the two anxious auditors, who drew their seats on either side of him (who now held his late kind protectors and masters in abeyance), and thus began his narrative of by-gone events:

"At the time when the assassins hired by Prince Menzikoff to destroy my—"

"Wretch!" cried Alexander, "my father was a brave man, utterly incapable of the baseness of murder, even when most irritated by anger, or misled by ambition."

"He never injured your cousin, even in thought," cried Brukenthal; "though, unhappily, having arranged the marriage of his daughter with the empress, he declined giving her to one whose virtues he honoured."

At length the question was heard, "By whose orders was Theodore Dolgourouki seized and stabbed when found in the gardens of Oranienbaum?"

To this Brukenthal could distinctly answer, "that, within a short time of his death, he had written an account of that unhappy transaction from the lips of Menzikoff, who had given references to the actual perpetrators of the injury;" adding, "previous to this account, which I will proceed to read to you, and the truth of which could be immediately ascertained by persons resident at Petersburgh, I confess I had always entertained suspicions of Count *Ivan* Dolgourouki, who was the next heir of the unfortunate Theodore, the favourite of his father, and, from what I myself knew of his conduct, capable of doing a bold, cunning, and unscrupulous action when it led to his own advancement."

"Me injure Theodore! impossible! You cannot think it, and say so only to wound my feelings by false accusations: you trample on the fallen, and—"

"Hold!" cried Alexander, "or you may drive us to reprisals, which hitherto we have certainly showed little desire to make. Remember, you set out by accusing my father—my dear, honoured, and slowly-murdered father, of a crime to which his whole soul was abhorrent, but which, I grant, a prejudiced person might deem possible, the circumstances considered. My venerable friend's suspicion he never hinted before, or I should have told him that I had heard my sister say, 'your conduct to Theodore was noble,' since, on his father's desiring to disinherit him, you refused to accept the patrimony never justly forfeited by one you held inexpressibly dear. With this unhappy idea in your mind, probably your very love for him caused your hatred and persecution of us. All our misfortunes may have arisen from misconception: was it so, Count Ivan?"

Ivan Dolgourouki did not reply, but he turned with an air of mingled pride and embarrassment from the eyes of Brukenthal, which were fixed upon him with a scrutinizing expression.

"Only say this was your motive for persecuting us, and you will remove half its guilt. My heart is as open to offer you friendship as it has been to yield you compassion."

There was no answer, and the open countenance of the generous youth became again dark with indignant anger, when Brukenthal interposed with a calm voice, yet with parental authority: he now said,

"Do not press your adversary with questions he cannot answer: the silence of Count Ivan is the only negative his feelings and situation allow him to give, and it is honourable to him, although no other answer could have availed him. If you, dear Alexander, were not in such

agitation, your own recollection of dates and circumstances would show you that the enmity which destroyed your house must be in full operation before the news of his cousin's injury could have reached the family of the Dolgourouki. Though your father was silent on a subject which caused him so much uneasiness, yet he was always inquiring, through every possible medium, whether any news of an extraordinary nature had reached Prince Baziltch Dolgourouki or the Mareschal—"

Brukenthal was interrupted, and all startled, by the appearance of Mary, who had sprang into the midst with a face as pale and a step as noiseless as those attributed to a spectre. She had waited the return of Alexander with news of Theodore until her patience was exhausted, and her extreme fear was excited (as high words were evidently passing below) that Ivan would not reveal that which he knew, or had deceived her by his first assertion, and was now receiving reproaches on that account. Eagerly pressing forward, she spoke with trembling eagerness to him on whom she seemed to depend for life or reason.

"Count Ivan, did Theodore survive being rolled up, as I *saw*, and being thrown into the sea, as I *heard*?"

"He survived, notwithstanding he was stabbed in the side by those assassins you saw. They did not throw him into the sea; he plunged into it himself, and was received by his friend when apparently expiring; that friend preserved him, but with extreme difficulty, for they encountered severe weather in the seas of Finland, and were compelled to remain some weeks in an obscure island to refit. A Danish vessel touching at the place, they engaged her to convey them to Dantzic, knowing the extreme distress the family of Kreuss must be then experiencing, and the equal loss Theodore experienced for want of medical assistance. A short time after they got out to sea, and at a time when they were experiencing all the evils arising from an ill-provisioned and every way wretched craft, they fell in with an English privateer, and, the two countries being now at war, on signal being given, the sloop could do nothing better than surrender. Their apparent misfortune was valuable to all, but to Theodore it was positive earthly salvation."

"But what became of him? where did they take him?"

"To England; for, although an opportunity occurred, of which the English captain availed himself, to land the Germans, he was too ill for removal in so hasty and comfortless a manner as they thankfully embraced, and, as he was under the care of a skilful surgeon, it would have been madness to have quitted. There was also a young midshipman on board, of noble family, who had become exceedingly attached, and waited on him with a woman's tenderness; therefore Kreuss, who, of course, could not leave his sister, was easy as to his accommodation, though he lamented the distance to which he must inevitably be removed. His own journey was long and disastrous, for his sister was seized with fever on the road, the consequence of the misfortunes which had attended their ill-fated journey and severe disappointment. When at length they reached their home near Leipsic, they learned that, many weeks before, the daughter of Prince Menzikoff, whom they had considered as the affianced bride of Theodore, was become the wife of the emperor."

A transient blush spread over the pallid countenance of Mary, but it soon fled; the pang inflicted did not prove what was intended probably in the first instance, yet soon repented, as Ivan quickly added, "The Germans know not, of course, how absolute is the power of a father in Russia; but let that pass: enough to say that my uncle's first information of his son's existence was by a courier from Germany, whose letter conveyed the particulars you already know, and which letter he sent to me; since then—"

"But when—when did you receive this letter, Count Ivan? tell me the truth, I beseech you."

"Just as you entered on your journey to Siberia."

"Not before?"

"Certainly not *before*, for with the impression I then received the *mines* would have been the destination of both your father and brother; probably such sentence might have followed, had not your conductors brought back the sad story of your mother's death; our next news conveyed to us the account of your own. The Czar had been much affected by the first, for he loved your mother from his cradle, and when he heard of your death he became inconsolable, and his long fluctuating disorder from that day became evidently fatal. What I suffered from his reproaches and threatenings no tongue can relate, yet he could not bear me out of his sight a moment. As I had been a necessity to him when he loved me, so was I when he hated me, and demanded, with incessant sorrow or angry imprecations, 'the friends of his childhood, who had once fondly loved him—the tender wife, who alone could nurse him—his playfellow Alexander, to whom he intended to marry his sister Elizabeth.' Day and night he thus raved in helpless imbecility, continually calling for the living and for the dead; but, as neither could by possibility be present during the short span of existence which remained, I caused him to be informed that you were all swept away. Though I did not know this, I certainly believed it to be the case, since the latest information received spoke of disease, distress, incurable sorrow, and a climate alike destructive to life in an early or late stage of existence."

"The very information should have prevented your conclusion," said Brukenthal, "since there was only one infant in the family, and my friend could not be deemed aged."

"True; but my object was the attainment of peace to the emperor, though it might be the peace of despair; and safety to myself, although that safety might be (as it proved) temporary. The end was not gained, for he continued to inveigh and lament with so much bitterness, that my reign was considered over by all within the palace many days before his death. The consequence was an entire loss of the Dolgourouki influence, which would have placed the crown on the head of the true heir, the Duke of Holstein; and the Princess Anne, of Courland, to the astonishment of the empire and of Europe, has gained possession of the throne—ay, and she will keep it, too; she has energy, talent, and beauty, and more of her great uncle's character about her than any of his own

descendants save the Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of Catherine."*

"I loved them both," said Mary, with a deep sigh, "and they once loved me."

"That they undoubtedly did, for many a tear have they both shed for your banishment and death, to my own knowledge; nor can I doubt that the enmity of the empress, as shown towards myself, in a great measure arises from the share I had in Prince Menzikoff's banishment; added to that may be the love—yes, let me say the love!—I entertained, and may still entertain, for the Princess Elizabeth. In Siberia, one may surely speak truth without flinching, and Alexander is not my rival now, whatever he might have been."

"You may say that safely, Count Ivan. I know nothing of love or ambition either, save that of getting to be a better shot than my good neighbour Alexovitch."

"Love is no matter of jest," resumed Ivan, "when it interferes with the conduct of empires, as Russia will soon know to her cost. Biron, the beloved of the empress, is recalled and advanced; his ambition knows no bounds; he will plunge the country into difficulties, you will see, from which Romanzoff, Woronzow, Sapicha, and others, will vainly try to rescue her. I left the mareschal at the point of death, my uncle Baziltch weak and retired, Theodore a wanderer, and Ivan an exile: so are the Dolgourouki situate—who will supply their places? who oppose the prejudicial influence that—"

"Be not unhappy, count; there are many yet left to Russia sufficient for her safety; see that the new minister does wrong before you pronounce against him, and, above all, discriminate between the patriotism which fears for your country, and the lamentation which mourns for yourself," said Brukenthal.

"What are courts and ministers to us in the desert?" said Mary, mournfully turning away. "I want only to know about Theodore; it must suffice me to know he lives, and lives far distant, yet you *can* tell if any second letter has arrived."

"You have held in your hand, lady, a whole packet of Theodore's letters; one of them arrived just as I was setting out, and has been not half read by me, since I was obliged to take them from my pocket-book, and get them secured in the manner you have seen, knowing that I should be deprived of that by the officer who brought me hither."

"You will allow my sister to see letters so interesting to her, Count Ivan?"

"Not voluntarily, or at *your* request, Alexander Menzikoff, for you have insulted me. 'Tis true I am at your mercy; two men may overpower one who is reduced as I am; murder hides robbery, and the snows of Siberia have covered such crimes frequently."

"Give your arm to Mary, my dear Alexander; she is again very faint, and certainly unequal to bearing any farther shock, whether from momentary penitence, which repents without amendment, or petulance quick to resent its own injuries, without allowing for the far greater it has inflicted. It would ill become us to scan a sick man's words too closely, or, under any provocation, forget the sacred character of a guest. Good-night, my children. I will stretch myself by the stove to-night; the blessing of God be on all beneath this roof!"

The anger which had reddened the brow and quivered on the lip of Alexander subsided as his hand shook that of him under whose parental sway he felt passion controlled, and reason resume her empire. He well knew that Brukenthal would compromise no point of honour on his behalf, and had held aloof from Dolgourouki hitherto in a way to which his own young and yielding generosity of nature was unequal, for that very day he had suggested the idea of persuading the governor to allow him to remain with them, to which Brukenthal had objected, as utterly incompatible with either happiness or propriety as regarded the empress.

Another reason was now evident, the power Ivan possessed of wounding their feelings, awakening anger it would be difficult to repress, and sinful to indulge. "No, no," said the youth to himself, "I must give him up—yet how happy might I have been in such a companion! He is well informed, has seen various countries, is polished in mind and manners, must necessarily sympathize in our afflictions and privations, is always at hand to receive kindness, and communicate the blessings of society; on how many points can we meet, and be rendered mutually beneficial! but the good father is right—there is still a gulf between us. In days past, he has been a remorseless and continued enemy; and how far is he at this time less? could anything short of a monster refuse the slightest wish of Mary, much less one on which her happiness evidently depends. The same man who, while she waited on Peter II. with a tenderness and devotedness even the gentle Catherine could not equal to his matchless grandsire, could calmly contrive, and resolutely effect her ruin, now refuses her the single gratification it is possible he can bestow, or she experience, although from her kindness in the hour of extremity he received life and ease—received it, too, when she was fully aware of his identity, beheld in him the serpent who had stung her to the heart, destroyed the mother she idolized, the sister she loved, the father to whom her heart clung with all the fond tenacity of a last, *last* refuge.

"He has denied her—the wretch may, in his wickedness, render this denial eternal by destroying the letters; in which case, no after information he could give would ever be relied on by me, for a heart so cruel must be necessarily deceitful. But shall I, from any sense of false delicacy, deprive Mary of the only real good it may ever be in my power to bestow? Did I not receive her from my father as a precious deposite, for whom my every effort was to be exerted; for whom I was bound to labour, and incited to love; whose counsels I was exhorted to follow—true! Must I, then, not consult her? Whatever may be her temptation, she will not tell me to do wrong."

Alexander crept softly into Mary's room, and found her, as he had expected, awake, for her mind was harassed by a thousand feelings, from which she had been hitherto exempt; hope, fear, solicitude, indefinable expectations, and unwarrantable conclusions, were perpetually passing her mind, and occasioning a sense of distress far more tormenting than the calm melancholy which had so long reigned in a kind of tranquil grief and subdued emotion over her bosom. She was thankful for the company of

* This princess succeeded the Empress Anne, who died early.

her brother, though grieved that her sorrows were so afflictive to him, and she eagerly listened to the occasion of his visit—the power of obtaining for her those letters she so earnestly yearned to read, and which caprice, revenge, or the natural feelings of a heart known to be cruel and unscrupulous might destroy in a moment.

"That the eye of our good Brukenthal is on him now I doubt not, but in the morning a thousand opportunities will arise that may enable him to burn them."

"Oh, no!" said Mary, "he loves Theodore; he brought these memorials with him as society in the wilderness; he may deny them to me, but he will the more fondly treasure them for himself. As to obtaining them otherwise than as his own free gift, it is impossible. I would not stain the mind of my brother by the rankling memory of a dishonourable action; no, not for even a sight of Theodore—at least, I trust not. Go to your mattress, my beloved Alexander, and sleep, as you hitherto have done, soundly and guiltlessly. It is a satisfaction to know that my heart's chosen was not the victim of his love; that he still lives, and may in time, perhaps, be happy, though I must never witness his felicity. Yes, it is a happiness for which I am truly thankful."

Thankful, doubtless, Mary was, but yet she was unhappy; and, when Alexander had retired, she vainly courted sleep to visit her pillow. A new scene was opened, which offered, in the first place, much to delight the eye of imagination, and awakened hope in the heart, still clinging with fond tenacity to its object; but yet there seemed not one point on which it could rest for comfort, or exercise fortitude; and, however she might cling to it, she could not fail to be sensible that she had been infinitely better without it.

At their usual hour of assembling on the morrow, Mary did not appear, and the circle, usually cheered by her presence, looked dull and comfortless; but there were no sullen looks, nor want of accustomed attention to the wants of their sick guest, who made inquiries of Catherine as to the health of her sister, she being soon the only person in the cottage with Ivan, Brukenthal undertaking Mary's usual duties.

"Sister is asleep now; but she has been crying, for I saw the tears upon her cheek. I wonder what made her cry!—was it you, Count Ivan, that was so cruel, so naughty, as to grieve dear sister Mary, who made you that warm tippet, and gives you the first cups of milk every day?"

"I will grieve her no more, my pretty Catherine; take this parcel to her, and this penknife, that she may open it carefully; tell her I send it, but the contents are for her eyes *alone;* she will return them only (at a distant time) to myself."

"I will tell her everything, and I will take her the best lamp, that she may read her lesson better. I suppose the inside is full of lessons, count?"

Ivan Dolgourouki, though his heart felt the lighter for having made this sacrifice to his pride, shook his head mournfully as he exclaimed, "Lessons! yes, my pretty Catherine, it is indeed full of lessons, which thine own innocent heart may one day learn to con too well; but God forbid thou shouldst receive them in the desert!"

Mary, awakened by the kiss of Catherine, and the bright light carried in her hand, was soon aroused; and, though her head ached, and her trembling fingers with difficulty performed their office, it was not long before she disclosed five letters, or rather packages, in the handwriting of Theodore Dolgourouki. They appeared to her as messages from the land of spirits, and eagerly as she pressed them alternately to her lips and her heart, she yet felt as if they were something awful and sacred, belonging to a state of existence from which she was eternally divided. Seeing the surprise evinced in the looks of the child recalled her to herself, and, sending her down with a thankful assurance to Count Ivan that she would obey his wishes, she lifted up her heart to Heaven, beseeching strength to endure whatever might befall her; and then, having noted that the letters were numbered, began to enter on that which was evidently a most agitating though welcome task.

Theodore to Ivan Dolgourouki.

London, January, 1728.

My dear cousin,

You have heard, ere this, from my father, the grievous misadventure which befell me last autumn in the Gulf of Cronstadt, and which has reduced me so much, that even now I can scarcely consider myself a living man. It is on this very account that I will not lose an opportunity offered by the French ambassador to convey a letter to you, dear Ivan, because there is no knowing whether I shall be able to write another; and there are many things I can say to you which it is evident I cannot say to my father, though I trust he is no longer offended with me for declining those paths of ambition which have so little benefited himself, but which, I apprehend, you are at this time pursuing with ardour.

May they make you happy! you have talents for them which I am deficient in; and, *mal-à-propos* as my fate has hitherto been, notwithstanding you may say, however little ambition has done for one cousin, love has done still less for the other, believe me, Ivan, even now I do not repent devoting myself as I have done to the gentler passion. It has demanded no other sacrifice than happiness and life; religion, integrity, all that renders life a blessing and happiness a possibility, are untouched.

In a short time, as travelling will in Russia be rendered easy, it is probable the court will be going to Moscow, and you will see my father (it is not, indeed, improbable that you are now with him); in this case, I beseech you to guard him from adopting a belief to which his prejudices against Menzikoff may subject him, viz., that the men who injured me were incited by him as personal enemies. I declare to you, most solemnly, Ivan, that my clear conviction is to the contrary. They accused me of being an enemy to the empress, and urged me to name my accomplices; this alone proves that treason, not love, was my supposed crime. I was suspected of concealment for the purpose of killing the empress, who, you know (good as she is), has more than once been in danger. From their words, I found they had been commanded to watch the gardens; and my own observations, indeed, my own *entrée*, proved that it was not without reason. Their determination to drag me to our terrible new prisons on

the Neva, acting on a mind already in the highest state of agitation from bitter disappointment and almost phrensied love, rendered me impetuous to very madness, and I greatly fear I gave a death-blow to one of my enthrallers; it was natural for the other to avenge, as he did by the wound which he gave remorselessly, considering me, in a twofold sense, the offender. All was the work of a few minutes; and, but for the rapid movements, as well as the unparalleled after-care of my dear Kreuss, I should not be telling the story. All which now remains is for you to make inquiry, dear Ivan, as to any such accident having happened to one of the poor fishermen; and, should I have been so unfortunate as to have killed the man, take his family under your immediate protection.

A few words will suffice to tell me this—let your letter, I beseech you, by all the love we have borne each other, notwithstanding the extraordinary separation we have experienced from our boyish days, be filled with memorials of my own Mary. Forget that she is the daughter of Menzikoff. Dismiss from your mind the supposition that he has refused her to a Dolgourouki, since I can most truly assure you that I never asked him for her, being bound by a promise made to her excellent mother not to do so until she permitted me. In short, remember only that I am an unfortunate lover, confined to a sick room at an immeasurable distance from my heart's idol, who is surrounded by adorers, and under the absolute control of a father whose ambition will unquestionably induce him to bestow her on him who can bid the highest for a prize all must deem inestimable.

I see you smile, Ivan, with somewhat of a curling lip, and grieve that the Theodore of whom in your kindness you think so highly, should have become so infatuated; and that neither time, distance, nor the loss of nearly life itself should have cured him of a passion whose issue hope itself scarcely encourages. Well! grant it is folly, still it is my all of life and of life's enjoyment; my reason clings to it not less than my inclination, for it has confirmed whatever was good in my intentions, and strengthened whatever was wavering in my resolutions. If I had not devoted myself to Mary in the manner I did from my first acquaintance, I might have been drawn into the vortex of ambition, and all the base intrigues, the unholy aspirations which belong to it, and which I had taught my very soul to eschew while pursuing the history of more enlightened countries and more patriotic spirits than I can hope to mingle with. Or the taste I have imbibed for music and painting might have rendered me the votary of meretricious pleasure, and the song of the siren lulled me into that repose which is the death of every manly virtue.

Love did not do this—it increased my philanthropy, awakened me to the wants of my country and fellow-men. Go to Pozeck, Ivan, and see what great things I accomplished in so short a time; learn from that how much more might be done in the neighbourhood of Moscow; or rather, come hither, Ivan, and see what may be done by a nobility living among the people, diffusing wealth and knowledge, which is itself wealth to as wide a circle as their means and influence extend, until the whole land is one vast garden, everywhere bearing on its surface the means of life to the poor, and offering in its vast manufactories, its well-explored mines, and its commanding navy, riches, elegances, and luxuries for the enjoyment of both its grandees and artisans, of which you can form no idea; for, though you have travelled on the Continent, you could find nothing, save in some few Swiss chalets, that could be brought into comparison with an English farmer's mansion, or the small snug house furnished in every part of their manufacturer's streets in the trading towns. The higher and better paid of these workmen earn a sum equal to the produce of small estates; and were it not for the circumstance of food and rent being expensive in towns, could rival the lords of the soil in the appearance of their families. True, many of them labour too hard, and shorten the natural term of existence, in order that their wives may dress above their station, or their children receive as good an education as those who are their superiors; but still the very error is combined with general improvement in the human character. The man who loves, and therefore indulges his wife at the expense of extra labour, whether of the toiling hand or the thinking brain, is a man: the serf who beats and starves his wife, because she is as much his slave as he is the slave of his lord, is a despicable animal, inferior to the brutes over whom he tyrannizes, since his intelligence is far too insignificant to atone for his barbarity.

In saying this, think not I am condemning our serfs as below the general standard of human beings. No, Ivan! on my life, I think more highly of them, taken altogether, than any part of the community among whom they are placed. I love them for their gayety and good-humour, their endurance of a thousand ills and provocations which one human being ought never to receive from another, and more than all for domestic tenderness, and, in many instances, refinement of affection, which the highborn and highbred among us too seldom exhibit; for you and I well know that the most aristocratic stoop to conduct in our domestic lives which would disgrace our lowest slaves. Many Peters must make laws; many Catherines, with softer ways of enforcing such laws, must follow, before Russia has ceased to be barbarian, even in the mansions where luxury and splendour have shone as proudly as in the palaces of the Medici in Italy, or in Versailles at the present moment.

But, while writing of others, I am forgetting to relate my own adventures, which your friendship and pity make you anxious to know, and which I had not strength to detail to my father; for, although I am still but a shadow, I am comparatively strong to what I was when I penned that letter, necessarily so long delayed, and which served little more than to tell him he had yet a son—a son whose heart he would not stoop to read, even where love for himself was the burden of its very pulsation.

From the great loss of blood experienced, most probably, in consequence of my plunging into the sea and swimming towards the boat, I had become so weak as to be scarcely able to speak, and the slightest exertion appearing to threaten immediate dissolution. I was tended by Kreuss and his sweet sister, with all the watchful tenderness due to a newborn infant, my mind in a great degree partaking the weakness of my body after its first terrible ebullition had subsided, a circumstance which unquestionably preserved my life.

Having no other surgeon than my poor friend, my wound made little progress until the time when we were placed in the English frigate, when I was immediately attended to by a very clever man, from whose care I soon derived so much benefit that Kreuss, for the first time, began to think I would survive. When, however, the opportunity of landing with his sister, who had suffered severely from the many hardships inflicted on her in this unfortunate voyage, presented itself, the excellent young man was distracted between opposing duties; and, notwithstanding the great kindness shown to us all by the English captain and his people, seemed incapable of leaving me in the hands of strangers, yet fully sensible he could not procure for me equally eligible accommodations until a long journey by land had been traversed, which the surgeon declared I was utterly unable to bear.

"Turn your friend over to me, baron," said a young man, whom I had often noticed as looking pitifully towards me, because I was told by the captain he was the bravest of his crew, and he had struck me as the best looking; "turn him over to me, and I'll nurse him like a pet lamb all the way to Old England, and then put him in tow with my mother and sisters—my name an't Harry Herbert if I don't."

"'Tis an honourable name in your own land, and very ancient. I think I may trust you," said Kreuss.

"You may trust a British sailor," said the youth, proudly, "whether he has a name or not; but you Germans are all for pedigree; so perhaps my saying I am the third son of the Earl of Partinscale may render you more easy."

Kreuss eagerly mentioned my family and titles—Prince, General, &c.

"Yes, yes, all very right; he is a fine fellow, suffering from a cause to which every brave man is subject—that's enough for me: I take him as Prince Helpless, General of Lint and Gallipots. If I and mine make him into an English fox-hunter, will it not be his best title?"

Kreuss humoured the kind youth's fancy, and left me with more reliance on the future than he had dared to indulge; and from that time has young Herbert been, in fact, my devoted servant at every hour save when his duties compelled his absence. He even engaged the attendance of the same surgeon for a month after my arrival, and conveyed me from the port where we landed, by water, to within two versts of his father's residence, where I have been treated with the kindness and consideration a son alone could claim, and by slow degrees am regaining strength, though the season is against me.

The ambassador from our court has visited me and supplied my wants, which must have been positively distressing save for Herbert's generosity, since poor Kreuss was compelled to use my purse, neither of us having been prepared for the many evils which arose to us. He will have written to my father more fully than I was able; and you will, I trust, have heard, many weeks ago, that I was still living, and therefore, dear Ivan, still loving.

In fact, as I gain strength, so do I find myself recovering powers of memory and mind, which have been suspended, and every day brings with it a portion of recovered sorrow and deep solicitude, to say nothing of the disappointment arising from the blighting of all my plans, and the finding myself thrown at such a distance from her who is my pole-star of attraction, and towards whom I have as yet no power to travel. To the kindness of Lady Partinscale and her niece I am indebted for so much improvement of my English (which, you may remember, I studied in Pozeck), that I can now join in conversation freely, which is, of course, a great relief to me, besides rendering me orally acquainted with the laws and government of this singular country. The great changes which have taken place within the last century have always excited my curiosity, and I cannot fail to learn from the best sources what were the moving springs which wrought that unprecedented fact—the condemnation of a king to the block, in his own country, by his own subjects; the banishment of another king, and the placing a foreigner on the throne. These strange events, and the circumstances arising out of them, will form the subject of my next long letter, dear Ivan, and must be interesting to you, who have devoted yourself to the cares of state and the government of your fellow-subjects. Here everybody talks about politics as if they understood them, which, in nine cases out of ten, I apprehend they do not; but as it is certain they have an interest in them, and can every week see an *exposé* of the acts of government, which is actually published in the capital, circulated by degrees through the provinces, and may be purchased for a trifle, no wonder freemen give their opinion freely, and comment on the promulgation of a new law with the same scrutinizing tone they would use if a plough or any other machine were under investigation. Great truths are elicited by humble means; and, although these censurers may be often wrong, and are almost always fatiguing, I doubt not many important facts, the foundation of invaluable edicts, might be derived from a close attention to their observations.

You will say, as you have often said, "that I am still thinking of the people who are but the property of their masters," instead of the high and puissant who claim them, and who ought to find in one of themselves a partisan and historian. I grant it; but here, as every man is in so far noble that the laws protect him, and in many cases educate him, he may be said to merit attention almost as much as those who can compel it. I would you were with me, Ivan; you would soon see enough to put all your prejudices to the rout, and yet the lower order of Englishmen by no means exhibit themselves to advantage with strangers. Neither their good qualities nor their happiness are seen on the surface; but, unquestionably, the former exist and the latter is felt; for what else could have rendered the people of an island, little favoured by nature, so *great* in all the highest attributes of the word as they certainly are? They are rivalled, too, by the Dutch, who have only a strip of land won from the sea; yet whose navies visit every shore, whose colonies are planted wherever wealth can be won, and who secured their liberty by courage and perseverance unequalled in the annals of human warfare.

When I write next I will tell you much of England, as I trust I shall have visited its court (for I saw the monarch when I was in Germany, in his father's electorate of Hanover, and remember being much pleased with his wife,

the Princess Caroline), and one has a little curiosity to see how a man carries himself in a situation full of difficulty, and in a court so highly refined as the present, who had little to distinguish him beyond the courage inherent in his family. Write me, I beseech you, quickly and fully, and despatch your letter by a courier whom I can attach to my person, and with whom you can intrust a considerable sum. Nevertheless, so soon as I am able to travel, I will return, for every hour increases my solicitude; and, whatever may be the event of my attachment, I earnestly desire to be on the spot, not only for my own, but the far dearer sake of my beloved Mary, of whose tender and ever-enduring attachment I have no more doubt than of my own. I am also anxious, to the greatest degree, as to the health of the princess her mother, whom I love and honour as if she were my own, and from whom I now clearly see it would have been wicked and cruel to divide her daughter. Of them and their concerns, in so far as you can learn, inform me fully, dear Ivan. I wish you could also tell me that you were as fondly attached to some fair girl as myself; for then, and then only, could you write as much at random, as foolishly, ingenuously, and sincerely, as your truly affectionate

THEODORE.

Letter No. 2, affixed to the foregoing.

Ivan, dear Ivan, I am positively bewildered! mad!

I have undoubtedly received my deathblow, and I ought to be thankful that such is my destination, for what have I to do with the world since Mary is given to another!

Did I not tell you I would come soon to Russia; that I would personally watch over my invaluable property—the heart of an angel given to me in the first hour when she knew she had a heart, save for the ties of consanguinity? Was not the first blush on her cheek, the first gentle throbbing of a bosom pure as Heaven ever sent on earth, and in its own nature noble as pure, given to me? to me alone, when the brightest eyes, the proudest names of Russia, nay, of all Europe, were bent upon her; and the sons of monarchs vailed to the father they despised, that they might gain favour for the daughter they adored?

I will try to be calm; I will tell you why I am thus agitated, alarmed, distressed—*distressed!* there is not one word in the vast vocabulary of human expression, in the wide circuit of human existence and human suffering, which can offer to your mind any idea of my feelings, my perturbation, my agony; but mark me, Ivan, and remember it to all eternity, even now, in the transport of passion, I say not one word, one echo of a word, which can by possibility throw blame on Mary.

But I will be calm; I will tell you what I have heard; if you can contradict it, raise heaven and earth to do so—fool that I am! it is official: the ambassador, who sent for my papers to you, has given me the information by way of amusing me; all the devils in hell could not have invented a better medium for tormenting me, and this Frenchman talks of amusing—of the—oh! I am mad!

He says "Prince Menzikoff has attained the last step on the ladder of ambition; he has married his daughter, the Princess Mary (mind that, *Mary!* had it not been Mary, he might have given a dozen daughters for me) to the declared heir of the crown. She is very beautiful, he adds, but reduced by a severe illness to such a state of weakness as to excite pity rather than envy when she appeared in public with her consort, who is only twelve years old, and in delicate health. The empress also appeared, but was evidently ill, and my despatches were occasioned by her death."

Compelling myself to transcribe these words has shown me that beyond a doubt they are true; that Mary should suffer severely when I was torn from her, and most probably murdered by drowning, is perfectly in course; and that her father, so soon as she was capable, should compel her to marry, by urging the value such a connexion must be to her family, perfectly in character; indeed, what can any Russian maiden do in such a case? Do they not all obey, and, with few exceptions, all suffer? Are not one half of our female nobility (lovely and accomplished as they are) repining slaves, and the other half—alas! are they not all alike victims? The mother of Mary was one of the few among us who felt the value of a union with the man she loved, and therefore desired it for her daughter; yet was she an unhappy wife, forsaken for ambition, which has now completed its triumph by immolating the child she had imbued with every virtue and every grace. Doubtless the princess lives, or respect for her memory would have delayed these accursed nuptials, which have probably been hurried forward, in order that they might precede the death of the empress. There are, therefore, two women sacrificed—two matchless women, to this man's lust of power; but I will not curse him—no, he is Mary's father! and who among the Dolgourouki (save Theodore) would not have done the same?

Fulfil the wishes I have expressed in my letter, I beseech you, for I am fearfully shaken, and the promise of returning health seems utterly annihilated; send me, therefore, a countryman or two to watch over me, receive my latest orders, and take back my corse to Russia. Attempt not to visit me, dear Ivan, I conjure you, but bestow every kind office of which you are capable on that fair flower who has need of every one's assistance in the thorny path where pride has placed her. You were wont to be a favourite with the froward boy to whom she is consigned as a toy; he may torture, though he cannot comprehend. Oh! Mary, is it thus thy beauty, gentleness, intelligence, and virtue are bestowed? are the warmth and tenderness of thy young heart—thy winning simplicity—thy noble confidence—thy poetic imaginings—the charm and novelty of thy ideas—thy natural eloquence—thy sweet voice, whose very whisper thrills the heart while it captivates the senses—are these meet gifts for a sickly child, the son of a weak and wayward father, as foolish as unfortunate? Fool that I am, would I give her to one that had power to estimate her justly? to woo and win the heart that is still my own? Oh! no, no, *no!*

Ivan, I must not return to Russia now—alas! I must never return. Should I continue to live (which at some moments appears impossible, and at others too probable), I must waste existence as a self-banished exile, for I dare not trust myself to cast one look on the wife of my sovereign. No, sweet Mary, never shall one

new agony be awakened in that virtuous breast by him who would die to preserve thy peace, who must die a thousand deaths every hour of his existence in recalling thy last looks of tearful love; thy holy, yet imperfect resolutions to abide near a dying mother, thy full and innocent reliance on myself—ah! why, why was thy very virtue made thy ruin? ten minutes earlier hadst thou yielded to my entreaties, we had been on that wide waste of waters which would have put a barrier between us and all with power to hurt us: onward, yes, onward would I have led thee, precious dove, even to the deserts of Columbia; I would have fed thee with my own hands, clothed thee by my own labour, built for thee a bower—

This is raving: I know it, Ivan. Could I have protected her from the winds and waves, the dangers and hardships which bowed the fair frame of Amelia Kreuss to the earth like a broken flower! Unhappy that I am, on how many have I inflicted suffering! but she is now well; she is soothed by the cares of wedded love. Kreuss too, generous, devoted, noble-hearted friend, he will be happy soon! I alone am the blighted branch, condemned to wither in wretched loneliness, and die unmourned and unrepresented—to perish as a vapour that is exhaled and forgotten: I, in whose heart life rushes with as warm and benevolent a tide as human nature ever furnished; loving as fervently the sports of early childhood as the enterprise of manhood, and having discarded ambition in order to live on affection, which has been from my cradle a fountain perpetually gushing, as from the mother's nature within me; neither tainted by pride nor chilled by experience, but full of glowing tenderness for the ties of home and of philanthropy for unnumbered dependants. Ivan, is this heart to become one block of ice, one mass of rock, steril, useless, unlovely, dangerous!—nay, God forbid!—may he preserve me from the sin which is frequently attached to suffering!

Forgive me that I thus throw before you the effusions of a broken spirit; may you never know my troubles, Ivan, save as I show them: but I must say adieu; my tears have already rendered the writing illegible.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

And fast, *fast* fell the tears of Mary as her dim eyes pursued this transcript of her Theodore's feelings, and her efforts to subdue the passion of grief which rose with recollection only rendered her sobbings the more violent, and both Alexander and Brukenthal hastened to her assistance. The latter took from her hands the paper saturated by the tears which had mingled with those of Theodore, and found that her mental agitation had produced fever, and rendered her seriously unwell. When, therefore, her exhausted agony permitted speech, he entreated her to give the remainder of the letters into his charge, until she should be able to hear or read them, seeing farther effort to that purpose would render her too ill for any prescription on his part to be beneficial.

"You are right, Father Brukenthal, and I promise to rest from a task my eyes forbid me to continue; but place them, I beseech you, beneath my pillow, for Ivan gives them into my hands *only*, and I will not deceive him, though my sense of his past cruelty increases every moment."

"You think Theodore still lives, my daughter?"

"How can I doubt it, knowing as I do how much of misery the young can live through, and Theodore is not twenty-six till the 4th of April. I have kept his birthday in my heart even here, as I also held the day of his death by fasting and prayer."

"My poor child! my poor child!" exclaimed Brukenthal, as the tears gushed from his eyes, and he inwardly vowed to devote himself, with God's mercy, to the deliverance of a young creature who had suffered so long, so patiently, and, for the sake of others, even cheerfully, but in whose troubled countenance he now read that increase of sorrow which suspense and anxiety never fail to create. He dared not ask the question which hung upon his lips, "Is Theodore married?" yet there had been something in the look and manner of Ivan which had awakened the belief that he either was so, or likely to be, and he had that morning declared again "that he had not read the half of Theodore's last letter, though it would doubtless mention the most material passage of his life." The good man felt extreme anxiety on this point; for, as Mary had long been numbered with the dead, he thought it very possible that Theodore; blessed with returning health, and that restoration of spirits which the bereaved believe to be impossible, but the experienced daily witness, might have been led to make a second and even a happy choice. He earnestly desired to prepare her mind for such a circumstance before she read farther, but for the present administered a sleeping draught, and after a few words of prayer for resignation to the Divine will, left her to repose.

In the course of that day Ivan was removed by the village guardian, who had procured him a lodging, being accompanied by Alexander, who placed him on their only horse, which he led with great care; for all remains of anger had vanished when he learned that Mary was in possession of the packet she desired, and on parting with Ivan he assured him "that it should soon be returned, and assuredly without any one casting an eye over the contents save his sister."

"She will not show them to you, I am certain; you are too young, happily too clear of passion and its enthralments, to be made the spectator of poor Theodore's weakness. Mary loves both you and Theodore too well to bring you together through such a medium. Love is not an acquaintance for the desert."

"Nevertheless, such an acquaintance may come uninvited."

"What can you mean, Alexander? *You* cannot love—you are too happy."

"I love my sisters as well as ever man loved woman; I would go out the roughest day that ever blew in Siberia, with the wolves howling in my ears, and the hyena skulking on my trail, to get a bird for Mary when I see her appetite fail; ay, or to find a warm fur to wrap round my little Catherine's throat: have I not broken ice when—"

"I grant all that, for your courage is equal to your father's, which was a property I always

allowed him; but *your* love is as valuable in the desert, as that love I deprecated would be mischievous. You do not comprehend me."

"Yes I do, perfectly well; and I answer, *marrying love* visits the desert at times, for the young Boyar Alexovitch loves Mary, and would gladly share his future sovereignty with her, for his father gives full consent, and he is rich and powerful. I grieve that she cannot love him in return, but I will never say so, lest it might give her pain, or in any way influence her; within the cottage I never allow myself to mention his name."

"What is the brute like? I mean, is he a Siberian bear or a blue fox?"

"You mean to ask, is he ugly or handsome; to which I reply, he is not only handsome, but elegant, yet he has not one spark of the fox in his composition; the snows around us are not more free from guile and cunning than Alexovitch; he is generous, and brave, and pious—why do you smile?—he manages his horse like a Tatar or an Arab; he throws the jerreed as well as a Circassian; indeed, his mother was one, and, like her, he is gentle and beautiful. You are yourself, count, of a fine height, and have something dignified about your head, and are fairer than him (but that goes for nothing in a man), but his eye is far brighter than yours; to be sure it is unfair to compare you now you are so weak, and in sheepskins also. True, Alexovitch wears them too, but he covers them with a booshe worth a thousand crowns, and has a cap of skins and feathers such as I never saw in Petersburgh."

"And Mary can resist both the cap and the eyes beneath it?"

"She is not a girl to value external advantages of any kind, even if her heart were disengaged, which it is not, as you are well aware. Nevertheless, I may be allowed to regret the circumstance, because the young Boyar would be a brother I could not only take into my very heart, but who is suited to my taste also. He has never been at court; there are no crocodile tears or hyena whining in his composition; his smile is as honest as the sunshine in June; and he gives you a lift as freely as if his limbs grew for your use rather than his own. The poor adore him, for he stands between them and all evil, whether they want food for their families, or rent for his father; and I have seen him leap a chasm that would fright you, to succour a lamb that was dropped from the claws of a soaring eagle."

"He is a fine fellow, undoubtedly: can I not make his acquaintance?"

"That depends on Father Brukenthal's opinion."

"Not less on mine," said the keeper, who was walking at some distance, but now turned sharply towards them. "I prohibit all acquaintance during the term prescribed by the government, in which no indulgence is allowed to my prisoner, Count Ivan Dolgourouki. You are well aware that your humanity, Alexander Menzikoff, has effected a great encroachment on my orders already, and must be sensible that only by performing my duty more strictly can the prisoner himself escape a severer sentence. I don't like to remind you of the mines."

Both parties shuddered, and, after shaking hands, parted in silence, the younger not only pitying Ivan (who was still an invalid, and would, he well knew, find nowhere the kind attentions, the cleanliness, or the plenty of his own cottage), but himself also for the loss of his society. "It is a pity he has been so wicked in his ambition, and especially in his cruelty to us, for he is a pleasant companion; he has read much and seen much; he has wit, and that playfulness which I have heard attributed to some of our visitants long since, but never witnessed before. One would spend the winter better if shut up with him than with dear Alexovitch, perhaps, for he knows nothing of either men or books—he looks even to me for knowledge."

On Alexander approaching his cottage, he saw a sledge at the door, and the very person he was thinking of in the act of entering, his father having preceded him. They came so soon as the weather allowed to make kind inquiries, bring various little presents, and learn if the road was practicable for Sabbath worship, which they found the case. It was a circumstance on which Brukenthal and the Boyar felicitated each other sincerely, but the knowledge of Mary's indisposition cast a shade on all.

"The light of your dwelling is darkened indeed without her," said the Boyar, "but methinks the Boyarina could relume it for you; is it possible for her to take the place of Alexovitch, and return with me? I would leave him as an hostage for our bringing her back in safety, and the young men could go out together in the day, and at eventide enjoy your society."

"Ah, my lord, you forget the dimensions of our cottage; we have no serf save Peter, and he is always with the cattle."

"It will teach me the usages of a camp, father," said the young man, gayly, "and you, sir, will be to me not less a spiritual instructer than a commanding officer. I am certain my mother will cure the empress, and I should like to go out with Menzikoff better than anything on earth."

The eyes of Alexander had shone with delight as he heard the proposal, but his countenance soon became overcast, and he related to them what the guardian had said that morning, together with the circumstances of Ivan's late residence among them. The Boyar blamed them for warming "the frozen snake;" but his own generous nature could not long resist the pleadings of the youth, nor the precepts of Christian charity, as delivered by Brukenthal; but he agreed with the latter that no liberties must be taken at the present moment unsanctioned by the person in question, saying, "government has long arms, and eyes that see over the earth."

"If the eyes of our present empress had not been blinded by false report, her arms would not, could not, have been slow to save the family within these walls," said Brukenthal, "for on not one does the shadow of offence rest, though not one is free. I only can go, as I came, voluntarily, and, having no secrets with you, noble Boyar, or your son, whom I love, and whose welfare I seek, I profess to you an intention of setting out for Russia next week, for the express purpose of seeking the nobleman to whom Mary is attached, and whose existence we have ascertained through our late guest, in order that he may exert his powerful influence on the behalf of these oppressed ones."

"He is found! he lives! Remember, prince, I never thought him dead—I never allowed you

to hope that the empress would listen to another suiter."

"You did not, Father Brukenthal; but still—I thought—I hoped—"

The young men went out together, and Brukenthal told the Boyar that Ivan had confessed raising a report of the death of all the family; and although it was known that regular returns of the prisoners were sent back twice a year, there was a great probability that such returns might be those of criminals condemned by the judges only, as being returned when troops of those unhappy convicts were conveyed, and might, or might not, include the class condemned by the fiat of the sovereign. "At all events, I will go forth, and, at least, proclaim the truth to the Czarina. She is a woman, and must feel for her own sex; she has been the friend of Mary, and must know her innocence and her virtue."

At this moment Alexovitch hastily re-entered the cottage, and, having apparently shaken off the surprise and disappointment he had received by the admission of a new and fascinating object of desire, he immediately addressed his father in the most earnest manner:

"When can I go into the world, dear father, to so much advantage as now, when I can accompany so good a guardian as Mr. Brunkenthal, to whom also I can, in return, be useful? You have always said that I should see the new city, and Count Woronzow has promised to take me by the hand whenever you should send me. When can I go better than now, in the beginning of a new reign, when the stir and bustle of armies and of pageants are afloat? You have never intended me to live and die amid the snow, unknowing and unknown; it was not thus you passed your own youth, father, and whom can I imitate better than you?"

It might be said, as the poet sung a few years later,

> "Here ceased the youth, but still his speaking eye
> Express'd the sacred wishes of his heart;"

for never did one more eloquent gaze into the listening orbs of a proud but anxious parent. That Brukenthal, not only a pious priest, but a proved good friend and an old soldier, who, in withdrawing from the world, had not, therefore, forgotten its demands, or become incapable of its manners (seeing that he was not less courteous than manly), was invaluable as a guide, was indeed undeniable, and that such a one could ever again be hoped for in that desolate country was not less so. As it was also made much more clear to the Boyar that Mary would never marry his son than it had appeared before, he felt a desire to give that which he could bestow in lieu of that he could not; nor could he gaze on his son, in the beauty and strength of early manhood, and educated according to his own ideas of manly accomplishments beyond most of those with whom he had formerly mingled, without feeling that it was a duty he owed both to the world and the young man to enable them to meet. But to part with him, to trust one so well-disposed, so totally ignorant, in a world he had accustomed himself to consider even worse than it is, since few besides the bad emerged from it hither, rendered the trial an arduous one. The Boyar turned from the pleading looks of his son to scan the countenance of his revered friend.

Brukenthal understood the appeal; but so desirable was the scheme to himself, who naturally dreaded the long and awful task before him (more especially parting with the children of his heart), that he hesitated to answer, lest his own secret wishes should interfere with his honest opinion. Alexovitch mistook the cause of his hesitation, and said eagerly,

"Dear sir, I will be no trouble to you. I am quick and hasty, it is true, but I am not intractable; my mother will tell you that a thread will guide me—and I so reverence you!"

"I fear you not, my dear young friend, though you give yourself a bad character for one entering a world full of temptations. I trust you will well know in whose hands the thread lies that is to guide you."

"In yours—yours only; if you are willing to take me, I promise to abide your counsel in all things, and I am not a thing of pliabilities—no man shall make me forfeit my word. I may be led by love, but, I trust, not drawn by cunning."

"I trust you, Alexovitch, as I would trust Alexander, because I believe that you would act as those do who know the eye of God is upon them, and who, believing in his revealed word, from time to time seek in the blessed book for the instruction all human weakness requires. Were you a cold, conceited, self-dependant youth, I would not take you from the parental roof to launch you on the smiling but fickle sea of life—no, not for the empire of all the Russias. But I repeat, I have no fear for you beyond that which should always accompany due solicitude; nevertheless, decide on nothing till you have conversed with your mother; she is a good and sensible woman—moreover, a Christian on conviction; honour and obey her, even as you obey your father."

Little as this doctrine might have been relished in Russia, it was eminently welcome to those who received it; for the Boyar, conscious, perhaps, that his marriage had been scarcely consistent with his profession at the time it took place, had long felt deference for the superior powers of his wife's mind, not less than entire love for her person, and he had for more than twenty years witnessed the beautiful consistency of her character as a Christian, ever since the period when she was baptized into that faith. He therefore readily agreed that the decision of this important question should depend on her, and be soon communicated to the family; but he did not depart without adding that, under any circumstances, the journey of Brukenthal should be assisted by every means in his power, and that, in order to secure secrecy, he would have him set off from his mansion, in which case he would have no need to pass through Berenzof, nor fall into the common route before reaching Nishnei Novogorod.

Alexovitch departed in high spirits, for he felt assured that his mother, tender and gentle as was her nature, and devoted as she had ever been to him, would not oppose his wishes; and, as he did not behold her who had captivated his youthful fancy, he was the better able to enjoy those dreams of the future which are, perhaps, the best realities of life.

Far different were the sensations of Alexander: he felt as if the very ground on which he stood were moved from beneath his feet: to lose at once the father he venerated, the friend he loved, was altogether beyond his strength to

sustain, especially when Mary was sick and languishing, unable to soothe and advise; and the one human being to whom he might reveal his feelings was the one from whom it was judged right to keep their movements secret. Ivan appeared to him at this time as an impersonation of the spirit of evil—subtle, insinuating, designing, and pleasing. How could he escape the temptations such a one might present, when he had neither the venerable wisdom of Brukenthal to warn him, nor the lively intercourse of Alexovitch to divert him? Might not Mary herself become charmed with their insinuating companion, when not another remained to whom she could commit her passing thoughts, or reveal her wishes? Could he maintain the guarded reserve, the constant prudence an intercourse with Ivan required in Brukenthal's opinion, when Brukenthal himself had ceased to assist him? Look as he would, the prospect before him was cheerless to very misery, and the prospect of good arising from the journey of his venerated friend far too distant to awaken hope, much less to foster confidence.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

So soon as Brukenthal thought Mary capable of hearing the change he meditated, he related all that had passed, declaring that he believed his own personal exertions could alone give them a chance for restoration to their country, and counteract the evil of Ivan Dolgourouki's false report as to their death.

The bare idea of losing the good man she loved so tenderly, and relied on so entirely, alarmed her exceedingly in the first instance; yet she sincerely desired that he should take the journey, and felt much consolation in the hope that Alexovitch would accompany him, as that included accommodation of every kind; and when she looked at the snow-white hair and the deep indentations which climate and sorrow had marked on his venerable countenance, it seemed utterly impossible to her to part with him under any other circumstances.

"You will seek Theodore wherever he may be found, Father Brukenthal: true, we have no money, but Alexander has many valuable skins, which are of light weight and easy conveyance; and I have diamonds, you know, of great value. If we are fated to die in the wilderness, it would be to me a consolation to know you were honoured and rich among your people, and blessed with the means of helping the poor of your flock."

"I will take only that jewel which was your dear mother's; your memory will not be the less faithful to her virtues for parting with that, and it cannot be difficult to dispose of it to supply my wants. That Prince Theodore Dolgourouki will rejoice in knowing you are living, and that he will use any interest he may have to assist me, I cannot doubt; but, from the fate of Ivan, I am led to suppose all his family are under ban, and greatly should I dread drawing him into difficulties."

"Go not near him; save *him*, father, whatever you do else; and yet even here his presence would make your poor Mary happy."

"You are mistaken, Mary; it would increase your sufferings tenfold, even if you were his wife, which, alas! perhaps, is now become impossible. You must summon courage to read the remainder of his letters, for they may reveal much that is necessary to be known: remember, he believes you dead."

A bright blush for a moment flushed the countenance of Mary, and as quickly receded; she felt indignant, but yet afraid; for surely the good father knew the character of his own sex better than she did, and he might have received from Ivan some intimation that awoke suspicion. Such terrible events had happened since the time of their parting, so slowly does time pass in the long, *long* winters of Siberia, that a life seemed to have gone over them both, and fully justified even the marriage of Theodore with another, in the judgment of Mary, though her heart refused to acknowledge it. After a considerable pause, she said,

"I will read my remaining letters; I will conquer my feelings better than before. If I should find that he is—that is, if it appears probable Theodore may at this time—"

"Be married, Mary?"

"Yes, should it be so, trouble yourself no farther, seeing there would be an additional reason for protecting him from jealousy as regards the government; and it would be better he should continue to believe me dead; besides, he is not in Russia, Father. Alas! all is still dark before me and around me; and the gleam of light communicated by Ivan has rendered all more gloomy."

"I go expressly to brighten it, and you must not allow yourself, after enduring so much so well, to sink even under a state of suspense, which is generally found more trying than actual sorrow. No, Mary; you must still struggle as a Christian woman, patiently but bravely; for poor Alexander will not only be left without any other comfort, but in some sort be exposed to temptation daily. You must guard him even here as if he were in the world, for we have a serpent in the wilderness."

"If you forbid him to associate with Ivan, he will obey you."

"Such obedience would be painful, and at length intolerable; I would not subject him to it, for he must have society, nor should it be denied to you. Ivan has great talents, and, at present, great suffering. I cannot forbid you to relieve one and to benefit by the other; but guard, I beseech you, the pure mind of your brother from the effects of his plausibility, his deceit, the proud wishes he may kindle in the heart of your brother; for, remember, amiable as he is, yet Alexander is the son of Menzikoff."

"Alas! to what could the most ambitious aspire in Siberia?"

"I am looking to the time of his return—looking also to the necessity of giving your heart and mind full employment, since even under the happiest auspices many wearisome months must pass before my mission can be effective. God forbid that your bosom should nourish hatred towards your enemy! but you must remember the deed which has prevented the Czarina's kindness in order to account for her delay."

"You have shown me my duty, dear Father Brukenthal, and I will try to perform it; but my heart is very heavy, and I am weak as a child. When you are gone, I wish to have a woman with me, but Aishey is married, and in every family they are beasts of burden: there is none to spare."

"I will instantly set out to find one, and if unsuccessful here, the good Boyar will help us from his village or his dwelling. Cheer up, my child; though I am past the age for trusting presentiments and listening to vain hopes, my heart whispers that all will finally succeed to our wishes."

The good man set out on his errand, and Mary rose and descended, to the joy of the poor child, who fondly danced around her, pointing out the many domestic offices in which she had assisted her brother or Peter, who were now engaged in the barn. Mary praised her, kissed her, and gave her a lesson to study in the manner Alexander had prepared it; and then, after looking up for strength to meet whatever of trial was before her, she placed herself by the little window (for it was now midday), and, with trembling resolution, drew forth the third letter of Theodore, though she rather desired to dwell again on those effusions of his love and sorrow which had overpowered, yet, in one sense, consoled her.

No. 3. *Theodore to Ivan Dolgourouki.*

Portsmouth, February, 1728.

I write, dear Ivan, to tell you I am on the point of leaving England for Lisbon, and entreating you to forward by letter, the servants, who are at this very time, I doubt not, on their road to me, by your directions. I have myself left full instructions that they may follow me; for, as you may suppose, I want the money they will bring, and still more the letters you will write me. I want also the face of a countryman, the sound of my native tongue; though I have the facility of a Russ in acquiring other languages, I do not the less yearn after my own.

This sensation is felt the stronger, because I do not think I shall ever have the courage to visit the land of my birth again, Ivan; but I will try to tell you what has become of me since I wrote you last, after receiving that terrible news, which has since been fully confirmed, and which, for a period, again threw me on a bed of sickness, from which I should, probably, not have arisen if I had not opened my heart, in all its bleeding misery, to my dear young friend Herbert, who was thus made a second time, to me, the medium of restoration, if that can be called so when a man returns to the world, like Samson, shorn of his locks, and henceforth consigned to an existence which is not life—a being that neither enjoys nor communicates the good which belongs to his age, his qualities, and his station.

Before, however, I had left my chamber, my young friend was summoned to his duty: for here the sons of the highest, when once engaged in the navy, of which you have heard so much (since it was the envy of our great emperor), are compelled to yield immediate obedience. I found, however, when I rejoined the family, that he had communicated the cause of my relapse to his parents; for, although not a word was uttered which could wound the most fastidious delicacy, the attentions of the countess were so truly maternal, and partook so much of that sympathizing tenderness peculiar to woman, and the earl applied his mode of relief so expressly to what might be termed stirring up the man within me, that I neither doubted their knowledge of my condition, nor shrunk from it; and the lady soon became the confidante of my every feeling.

Agreeably to their advice, I rode frequently on horseback, accompanying a lovely girl, the orphan niece of Lady Partinscale, who was also an invalid, being afflicted with the disease, common in this country, which they term decline. So soon as I was able, the earl resolutely took me from what he termed the care of women, and introduced me at court, and to many of his most distinguished friends. I visited all public places of resort, and in the theatres actually forgot myself at times, and lived through the imaginary scene before me with the emotions I had once enjoyed. Nothing in their buildings pleased me so much as their churches, and with the ancient Abbey of Westminster I was absolutely entranced; also with the Hall in its neighbourhood, built by one of their first Norman kings. I was also introduced to their greatest living poets, Pope and Young, who have secured eternal fame in the very prime of life. Newton, their great philosopher, and who will probably be deemed, by posterity, the very greatest any country has produced, died just before it was my lot to visit England; and so did Addison, whom they account a writer of extraordinary elegance and pure morality. Swift I did see; he is a priest, but a severe satirist; a great dabbler in political affairs; unamiable as a man, and coarse as a companion, but a sincere patriot, being an Irishman, which, you know, means a different character from an Englishman, many from this country being found in our own army, and perhaps all others in Europe.

I found great interest in attending their Houses of Parliament, and was particularly struck with their bench of bishops, remembering what I heard in Germany respecting the firmness with which this class resisted a king who sought to change the religion of his country, and make himself as absolute as our Czars; there is something peculiarly striking in the firmness and grandeur of a mind which is accustomed to the profession of meekness. I believe those are all dead who were thus condemned to imprisonment, but I honoured their memory in their representatives. I was too late to see their great warrior Marlborough, but I was introduced to his widow, who is still a fine woman, in whose bold, bright eye may be read a more commanding spirit than a Russ would like in any but his empress.

Why did I write that word? I thought I had schooled myself so well, that in no possible guise should that fair vision rise before me; it is, perhaps, sin to name, and certainly sorrow to remember. However, it has arisen; and kings, priests, warriors, poets, orators, are all lost in confusion. I can write no more of the country, but I may tell you more of this family, for they are with me and around me; and their hospitality and friendship have bound me to them for life. Would that there was no other tie, no other tendril, clinging so gently, yet winding so closely round a withered stem!

I told you that the Earl of Partinscale had a large family; his eldest son is now on his travels, for every Englishman of fashion makes what is called the grand tour. The second is with his regiment; the third, as I have said, in the navy; but there are, besides, three sweet girls, pursuing their education, and two boys in the nursery. The niece, to whom the earl is guardian (Lady Amabel Seatown), lost both her pa-

rents so early that her affections own no other claim than these kind relatives; and, as the earl is not rich (being, like many others, a sufferer from the loyalty of his grandfather), a portion of his niece's wealth was left by her father in order to provide for her minority; notwithstanding, I understand her fortune is enormously augmented, and, of course, her hand sought by the highest in the land. She had not, however, been introduced at court when I arrived, but was soon after, when I was struck with her beauty, but, at the same time, with her extreme tenuity, and could not help comparing her form to that of Mary, much to the advantage of the latter. Soon afterward arrived that shock, which, while it recalled memories of both love and beauty to my mind with a vividness unknown before, yet divorced me from them, as it appeared, forever.

It seems (as I afterward learned) that, at the time when this young creature was presented to her sovereign, she caught a severe cold from exposure to the air, so that, when we again met, both were invalids, both recommended to the same diet, the same gentle exercise, when the sun permitted us to move, and the same quiet amusements within during those winter evenings when the earl was engaged with attendance in the Parliament, and the countess with those parties unavoidable to her station. I was aware that Amabel knew how I was situated, for she evidently pitied the sorrows of my heart as much or more than I grieved to see so fair a flower withering before my eyes, and too often reading in her situation the probable fate of my own drooping, perhaps dying Mary. Such emotions in her unhappily produced a tenderer sentiment, of which I could not fail to be sensible, because one young, ingenuous maiden's heart had been opened already to my view; and I hastened, therefore, to avert all evil from such a preference of a man whose heart was incapable of returning it, by feigning a desire to see more of the country; and, accordingly, I have visited the manufacturing towns, the seaports, and whatever this small but populous and most intelligent beehive of humanity presents, and should have remained absent till the arrival of your letters, at least, if I had not been recalled in the most urgent manner by the earl himself a week ago.

It appeared that Lady Amabel was much worse, and had been positively ordered by her physician to hasten to a warmer climate before the arrival of March, which, in this country, as in our own, is considered the most trying month in the year to delicate constitutions. The urgency of her case, the sense of her weakness, the knowledge of my unhappy freedom from actual ties, conspired to give an unnatural courage to the suffering girl, and in an agony, which greatly increased her symptoms, she confessed to her aunt the passion I had unhappily as unintentionally inspired, and declared "no power on earth should induce her to quit the country, unless accompanied by me."

In relating this, the earl candidly told me "that it had long been the hope, as it was the fondest wish of his heart, that his son should have been the chosen of his cousin," and, but for my arrival in their family, he could scarcely doubt such would have been the case, seeing she had in childhood showed a marked affection for him, which, both from person and disposition, he was calculated to improve. "However," added he, "that is all over now; a very few months will, I fear, decide the future fate of poor Amabel, and no consideration of a selfish nature shall interfere with the happiness it is possible she may attain by marrying the man she has so decidedly chosen."

I hesitated not a moment in assuring him that I never wished to marry; that I had secret but decided reasons for at least two years abstaining from any such engagement (you, Ivan, will guess what they must be who know the constitution of the Czar); and I assured him that my late journey had been taken purely to rid his house of a dangerous, but not insidious visitant. For this he had already given me credit, and, after having had much conversation with his niece, whom he unquestionably loves with parental tenderness, he has at length induced me to accompany them all to Lisbon, my own remaining delicacy of health offering a sufficient reason for my visit to this favoured climate, and, at the same time, gratifying the delicacy of Amabel, and her earnest desire to secure my society.

To deny, and thereby to facilitate the progress of this fair and trusting creature's disease, is utterly impossible to one who has suffered himself, as I have done, from bitter disappointment in blighted love, yet I am well aware very distressing consequences may arise from my compliance. May God direct and guide me in this path through troubled waters! It is plain that, one way or other, sorrow is before me. I must either give pain or receive it; be it, then, my first great care not to merit it, either by a firmness cruel to others, or a pliability fatal to myself.

Surely, surely, Baziltch or some one will follow me without loss of time, for my pecuniary obligations have become distressing from my journey and my sickness, and I need not tell you the sense of them destroys a man's independence to his own perception, however generous may be the hand that supplies him. Our own ambassador, and after him the earl, has lent me sums which, though considerable, are far below my income (which I learned in Germany to consider the proper boundary of my expenditure, a piece of knowledge seldom attained by the Russian nobility), but which I shall feel a burden till I can repay. This troubles me the more, because, to say the truth, during my journey I gave freely to the charities supported by public contribution, and the artisans who merited recompense for their talents and industry; and the earl being, though liberal, a prudent man, maintaining high rank with bounded income, may think me what I am not—nay, he may suspect me even of desiring that which I affected to fly from. Deliver me from this, dear Ivan, by sending an adequate sum direct to Lisbon.

I am summoned to the vessel: Amabel herself stands by my chair. Adieu, adieu! praise me for my forbearance, but write of her, *her only*; so will you be indeed the friend of your still anxious, bereaved, dispossessed

THEODORE.

When Mary had read this letter, and pressed her lips to "the one loved name" a thousand times, she felt that it would be far, *far* better she should know no more; but the thing was

impossible; life and death were before her, and she rushed forward to ascertain the worst or the best, distantly as she was placed from the scene of action.

No. 4. Theodore to Ivan Dolgourouki.

Lisbon, March, 1728.

Dear Ivan,

We are safely arrived at this ancient city, and to me the voyage has been so beneficial, that I can once more truly say *I am well*, and with that health I experience some return of my usual spirits, and a kind of hope plays, like a lambent flame, on the leaden surface of my cold heart, as if to cheer what it is unequal to warm. I should, however, if my tenderest pity were not perpetually taxed for poor Amabel, be probably much better, for the novelty of all around would exceedingly amuse me, as the bravery and enterprise of this little kingdom has much that is captivating in history, and, so far as I have seen, the surface is full of beauty and magnificence. We are about to remove to Cintra, for which the dear invalid has a great desire, insisting that it will remove every vestige of her disorder, and there are certainly times when she looks so well, I am ready to believe her prognostications; but the countess, and even the English physician who accompanied us hither, tell me that her hopes are a part of her disease, which at once deludes and destroys.

How strange a mystery is death! it flies the wretch that sues for a conclusion to his sorrow, his poverty, or his toil, and refuses the criminal, whose removal would be a relief to his species, to fasten on the innocent and fair, the wealthy, the beloved, and the young! Many of these favoured yet stricken ones are assembled here; and last night we had a little party of both sexes, who met to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of Lady Amabel, whose presence at once charmed the heart and rent it. All were handsome, several highly accomplished; the bloom of beauty sat on their youthful cheeks, a more than earthly radiance beamed from their eyes; but their forms were fragile and stooping; and in their laugh—for they were gay, and innocent, and sanguine—there was the hollow whisper of the tomb.

I have been most agreeably interrupted by a letter from Baziltch, who has arrived in the Tagus, and, finding he must remain all night at Belem, forwarded by the hands of an English gentleman that which he considered of most consequence, the money I so long have needed, and which will make me perfectly comfortable on that score. Thank you for this care, dear Ivan; but I would the honest fellow had sent me your letters; probably you told him to give them only to my own hands, and men of his class are always literal in their interpretations. Be it my first care to see the earl, who himself received the package.

Ivan, I am overwhelmed with astonishment and dismay. Sir Henry Selwyn told Lord Partinscale that Prince Menzikoff was banished to Siberia, and my servant brought the news to England, having received it while lying off Cronstadt. He added, "in another week all Europe will ring with it, and execrate all who have been concerned in it."

And well may they thus contemn an award which nothing but treason on his part could justify; and what treason can one suppose he could contrive, whose daughter shares the throne of his sovereign, that sovereign being a boy, whom his constant and loving guardianship has preserved during his sickly infancy? It is evident that no change in the state of the crown could be beneficial to him, and the continuance might, seeing it gave him an opportunity of making another boy-marriage, by giving his son to one of Catherine's daughters, and we are certain he had sufficient ambition to aim at such a union, and thus become the ancestor of future sovereigns. He had far too good an understanding to desire the *name* of Czar for himself, seeing he has held the *power* ever since the death of Peter. I would not believe even himself, had he confessed it on the rack, and to the rack he would have been sentenced in such a case, we are all certain.

Menzikoff in Siberia is a blot on Russia, which all her snows will fail to cover. For Heaven's sake, Ivan, exert yourself to remove it! call on all our friends, connexions, even serfs, to assist you. In having been our enemy, your desire for his recall will at once prove the generosity of your nature and the truth of your patriotism. The hatred you indulged in the day of his power must become pity in that of his misfortunes, and between the two you will learn to estimate and judge of him truly, to take his faults of pride and ambition along with his temptations, and place his merits beside his errors. Where is the man on whom fortune showered so much in the very heyday of youth, who would not have been spoiled by her indulgence, and therefore asked for more; and how could he doubt his own capacity to rule mankind, and render grandeur the means of public benefit, who had been invested with it by the hand of the most extraordinary sovereign that ever swayed a sceptre? It is a fine thing, Ivan, to be descended from a long line of princes, the ancient Boyars of the land, who owe the origin of their greatness to such remote antiquity, we know not how it came; and it is natural that you and I, to whom nature has been not less liberal than fortune, should be proud of our high position. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that God confers, as with his own finger, a greatness infinitely superior to the claims of blood, or wealth, or beauty; on some men he bestows genius, his own title-deeds for immortal fame.

Peter had himself this gift, and the intuitive knowledge it bestowed enabled him to discover it in the untaught *pie-boy*, who, when the page of learning was once opened to his eager eyes, grasped its stores by the devotion of a student, yet, having accomplished that which he had the wisdom to know sufficed for active life, resigned the volume he loved for the sword he envied, and, through regular gradations, became a general at nineteen, and such a general! well might Peter set him over the city *he* planned, but which Menzikoff raised, the port and navy he desired, but Menzikoff brought to bear; but why trace his earliest deeds to you, who know them better than myself?

While in England, and even here, I have conversed much with the ambassadors from various courts, many of whom know him well, and universally acknowledge his talents, and the service he rendered his country as a diplomatist. It is common for all to praise the administration

of the late empress; *we* well know, Ivan, whose it was. Though he might send some whose satire galled him to Siberia, how many did he recall whom Peter in his caprice had sent there? who relieved the people from their most oppressive tax? rewarded architects and artificers, protected merchandise, raised schools for the poor, gave refinement to the rich, and—

That word refinement checks my colloquy, for it brings the princess, his tender, pious, and most loving wife, before me. How will she bear the separation? Be not surprised if I should be in Russia almost as soon as this letter, for the express purpose of consoling her, and aiding you and all else who are capable of touching the heart of our young emperor, to procure her husband's recall. Yet how can I leave the sweet girl who seems to derive her daily existence from my presence? or how dare to behold Mary at a time when her sorrows will render her more endearing than ever? Besides, what hope have I, or you, or any human being, of moving that heart which she has failed to soften? How is it possible that so much firmness can dwell with so much weakness? But Amabel sends for me, and, as I have not seen her to-day, I must obey her wishes.

Baziltch has arrived, and given me your letters, but I cannot reply, for I cannot even read them; he has made me more wretched, more mad than ever, and but for a faint, *faint* hope that his information is incorrect (since it was received after leaving the Neva), I should be utterly overwhelmed with despair.

He tells me, "Menzikoff and all his family are banished to Siberia; that the sentenceo vertook them on their route to Plescoff, and included the empress expressly, though she was scarcely recovered from the smallpox, which she had caught from the emperor," and adds, "that from his own knowledge Princess Menzikoff was far too ill to travel anywhere with safety."

O God! what are racks and tortures compared to those evils to which these delicate, suffering, and most guiltless victims are exposed? I can only take refuge in the hope of their deaths. Yes, the mother and her offspring will all perish; bitter grief, piercing cold, severe hunger, the loathings and the terrors which belong to luxurious habits, and new situations, all will contribute to this end. Mary will pity all, labour for all, and be the last to perish, upheld by her faith in God, and her love to her kindred; but soon must she also lay her pale cheek on her father's bosom, and die in his arms.

That father, alas! he is strong to suffer; he may live, he may return, but the messenger of mercy will be too late to save the rest. They will bring him back with the weight of a hundred winters stamped on his furrowed brow—the sense of more sorrow concentred on his heart than thousands sustain. Perhaps they will bring back a suffering idiot, on whom his enemies may gaze with horror, and his friends weep a deluge of unnoticed tears.

My sorrow, my abstraction, have greatly affected the sympathizing invalid. I write this portion of my letter from Cintra, the most beautiful, romantic scene to be found in Europe. But what are trees, and rocks, and palaces to him whose soul is transported to that "hell on earth," from the name of which every Russ shrinks from his very cradle! Mary in Siberia! —O God! where sleep thy thunders—

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I have told all to Amabel; for it was better she should know the source of my sorrow, than be grieved by my unavoidable retirement and estrangement. She would fain comfort me by an assurance that the banishment of Menzikoff is only a temporary correction, a check given to his overweening haughtiness, and cannot be intended as an abiding punishment, because partaken by his innocent family. The earl unites in this opinion, and I would gladly believe him right; perhaps even now they may be retracing their steps; the repentant husband (whom Baziltch describes as being much like Lady Amabel in his disorder) has already recalled the empress to his throne and his heart: but can even her angelic nature forgive this cruel experiment on her feelings, this injury to her faultless mother? No, Peter, she will be lost to you forever!

You tell me little beyond her having been very kind to the Czar as a nurse, and that, although very pale, she retained that beauty which, in her husband's eyes, was indispensable. It is well; but to me the casket, if defaced, would still have contained the jewel of my soul.

I have left the family, that I might roam over the hills, and hide me in the thickets, as the restlessness of sorrow prompts; but I am so importuned to return, that perhaps I may. Should this awful journey indeed turn out the freak of temporary caprice, as they almost persuade me to believe, may it prove to the perpetrator a perpetual source of sorrow and remorse, an imbodied and abiding evil. But no; a Dolgourouki will not curse his sovereign, nor, in fact, do I hold it as the deed of the Czar.

Doubtless you have letters on the road for me, which reveal the whole of this terrible transaction. Oh! that you may be able to convey somewhat of an antidote, and allay the fever that burns in my veins, and at once threatens me again with a bed of sickness, and prompts me to hasten home. Pity me, dear Ivan, and pardon me, if I urge you to aught beyond your power, or fail to write with due respect. I am no longer myself, but I believe I still love you, thank you, and confide in you. THEODORE.

Pau, in France, June, 1728.

Dear Ivan,

Your despatches have not come to hand, and I cannot believe you would neglect them. I have left Baziltch at Lisbon to ensure them, and Lord Partinscale will, I am certain, take care of any that may go to England, whither his affairs have called him; and I am now conducting Amabel and the countess to the south of France, the heats of Cintra becoming too great for the invalid, who seems only capable of existence while changing the air by slow travelling. Here we expect to be met by her cousin, Lord Borrowdale; and, as he is coming from Germany, it is possible he may have heard much later news of the proceedings in Russia than have reached me. The alternations of hopes and fears under which I suffer have again shaken my health severely, as you may suppose; but the mind is the seat of suffering; and it is not now affected, as formerly, by the loss of blood, when its memory faded, and its powers were quiescent. No, my imagination was never

so vivid as now, my recollections so numerous and faithful; the former perpetually conjures up scenes of suffering in Siberia, all poured on the head of one whom the latter place before my eyes in all her sweetness ten—

The young nobleman is arrived—how tumultuously every pulse in my body is beating! This is not to be endured; I must break in upon the caresses of a mother—I must know my fate. If he can tell me nothing, even in spite of Amabel's entreaties I must proceed to Russia, and learn the truth; nor shall all the snows of Siberia stay me if Mary lives and—

The paper on which these lines were written was again marked by the tears of the writer, and was so injured as to prove his agony. It was enclosed in another sheet, written about a fortnight after, and dated from Nice. Its language fully explained to Mary the hesitation it was natural Ivan should exhibit when pressed to submit these letters to her examination. She knew that he must have writhed already under the conscious guilt of his conduct, and the honest confidence of Theodore, whom she believed he could never dare behold again—how, indeed, could he look upon herself? She cast her eyes around the cottage, rejoicing in his absence, and gained from that consolation and power to proceed.

Nice, August.

We have arrived at this place, to which Baziltch is coming, but whether with letters from Russia I know not; enough to say Lord Borrowdale gave me accounts of much that was terrible; and in this city I have met General Razoski, who has just brought hither his drooping wife, and has more than confirmed the tidings.

Was I not a true prophet? Did I not deem it murder by wholesale—murder by torture such as the Czar Peter, in his most ferocious moods, would never have inflicted? But I will be calm—I will not rouse the fiend within. I will relate what he learned at Moscow from soldiers who conducted the latest gangs of criminals to that side of the country whither Menzikoff was sent some months before.

His own guards had already told of the death of the princess. She expired, Ivan—the mistress of the palace of Oranienbaum, whose splendour she graced, *expired in a wagon*, far from all human aid save that of her helpless and distracted family. Menzikoff resolutely carried her corpse to his own distant dwelling; but where that angelic woman breathed her last, though two hundred versts beyond Nishnei Novogorod, will Theodore Dolgourouki raise a monument to her memory.*

What follows next?—why do I hesitate to trace on the paper words written on my heart in characters of blood and of fire! Arrived at their future home, the whole of the young family were seized with smallpox, of which the young empress died, and was buried with her mother. You told me, Ivan, she already had passed through this disorder; she must, therefore, have died of sorrow and fatigue, the victim of her tenderness. The general adds that it was believed all would die eventually save the young child, who was incapable of comprehending the many miseries by which it is surrounded; and they spoke more especially of the state of Menzikoff himself, who was already bent down to the dust by these reiterated strokes of misfortune.

Ah! why was I thrown at such an immense distance before I heard of this affliction! Had I been in England, I might have reached Russia, and followed her even to Siberia—no, she would have been already in her frozen grave!

One thing alone remains on which my heart may lavish the tenderness due to Mary, and I expect confidently your assistance; it is securing that sweet flower, that Siberian snowdrop, to which she was, while life remained, a devoted sister. I will nourish it even in my heart of hearts. Should the father live, he will rejoice to trust me with this little helpless one, though he denied me his unequalled Mary; and no emperor will pretend that the babe has deranged his government or insulted his person—in short, I will have her. I will journey to Berenzof, or beyond it, for my prize; and if then denied the right of possession, the Dolgourouki shall once more prove his right to the name he bears. It is not more than five years since the army, at Menzikoff's bidding, placed Catherine on the throne; have the soldiers forgotten the general they then worshipped and obeyed? God forbid that I should be compelled to try! but this last tendril of a withered tree, meet to be monarch of the forest, shall dwell beneath my roof and twine around my heart, even as she had been the offspring of that beloved girl who has gone to her early grave pure as the snows that cover her—

The general confirmed my ideas as to the base influence exerted on the weak mind of Peter by the personal enemies of Menzikoff, but he named no one, and replied to all my questions with a guarded manner, even when himself affected by his sad story. The strangest thing is his assurance that you remain in favour, and, with little exception, have been constantly about the royal person; strange that you should not detect the secret plotter, for you are quick in observation and sagacious in conclusion. Doubtless you knew and saw the beginning of this intrigue, permitting it, alas! to continue, because you hated the subject and envied his success, but was astonished when the deed was done, and found yourself incapable of redressing the injured: but did you try, Ivan? Did you remember that Theodore bade you be the guardian of Mary?

My heart is full of strange misgivings, and every hour weakens the one tie which binds me to earth: may the Eternal pardon the rash resolves, the dark despair, the vain murmurings of his wretched creature! Spare my father all knowledge of my sorrow; I will command myself sufficiently to write him by the conveyance the general offers; and, remembering the shortness of our northern summers, I will, in a short time, send back Baziltch to forward the only wish that remains to me on earth, the rescue of Catherine Menzikoff. Assist me, and render me again your affectionate THEODORE.

No. 5. Theodore to Ivan Dolgourouki.

Dear Ivan,

I have, as yet, received no letters from you. The circumstance torments me the more, because it compels me to be suspicious; but I

* This monument is in existence now, and mentioned by travellers.

will not give way to this feeling, because in my own person I have a proof of its fallacy. I, who have always been open to a fault, as liberal as a man of principle dared to be—whose repugnance to guile has driven me from the haunts of greatness, have been considered capable of what in my own person I consider to be revolting baseness; yet, as the world is constituted, it is certain my position made me amenable to false judgment. The knowledge of my own innocence—indeed, my utter incapability of selfish consideration, much less of avaricious desires, make me slow to believe the many accusations which are now, Ivan, openly made against you. No, I will not, till I see you face to face, believe you to be the artful enemy, the cold-blooded destroyer of the best and fairest creature God ever made. A Dolgourouki may be ambitious, violent, prejudiced, but he cannot be so cruel, so malignant, so sweeping in his baleful and hidden hatred, as to destroy all—"all by one fell swoop."

I will try to write of myself. From the time of Lord Borrowdale's arrival, and during our slow progress to Nice, I perceived a certain coldness in his politeness which I thought could proceed only from suffering, in consequence of Amabel's open preference of me. I concluded that he had been smitten by her charms before he set out on his travels, for she was then a most lovely girl, and as sprightly as she was handsome, and it would be natural for him to suppose that her parents would guard her for his sake, therefore I sympathized with him as a disappointed lover, and one day took an opportunity of communicating my opinion to Amabel, as a hint that she would, as much as possible, save his feelings at those times when she was able to see a family group in her apartment, which was not often the case.

To this she replied, "You are mistaken, Theodore, for Henry loved me much less than either of his brothers, who both hold me dear as a sister. It is not the jealousy of a lover, but a *legatee*, which afflicts him. I know he has written, urging his father to hasten to Nice, and doubt not they have, by some means, found out the tenour of the will I made at Lisbon."

"Have you made a will? Surely you had no occasion, for the countess would be your heir?"

"I have not forgotten what I owe to my beloved aunt, for I have left her a noble legacy; but all the bulk of my property and my diamonds are yours. You know I have often deplored, to my aunt herself, the sad mystery which prevented you from giving me your hand and name, for two long years, in which case I should have endowed you with all—*all*, had it been tenfold; therefore, if I should die, the present disposition of my affairs is for them better than they might expect; but they may not think so."

"Revoke that will, dear Amabel, I beseech you, for neither as your lover nor your husband will I accept property which I well know your uncle requires for the advancement of his large family and his high rank. I have no claim on you, my sweet young friend, and they have many."

"Claim!" exclaimed the fair girl, half rising from the sofa to which she is now confined. "You have my heart—the first, last love of a being who lives but in your sight, and thanks you for all she has known of real happiness here, and all she has been taught which may lead to happiness nereafter. Have you not sustained my fainting frame unnumbered times? read to me the holiest books; prayed with me and for me? even disabused my weak mind of that veil which my disease cast around it, and shown me my danger, while you bestowed its consolation? Yes, you have been all to me! my affairs are settled, and you must not deny me the privilege of a wife in offering her dower."

"To me money is useless; I am rich enough now, and I shall be more so by-and-by."

"Then give Harry Herbert a fortune; present the earl—"

"My sweet Amabel must see that I have no right to lay her worthy family under obligation, even while subjecting her to the charge of ingratitude. Much as I respect them, much as I owe them, they could not accept from me as a stranger, without pain, that which you had alienated. Your own act is necessary to render your gift valuable—suffer me to be your amanuensis."

"Then you refuse me everything, Theodore?"

"No, I will give you my hand, Amabel. It is a worthless gift; but I am now a widower, and, since you have expressed a wish to bear my name—"

The letter dropped at this moment from the hands of Mary; her head sunk against the wall, her eyes became dim, yet vision after vision arose in her mind of a marriage ceremony, a pale yet splendid bride, who, charmed into existence by the tenderness of her consort, recovered as by a miracle, and revelled in prosperity, while she pined in the wilderness, the victim of another's folly, another's error. The child, looking up, beheld her pallid face, and eagerly hastened to recall her to herself by every endearing epithet, and at length so far succeeded that she caught her to her arms, and, remembering the kind intentions of Theodore towards her, was moved to tears, which, for the present, relieved the sense of suffocation that affected her. In a short time she resumed the letter, having now arrived at an enclosed sheet, which she was certain Ivan had not unfolded: the narrative continued thus:

I spoke these words with difficulty, Ivan, but they were received with an emotion so joyous, so grateful, I may say, that I can never repent having uttered them; but yet, in her weak state, such emotion was injurious. I cannot dwell on the many trying scenes which followed during the next ten days, but in the course of them she dictated the will I desired, leaving the legacy she had designed for her aunt to my kind young friend, Harry Herbert, and also making provision for "the surviving daughters of Menzikoff." I made the number plural, for I do not know but Ulrica may survive. This is committed to the care of Sapicha. My own name was not in the will: the earl was sole executor.

Methinks you ask, "But were you married?" I answer we were *not:* but even to the last she seemed pleased with the idea, which she connected, as the countess told me, with the arrival of her uncle; on the very hour of his arrival, her gentle spirit passed without a sigh to its eternal home.

Long as I had foreseen this loss, and harassed as I had been with far severer trials, I was surprised to find myself so much affected. I

knew not till now how much her sympathy had consoled me, and her dependance stimulated me to self-command. The utter solitude and helplessness under which I laboured, induced me to resolve on proceeding immediately to Germany, knowing that in Kreuss and every branch of his family I should derive all of comfort I am ever destined to know, and I thought Baziltch was as likely, with your assistance, to effect my purposes with regard to Catherine as myself.

Having in a note expressed this intention to the family, I received an immediate pressing invitation to the room where they were assembled, when the earl mentioned much surprise at my intention, saying "they had expected I would follow the corpse of his niece as chief mourner, seeing that my situation with respect to the deceased was known not only to all the English, but to the general inhabitants."

I expressed willingness to show any possible respect to one whom I had loved and honoured so much.

"You may probably be enabled to communicate the wishes of Lady Amabel on this point."

"She told me, in the presence of the countess at Lisbon, that it was her wish to be buried wherever she might happen to die."

"Then application must be made for a place in the Protestant burying-ground, the poor girl being deemed a heretic; but I apprehend you, prince, are the person to whom we must look for directions."

"Her will is deposited in her own travelling cabinet. In that she has appointed you, my lord, her sole executor: I remember no mention of a funeral in it."

"Then you confess to having read it, Prince Theodore—perhaps to having dictated it?" said Lord Borrowdale.

"I must have read it, because I wrote it," said I, firmly but calmly, though his manner annoyed me; "but I certainly dictated not one word beyond saying, 'I trusted she would remember my dear friend, your brother Henry."

"But allow me to say, Prince Theodore, whatever may be the law or the custom in your country, in *ours* no man can legally write a will entitling himself to very considerable property—no, not even if witnesses are at hand to prove the words of the testator, a precaution you probably did not take."

"Have the goodness to examine the will before you condemn it. It is very short, and was written at several intervals during last week, but it has been examined by an English lawyer, and properly attested by your own servants and the landlord of this hotel. I beg you, my lord, to examine it before you make farther comments."

"Before such examination, I protest against its legality," said the son.

"You speak rashly, Borrowdale," said the earl; "your mother is gone for the document, and we shall soon see."

Lord Partinscale's hands shook as he unclasped the seals, and he sent for the family physician and the English servants. Rapidly casting his eye over the paper, and from time to time looking out from it as if to inquire if this was the right testament, at length he said,

"This appears quite regular, Prince Theodore, but I do not see your name from first to last."

"You see a delicate compliment paid to me in behalf of certain females, who I have reason to fear do not live to claim. It is not of such weight as to be worthy of a thought in such a property as this. May you, my lord, long live to enjoy it! for it could not have descended to better hands."

"I thank you, prince—I thank my sweet niece sincerely; but yet, I confess, I am puzzled. She loved you exceedingly; she had ready money to a great extent, and I have been led to think that—"

"*To think*, perhaps, that the sick foreigner your gallant son imposed upon your hospitality was a needy wretch, capable of abusing your kindness."

"No," said the earl, frankly, "this I could not think, for the cause of your sorrow was always frankly revealed, and it is certain we wooed you to return at Amabel's request, and whatever she had bequeathed you would doubtless have been her own doing. Still, human nature is generally ready to take fortune when it comes in the way; and the fact is, a friend—a—a person about her did whisper that she had executed a will in your favour: it was done secretly, surreptitiously, and so, it appears, was this; the poor girl might have a fancy."

"I told you, my lord, simply the truth; a will was made (but it may be now destroyed), to which," said the physician, "I was a witness, and which she herself told me gave all her fortune to the prince."

"That will she commissioned me to destroy; I give it into your hand. I have done my duty in preserving it, because it proves even her attachment to me never rendered her ungrateful, though it diminished her means of showing it. I have now your leave to depart; my office is ended."

"I have wronged you," cried Lord Borrowdale, "and I entreat you to pardon me; but you will acknowledge it was not without some cause, prince."

"We have all been wrong, and are all under the highest obligation to the most generous of men," cried the earl.

"I do not say so, Theodore," said the countess, as she placed her hand in mine, "for I never held a momentary doubt of your honour, your delicacy, or your good-will to us; not a doubt of you ever shadowed my mind; therefore I trust you will accede to my entreaty, and stay with us a little longer, and pay the last duty to her who loved you well."

I did so, but am now setting out; and, as my route is towards Russia, I will finish this long letter at Leipsic.

Leipsic, Feb., 1729.

I have been here some time, but have delayed sending this package by the uncertainty of whether I ought, or would, ever address a line to you again; what I heard at Nice shook my faith but a little compared with that which here is continually pressing on me. No one hesitates to say, "it is well known that your intrigues ruined Menzikoff, whose absence has been a fearful loss to the country, and of late bitterly lamented by his sovereign." I repel this belief—I forbid such things being uttered in my hearing; but your long silence, your known hatred of Menzikoff, and, more than all, your determined ambition, which, wherever it is indulged, deadens the heart to every virtuous principle and human affection, conspire to make me fear you have been guilty.

But I will not, dare not believe it; my aching heart forbids me to acknowledge I am bankrupt in friendship as in love; you cannot have so treated your nearest and once dearest relation—he who confided his sole treasure to your care—he from whom you generously averted a father's anger, and refused to accept his heritage. Courts, with all their mean subservience, their pitiful intrigues, their proud desires and earthly worship, cannot in three years have made you, Ivan, into a demon.

The baron has broken in upon me to say that he has spoken with the captain of a vessel just arrived, who told him that the emperor was dead, and that the Princess Anne, to the astonishment of every one, is placed on the throne, and has been received with universal acclamation and good-will. How is this, Ivan? our house always sought the succession of the legal heir; my father, yourself, and the mareschal were attached to the Duke of Holstein. It is plain you either had no power, or that which was insufficient, in which your opposition will prove your ruin. Short but most disastrous has been your day of power.

Fly to Pozeck, remain quiet, and you may be forgotten till the government is formed, and new cares or wars engross the ministers; my people shall receive instructions to obey you—you know they have been used alone to kindness and consideration. It is better you should go thither than to my father, for I must proceed to him, and support his spirits should trouble reach him, and *you* I dare not trust myself to meet; I would protect your person at any risk; my purse and my people are at your service, but your own heart tells you, Ivan, that you have severed every tie that bound you to the injured

THEODORE.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHEN Mary had closed this last letter, so certain did she feel that by that time Theodore had once more reached his native land, that she sunk down on her knees to thank God on his behalf, and scarcely had she risen when Brukenthal and Alexander entered: rushing eagerly to the former, she exclaimed,

"Theodore lives! he is unmarried; he knows the baseness of Ivan, and his heart yearns to become the protector of Catherine. Nobly has he vindicated my poor father; and five months since he was in Germany, intending soon to visit his own country. Judge, then, how sincerely I desire you to set out for Moscow, where, at this moment, I doubt not he sojourns! O that I could myself fly thither, and relieve him from sorrow and solicitude!"

"Had Ivan, then, no cause for conjecturing that he was married?"

"He had good reason, for, in the course of the letter, even I was led to expect his union, though with a dying bride. The latter part of the letter denounces Ivan as a traitor to his friend: this he has not seen; it will pain him severely, and he will know that I have read it. I know not how to return it to one now in a state of punishment."

"Nevertheless, you must return the packet as you received it, Mary: Ivan must reap that which he has sowed. If his heart is not absolutely seared, and I trust from many circumstances it is not, he will be glad to escape from a meeting with his cousin, which must have overwhelmed him with the shame of conscious guilt and baffled deceit; he may even feel thankful that his punishment places him in the light of an object of pity to one whom even habitual affection and close affinity will never more enable to consider him worthy of esteem."

The following day was the Sabbath, and the cottage was crowded with the villagers; but as neither the governor nor Ivan was among the congregation, it was concluded that the prisoner was under close *surveillance*, which the family could scarcely regret at this time; for, separated from all intercourse with the world, as h really was, still a sense of fear rested on their minds lest he should counteract the benevolent plans of Brukenthal, and, in some inconceivable manner, injure them still farther than he had done. On this account the good pastor dared not take any direct leave of his desert flock, though his heart yearned over them; and frequently his voice failed, his eyes filled with tears, and several were, from his evident agitation, struck with the belief that he was about to quit them. The hearts of Mary and Alexander responded to every tremulous tone of his voice; and when the Boyar entered, a little after the service had begun, neither could repress the strong emotion that affected them, and it was some time before they could pray for that heavenly support which they so peculiarly needed.

When public worship was over, and the people had shaken hands with all, as was their custom, the Boyar informed them that Alexovitch had prevailed on his mother, and held himself ready to accompany their friend. He added, "I would advise you to come to us to-morrow, for I find the snow in excellent order for the sledge, and it will not remain so for more than a month. It is evident that you had better lose no time in setting out. I will send a respectable widow to remain here so long as she is useful, and you can return in the vehicle which brings her. As my people have no intercourse with the village, your movements will occasion no observation, much as the women are given to tattle."

There had been no night so sorrowful as this in the dwelling of the exiles since that in which they were bereft of their father; and there were moments when their devoted friend could scarcely sustain the thoughts of parting, while the poor youth abandoned himself to sorrow at some times and at others tried to cheer Mary, who felt, in some degree, guilty of bringing this trouble upon him, since her situation certainly stimulated his movements. When the morning came, both were better, because both were busy. Mary had a thousand contrivances for the good man's comfort, and would have stripped her cottage and herself for the skins which might protect him; and Alexander, despite of every entreaty, packed all his choicest furs in the sledge, that they might be sold at Moscow or elsewhere for his convenience. The unconscious child hung round his neck, entreating him not to leave her; and it once passed the mind of Mary to send her to Theodore, but to this parting she felt herself unequal at such a time, and she dismissed the thought.

We have all known, probably, what it was to feel the heart riven, as it were, by consigning its most valued treasure to a distant country and for an indefinite time, during which many dangers must be braved, many privations endured; but we have not known the trouble of consigning our only friend, a man in the decline

of life, and bending under the infirmities of disease, to a journey of fifteen hundred miles over a country buried in snow, and with the vivid remembrance of its horrors, as experienced by ourselves. We may have been left behind to lonely sorrow, perhaps to poverty, but not to the sense of being divided from our species, as by the gulf of death itself; of being forbidden to enjoy what is the birthright of humanity, our native air, our local attachments, the "dear familiar faces" that smiled on our childhood. No; the most isolated and bereaved have not, like these orphans, been left alone in Siberia.

As considerable additional labour devolved on Alexander (for the good pastor had always been helpful in the care of the cattle), his necessity for exertion and the natural buoyancy of youth soon made him appear relieved, though far from being happy, as he was wont, for he longed for society, which in early life is an appetite of the mind, more especially to the highly-gifted and intelligent, not less importunate than hunger. He had, by the same circumstance, been separated from the aged friend whose person he loved, and whose conversation he enjoyed constantly, and that young companion who formed an object on which expectation could be exercised, and hope, curiosity, emulation, and contrivance continually dilate. He had too soon a new object of thought and interest in Mary.

It appeared that the excellent constitution she had received from nature, the unceasing exercise of her energies at the call of her affections, and, still more, the blessing of a pure faith, promising eventual happiness, had hitherto sustained her through the most afflicting losses and severe sufferings; but the alternate hopes and fears, the suspense under which she now laboured, were too much for her to endure. She required the cheering exhortations or the loving reproofs of her venerable pastor to control the sorrow she indulged, and the lassitude into which she sunk whenever Alexander set out on those expeditions which were now necessary, in order that he might replace the property given to their friend, and pay the taxes which, in summer, would be demanded. The good woman who assisted her labour sympathized with her sorrow, but knew not its source; for Mary, conscious of error, rather sought to hide it from her eye than confide it to any one. Considering how fondly she was beloved, how entirely relied on by her connexions, she had been yet unblessed, in a peculiar manner, by that confidence which is, to the young and loving heart, so sweet and consolatory, and which she had never engaged, save in her intercourse with that tender mother, whose loss seemed at this time more afflicting than it had ever been before. Since she had, as it were, relit the lamp of love by the letters of Theodore, and his name grew on her lip, his image rose to her eye, and his words and actions filled her memory, awoke her imagination, and occupied every avenue of her mind, she had found no one who could comprehend her feelings, and receive the overflowings of a heart at once so timid and so impassioned. Brukenthal, devoted to the service of the altar, had subdued or forgotten the emotions of his youth, had he ever yielded to them, and entertained only the love of an apostle for his spiritual children, or the tenderness of a father for the orphans of his friend; and Alexander's heart had never entertained a warmer flame than her own sufferings and relationship inspired. Often would she wish that her lamented father had been seated in his own chair, wearing the same pale but benevolent countenance on which she had gazed in pity; for he would have understood her feelings, have joyed to hear of Theodore's safety, smiled to hear her recount his virtues, lament over his sufferings, and descant on the possibility of relieving them.

It was pitiable to see the poor child hanging over that sister who had been her maternal friend, her tender nurse, and begging her "not to die as poor papa had done, or at least to live till the flowers came again, and the lambs run on the greensward; for then, dear Mary, you will smile on me, and sit down on the grass, and teach me little songs."

Mary felt as if she could not live till that time came, yet it was not far distant, and surely she had lived through much more of trouble than she experienced now: yet, reason as she might, and try as she might to conceal her increasing weakness from her brother, he perceived it, and became alarmed to the most distressing degree, in his fear communicating to her a sense of danger she had never experienced, and which told her to prepare for the tomb at the very time when she was most anxious to live.

But at this hour she believed it was too late to hope, and that her duty was resignation only. Yet one object remained for which to struggle: it was that of placing Catherine, through some medium, in the hands of Theodore. She had long since sent his letters back to Ivan, but every word he had traced relating to herself or the dear child was distinctly remembered; besides, she was a ward of Sapicha's, and, if in Russia, would not only secure the means of education, but respectable subsistence. But how could she mention this desire to Alexander? She was herself hastening to the tomb: if she robbed him of the child he so fondly loved, in addition to all his other privations, was she not condemning him also to a premature grave, and burying the name and race of Menzikoff in oblivion?

One day, as they were all seated at their mid-day meal, the kind brother, taught by affection and her own example how to win the coy appetite of a languid patient, they were surprised, it could not be said displeased, by the entrance of Count Ivan, who was now, in externals, like themselves, a wool-covered peasant of Siberia.

Alexander rose, and drew a stool to the table, which Mary, with a faint smile, motioned him to accept; and he was not long in doing so, for hunger, which he evidently felt in all its keenness, banishes ceremony.

"I thank you," he said, at length, "not only for this relief, but for all your kindness; nevertheless, this is the greatest, because (at least the empress knows) of the extent of the injuries and injustice you have received in consequence of my influence over the late emperor. I have longed impatiently to visit you ever since that brutal governor took me, in my pain and weakness, from you, but I could not bear to see you; and when I now look at you, lady, I read my own sentence of condemnation anew: you are ill, and I have made you so."

"The winter has been singularly severe—probably my illness proceeds from that; but I do not deny that the letters affected me both with pain and pleasure, felt so acutely that I have been useless to my family ever since I read them."

Ivan seemed for some time deeply affected; at length he started up, saying, "Where is the good pastor? Is he visiting the Boyar of whom you spoke?"

"He went to the Boyar's, undoubtedly," said Alexander, in that tone which implies the diffi-

culty an ingenuous nature feels in using equivocation.

"He has taken all the furs from the corner," said the child, "and he will sell them to buy pretty frocks."

"I would," said Ivan, thoughtfully, "he had been absent on a better errand; but it is all right, undoubtedly. It seems I, too, am required to provide furs, yet neither powder nor a gun is given to me; in short, I am come for the express purpose of offering myself, Alexander, as your hired servant; the governor permits me so to engage myself, as a favour; and when I tell you how terrible have been my sufferings, even to the extreme of cold and hunger since I left you, I cannot believe you will refuse me. I am now gaunt with misery, but you know me to be in the prime of life, equal to labour, capable of exertion, and sufficiently conscious of all that is past to know that, as your serf, I should work with tenfold—"

"Hush, hush, Count Ivan, you can never be the serf of Alexander—you are the cousin of Theodore. Labour you must, for all labour here or starve; but we can never class you as a servant," said Mary.

"To no other but you can I look; no person in the village can give me employ, and beyond its bounds I am forbidden to go; my money, which, you know, was but a trifle, is expended in my clothing and payment to the people who nursed me in the relapse which followed my removal; and my government allowance is so nearly demanded for my wretched lodgings, that no other food can be purchased than the coarse fish which my weakened stomach utterly rejects. If you will not take me I must die. Alas! I am not in the condition of your father, Alexander—I am not fit to die. I am—"

"Say not another word; stay with us; my sister is provided with a female friend. You shall help me, for I have a gun to spare, and I shall need assistance in the fields; but we receive you not as a servant, but a friend."

The words "a friend" at the same moment escaped the lips of Ivan and Mary, but no comment followed from either.

Ivan would have stretched himself that night in the corner where he had first been placed, but Alexander would not permit it, seeing there was a bed unoccupied in his own chamber; and on the following day he became the instructer of Ivan in various duties which they partook together. It was found that the younger person was the far better angler and more certain shot, but there was much of ability in the elder, and a pliability of temper, a willingness to be taught, and a deference to the teacher, which could not fail to win its way with a nature so generous as that of Alexander, who, finding himself really happier than he had been of late, could not forbear a sentiment of gratitude towards Ivan as the cause of it. In a few days this sense increased, for it was evident that Mary was somewhat better. She listened with deep interest to Ivan's stories of his boyish days, when he led Theodore by the hand through the neighbouring forests, and when, at a later period, he accompanied him, a gallant youth, to his first boar-hunt and his first excursion on the Volga. By degrees she too became capable of speaking of him; and while the nurse snored on her stool, and Alexander, wearied with exertion, now slept by snatches, and at times became animated by the scene or the character of that person apparently so worthy his admiration, she was deeply engaged in commenting on the circumstances described; revealing her own opinions or sensations, and often painting her pale cheeks by a soft suffusion, as she admitted the merits of Theodore, recited the words of her mother, or even adverted to those passages in his letters which exhibited the traits of goodness and greatness unfolded in his conduct, or evinced by his sincerity in the hour of confiding friendship.

Having thus left poor Mary in the way to regain a portion of health and meek contentment, even from the man who had despoiled her of all, we shall now follow the good Brukenthal through his wearisome journey, together with that young companion who unquestionably lightened the way, though he occasionally tried the patience and exercised the prudence of the anxious minister.

CHAPTER XL.

Brukenthal had by no means shaken off the pain occasioned by his first farewell, when he reached the dwelling where preparations were making for another; and a gloom sat not only on the faces of the anxious parents, but on that of every menial or friend within the vast establishment, which at this time appeared so elegant and comfortable as contrasted with the humble dwelling he had quitted, that scarcely could he forbear to wish once more that Mary could have brought herself to accept Alexovitch. He was now, however, so fully convinced that not a shadow of hope remained for him on that subject, that he sought conversation with his parents on the probability of his marriage with any lady of the court he was about to visit, saying, "he was happily not of an age to pine after one who had declined his hand when surrounded by many who were lovely and accomplished—great pains were now taken with the education of women of rank in Russia."

"Such women will not love us, nor our rustic ways; I wish my son to find a wife who will dwell with us in content, and not pine for the gauds of the city. We are not Russians who coerce the women we marry, and must therefore find our happiness in their affection, not their enforced obedience: a good girl, who will be happy in our love and share our cares, and whose children's children may play about our feet and cheer our old age, is the wife I desire for Alexovitch."

"He may find such a one in the city," said the mother, "for love renders all change and all sacrifice easy, and our son must be beloved—the empress had no heart to give, or the case of my son would have been different, I think."

"I must say that, in the excellence of his choice, he showed so pure a taste that I am convinced he can only be happy with a woman of intelligence and virtue—one who may grace his board, guide his servants, and rear his family honourably and religiously," said Brukenthal; being about to add, "that it would be a pity to tie so fine a youth to the daughter of an ignorant Tatar, or the cunning slave of a designing dealer;" but a glance towards the Boyarini checked his words, and she eagerly insisted on the possibility of her son's marrying not only wisdom, but wealth, rank, and intellect; and though the Boyar smiled at what he termed "a mother's weakness," it was evident that he was much of her opinion, and, since it evidently gave him courage to meet that which he felt to be a great trial, Brukenthal would not damp

hopes which were so natural they could not be deemed blameable. Never did there exist a parent who was not ambitious for his offspring; it is inwoven with the very fibres of his heart, the outwelling of his purest affections; and, though it may be his duty to restrain, he cannot be expected to eradicate it. There was another point which involved extreme solicitude: the Boyar believed that his son would be valuable to any sovereign who distinguished him: should he be called on to serve in the army, it would not be possible for him to decline, for himself and all his ancestors had been at one time or another engaged as soldiers. In this respect, he could only commit him to the care of Providence, and the good councils of his reverend friend.

Sleep sat lightly on the eyes of all that night, and tears were abundant in them the following morning, but the journey was proceeded in, and its necessities provided for. Warm wrappings, rich furs to be worn on dress occasions (an hereditary order bestowed on a brave ancestor ages before), a letter prepared with no little difficulty for Count Woronzow, a case of liqueurs, and a package of caviare, were placed in the sledges; and a heavy piece of gold given into the hands of Alexovitch, who was unable to utter thanks for it, and their long journey commenced. Away flew the coursers, accustomed to the bracing air; and the sledges, gliding over the smooth surface of the unyielding snow, soon appeared like swallows skimming the frozen pool. The motion, exciting as rapid, roused the spirits and awakened the hopes of even the older traveller, and mitigated the pain of parting with the loved ones he had left, by the promise of future benefit to all. To the younger it offered a thousand day-dreams of honourable enterprise and merited distinction, which were all mingled with memories of love and home.

It so happened that relays of horses, after their own had returned with the servants who had accompanied them, were got with little difficulty; and, as they had the advantage not only of the moon, but a glorious aurora borealis, which rendered the wild, white earth a flood of light, they travelled onward till long past midnight, when they were received at the post-house, a filthy hovel, where poor Brukenthal, weary as he was, could obtain no repose, and vainly sighed for the quiet and cleanliness which had reigned in a Siberian cottage, under the management of an enlightened and energetic female.

On the evening of the sixth day, by dint of either threats or rewards (and of neither was Alexovitch a niggard), they had crossed the Ural Mountains and the River Petahora, while it was yet a slender stream, and they now hoped to find little delay in prosecuting their way through northern Russia; but fatigue rendered rest indispensable to Brukenthal, and the younger traveller held himself well repaid for the postponement of his arrival in the far-distant capital by the conversation he enjoyed and the instruction it conveyed. His mind was hitherto an untilled soil, but readily did it open to receive the seeds of knowledge, and every particle of information now communicated became the subject of cogitation and the source of improvement. Never had youth and age blended more happily, yet many a time did Brukenthal say to himself, "how inferior has this young man's education been to dear Alexander's, who is three years younger! Must that intelligent, informed, and high-minded creature, with so much observation, activity, and ability, drag out existence among bears and foxes?"

Archangel was at length crossed, a milder climate was perceptible, and so much of a thaw had taken place that farther travelling in sledges was impracticable; therefore they sold these vehicles on arriving at that capital, and purchased one of those light wagons which are found the best kinds of conveyance where the roads are full of ruts and sloughs, sometimes assisted by logs of wood, which relieve the traveller from mud, but increase his sufferings from concussion. Many a sigh did Brukenthal give to the memory of poor Princess Menzikoff, who, even in her most fragile and suffering state, was dragged over them; and often did he contrast her husband, as he had seen him, at the head of a numerous army, or entertaining the nobles of a splendid court, with the miserable exile who held in his arms a dying wife, and beheld the daughter he had aggrandized by destroying her happiness, engaged in the lowliest occupations of a village serf. He could not wonder that a heart, once so proud and sensitive, had been, as it were, rent piecemeal by mortification, sorrow, and self-reproach. But oh! how thankfully could he turn from such soul-harrowing views, to the contemplation of the meek, infirm, and patient man, by degrees overcoming his fears, and yet stimulating his repentance; seeking, in the word of God, for the promises of the Gospel, and holding them to his heart as blessings, compared to which past glories were as dross; forgiving his enemies, rejoicing in his friends, and looking with earnest desire to that great change which would prevent him from ever again becoming the vain and sinful man he had been.

When they reached Moscow, both gladly agreed to remain a week or ten days, not only for the purpose of necessary rest to Brukenthal, but to enable him to procure suitable clothing; for which purpose he called on some friends who yet remained to him from the companions of his schooldays, and to whom he could confide the sale of Alexander's furs. These, on examination, were found to be of the very highest quality, and therefore he selected the most valuable as a present for the empress; trusting that, if a better medium failed, this might facilitate his admittance to the Presence. The rest, together with Mary's jewel, preserved him from any painful dependance on his young friend; nor did he find the hearts of his old ones so dead to the memory of Menzikoff, or the situation of his family, that they would not cheerfully have contributed to the furtherance of his views. It was, of course, a source of trouble, and a loss of property to the inhabitants of the ancient city, when their irresistible Czar determined on founding a new metropolis, and they had been angry with him they deemed an upstart boy, when, at his great master's bidding, he forwarded his designs by indefatigable vigilance and acknowledged abilities. As, however, Menzikoff loved his native place, during the reign of Catherine (which might be termed his own) he had shown all possible favour to the inhabitants, and spent as much time as he could within it; therefore, his unexpected and unmerited fall had excited much latent anger against all who were concerned in it—a sensation confirmed by his death, which was generally attributed to a broken heart.

It will be readily believed that, while Brukenthal was thus engaged, his young companion was not unemployed. Alexovitch, with all the wisdom of his age and the activity of his habits, wandered miles on miles through that vast city of palaces and gardens, streets and cornfields,

churches, convents, prisons, and colleges. The eternal ringing of the bells was to him the most delicious concert; and the gilded steeples of the churches, the magnificent vestments of the priests, and the decorations of the altars, when, with a reverence amounting to awe, he ventured within, astonished, dazzled, and charmed him. The various vessels plying on the River Moskva, the lighter craft of the Neglina, which runs from north to south through the city, on the borders of which are seated the mansions of the ancient Boyars and Kneses, the wealthy merchants and tradesmen, intermixed with low and dirty portions of the population, every hour afforded him objects of intense interest, admiration, or disgust. The arsenal, the university, but more particularly the soldiery, whenever assembled, won him to their quarters; and their various manœuvres never failed to exhilarate the spirits, sometimes depressed by the sense of grandeur and multitude which surrounded him; for he thought that, once more mounted as he was wont, not one of all he beheld would "turn and guide a fiery Pegasus" better than himself; and that, let him be once more properly equipped, he should be a man even among men in cities. As, by his father's special direction, this consummation of his wishes was not to take place till his arrival at St. Petersburgh, he was induced by Brukenthal at length to leave Moscow, which appeared to him such a perfect heaven on earth, that he desired to resign all farther search after novelty, and desire that society which was now his only want, with the exception of that noble animal, which, from his birth, had been almost a part of himself, thanks to his Georgian relations, with whom, in his boyhood, he had resided.

Compared to the country through which they had travelled, all appeared now easy and beautiful, while traversing the only good road Peter the Great, with all his eager desire for improvements, and his unlimited power, had been able to bestow on his subjects. At length Petersburgh, the gigantic outline of a proud metropolis, rose on either side the Neva in magnificent lines of buildings, all bearing the fresh, bright look of a new creation, and showing at once the grandeur of conception in design, and the deficiency in execution inevitable to a city scarcely thirty years old, which was yet crowned by a Cathedral, adorned by various palaces, fortifications, and other edifices. With all its beauty, Moscow still retained its first charm in the eyes of the young Boyar, though he was rejoiced to find himself in the place he had heard of as a fairy tale, which he rather desired than hoped to realize.

When Brukenthal had last visited the city which had been raised beneath his eyes under the superintendence of his friend, and had, therefore, more than common interest in his eyes, Menzikoff was, as we know, in the meridian of his glory, about to obtain the highest honour his sovereign could bestow. His name was dwelling on every tongue: those who were expecting employment were looking for recompense or courting attention; from the humble artisan to the accomplished artist, the young ensign to the hoary colonel, the aspirant who attended his first levée, or the ancient Boyar, who had dangled after four successive sovereigns, all alike were looking to Menzikoff. His splendid equipages were rolling near the palace, his beautiful horses were parading in the squares, his elegant vesse s were sailing on the Neva; crowds of the lovely, the great, and the learned, were pressing to his entertainments, and the very sight of his palace decorations sought for as a treat to the tasteful and the travelled. He appeared to be represented in every circle, either in his own personal greatness and unrivalled* activity, the number of persons in his service, the benevolence of his virtuous princess, or the beauty of his promising family. Every place and every person seemed full of him, for even those who envied his success acknowledged his talents, and, in their opposition, proved his all-controlling and animating power. Where was he now?—who held his power?—who dwelt in his palaces?—who revelled in his wealth?—who wept his sorrows and death? Of the many he had relieved from want or raised to affluence, who even remembered him in the city he had raised, governed, and adorned?"

Such were the passionate, the tender, and absorbing thoughts that rushed rapidly, not therefore transiently, through the mind and the heart of Brukenthal, as he retrod the streets of St. Petersburgh; and as, in the agitation of his bleeding bosom, some thoughts escaped him in words, Alexovitch was alike grieved and surprised to see the man he had deemed too holy and abstracted from the world, too self-subjugated or aged for the tremours of earthly sensibility, still capable of suffering so much, and, in the simple kindness of his nature, he replied, to the last words which he happened to have caught,

"No one remembers him as you have done, that is certain. No other person followed him to Siberia: you, and you only, were capable of that."

The absorbed soliloquizer started at the voice, though he attended not to the words of his companion; he saw the necessity of controlling the sallies of his mind, so long accustomed to expatiate in the freedom of the desert, and compel himself to enter on the great business before him. It was to him a circumstance alike pleasant and encouraging that the young Boyar's introduction was to the Count Woronzow, whom Ivan spoke of as being with Rozamousky Karitzhin and Restucheff, now at the head of affairs, and as having effected great concessions on behalf of the people when the present empress was placed on the throne. He argued from this that they were humane and conscientious men, likely to assist his wishes on behalf of the children of Menzikoff, whatever might have been their opinion of their father; and he well remembered frequently seeing the mother of Woronzow at the time of his last visit to Petersburgh, as she was the intimate friend of the Princess Menzikoff, to whom she was sincerely attached.

Brukenthal was aware that the first care of the young Boyar must be suitable dresses in which to present his letter to the count, and, under his auspices, appear at the levée of his sovereign; therefore, his object on the young man's behalf was that of procuring the necessary artificers; and, recalling the days of his own military career, and the names which had occasionally been mentioned as tradesmen employed by his late friend, enabled him to secure the most fashionable workman, new as the employment was to him. He had not, however, calculated on the time required for the choice of clothing by a handsome young man of twenty-two, who, at the same time, desired to be equipped in the mode of the court, which was decidedly French, and yet, from a natural percep-

* No longer unrivalled, since the present emperor's energy and activity have probably never been equalled by either sovereign or minister.

tion of its bad effect on his person, could not bring himself to relinquish the Asiatic garments he had hitherto worn, and which were, in fact, so much more becoming. Poor Brukenthal on this point felt himself unequal to advise, and, as he had now placed his charge in handsome lodgings, very near to the Count Woronzow, he left him to the task of his everlasting adoptions and rejections, and went forward to present himself to the Countess Woronzow, who would, he was well aware, prefer seeing him alone, that she might make inquiry freely as to her unhappy friend, the ill-fated princess.

She had herself died about a year before, and the good minister was unexpectedly ushered into the presence of a young and lovely woman, who was even now the bride of her son. This lady was highly educated and eminently handsome, but she did not then foresee that her charms and accomplishments, the fascination of her manners, and the true kindness of her disposition, would, within a few years, render her the very "glass of fashion" in the most polished courts of Europe, whither she accompanied her husband, then Prince Woronzow,* on his embassies. She was now very young, and, simply dressed, was sitting with a young female relative from the North, discussing the comparative merits of their respective provinces, when the good father was announced, and identified herself by rising to receive him.

Brukenthal appeared to advantage in the dress of his profession: his tall and slightly bending form, white locks, unpowdered, falling thickly round the lower part of his head, and partially shadowing a pale, oval face, replete with an expression of benevolence, firmness, and intellect, rendered him an object of attention to the young, if they were also the intelligent. The fair countess believed that he waited upon her to petition for himself or his people; it was the first time she had been so applied to in her new character, and she instantly resolved to supply him with assistance, not only in accordance with the feelings of her heart, but the importance of her high station in society.

Brukenthal explained by desiring to "see the dowager;" the information of her death which followed checked conversation, but yet warranted intimacy: he took a chair, and, having spoken of the late lady as she well merited, felt himself entitled to enter on his mission. With her husband, a man probably pressed for time, immersed in politics (and perhaps of an adverse party), he might have found difficulty, but the road to a heart that has only beat for seventeen years is always open.

Scarcely had he began to advert to the sufferings and death of Menzikoff, when he was interrupted by the countess exclaiming,

"Dead, did you say, holy father? Is Menzikoff himself dead also? How will my dear father lament him, for it is his pride to have been a colonel in his regiment. My husband the count, too, will be exceedingly sorry, for he was planning his recall some time since, I know. True, he may be acquainted with this painful fact, and has said nothing, because he knew that all was over."

"Pardon me, lady, Menzikoff survives in his children. He lost one, it is true, and false reports have been spread as to the death of the rest; but I have myself just parted from a daughter fair and accomplished as yourself, a noble son now in early manhood, also a little daughter, his excellent wife's last gift, and a god-daughter of the good Empress Catherine, a sweet child, whose first words were learned in the deserts of Siberia."

The countess and her young companion burst into tears; but curiosity soon overcame pity so far as to enable the former to say, "But you could not actually see them in Siberia?"

"Yes, lady, I did, for I visited them, and, I trust, consoled them for nearly a year, many months being consumed in reaching them."

"Good God, father, how you astonish me! Did ever man go voluntarily into that horrible country? go even beyond Tobolsk?"

"The attachments of youth are very strong. I loved Menzikoff ever since I taught him as a boy to read; and, though I was frequently angry with him, and often reproved him, I found the old love still linger round my heart. No wonder it increased tenfold when the dreadful news of his banishment and his wife's danger reached me. My friendship was likewise increased, exceeded, by a motive you, madam, may not at this early period have weighed—the anxiety which, as a minister of religion, I felt for the eternal welfare of one deprived of all the ordinary means of grace. It is enough to say I am repaid, far more than repaid, for 'my labour of love;' for his children's sake I now earnestly desire an interview with the Czarina, whom I have seen more than once at Oranienbaum. Will you, madam, secure me your husband's interference to this end? He can refuse you nothing."

The fair bride's cheek flushed with a sense of gratified love or vanity, but she hastily answered, "I know not that. Count Woronzow thinks me little more than a child, I fear, at present. Natalie, what do you say?"

"I say that on Thursday, when the empress has a *levée*, this good gentleman should present himself there, and I cannot doubt the count will so introduce him that he may plead his own cause; that much I think *you* may promise; but farther interference in the hurrying occupations of the count at this period I fear you cannot."

Brukenthal bowed smilingly to the fair adviser, and might have quoted the English poet: "Oh! how much wiser art thou than thy years!" but the friends were whispering with each other, and in another moment the countess addressed him in a tone at once gay and kind, saying, "You have been living long in the wilderness, my good sir, and can scarcely be provided with those ecclesiastical robes which must be worn at court, both by ministers of the Greek and Lutheran churches; suffer me to provide for your appearance. A female sovereign must be obeyed, even in trifles."

"I am most willing to be your debtor, courteous lady, as otherwise I might press too much on my companion, the young Boyar of Ostrokoi, who will wait on the count to-morrow, and is even now preparing for the same ceremony. There are limits to his purse, though none to his kindness."

When Brukenthal had departed, both the ladies were eloquent in his praise, not only because he had evinced what they truly termed the heroism of friendship, in visiting those regions whose very name blanched the cheek of every noble Russ, but that "he was a dear old man, who sought the rescue of the young, and knew what was lovely and loveable in them." The countess was convinced "that he was pious and learned, a pattern and an honour to his church, with more of true courtesy in his manners than the French ambassador, and without any of his grimace."

* See Jonas Hanway.

The result of this opinion was an immediate order for his robes, and a determination to appear in person at the *cortège* of the empress, it having been of late promulgated that a few married women of high rank were henceforward to attend the sovereign's *levées*, in order to give an air of grandeur to the apartments, and one of propriety, as respected a young and beautiful female sovereign.

Brukenthal returned to Alexovitch with his mind soothed by the kindness and consideration he had met with, but yet duly weighing his slight hold on important concerns, which it was impossible for two young creatures like those he had quitted to communicate. He had, of course, long felt that his cause was in the hands of Him "by whom kings reign and princes decree justice," yet was he not the less sensible of what might be termed the *risk* of his undertaking, and the extent of his requisition, on behalf of these orphans. In Siberia they had the means of life, in Russia not a single copec, and the only relation which, so far as he knew at present, remained to them, was the sister of Menzikoff, with whose husband he had been long in a state of open enmity—their mother had been an orphan and an heiress, and was without connexions. It was a question to him whether it might not be safer, since the belief of Mary's death had been diffused, to allow things to remain for the present in that state, for the very name of dowager empress might be unpleasant to one who had stepped by successful intrigue on the throne, and was, therefore, always likely to dread a rival.

The aspiring spirit of Menzikoff could not be forgotten, and who could say, except himself, that it did not exist in a daughter, who had attained her majority, and might be inclined to make herself amends for past suffering by grasping future greatness. These thoughts he confided to Alexovitch, so far as might render him cautious as to mention her only as princess or his neighbour, which he promised to do, being delighted with the account given of the ladies in Woronzow's family, to whom he was himself introduced on the morrow. After this interview, both our travellers were expected to make part of the dinner circle in the hospitable mansion of the count, such being the custom with noble families in Russia, whose style of living is every way on a princely footing, and generous to profusion.

Alexovitch was the first distant Boyar who, as his father's representative, paid homage and offered allegiance to the new Czarina, and, as such, he was especially welcome; it was, however, not considered the etiquette for him to accompany his venerable friend, who was recommended to the immediate care of the chamberlain, while the young Boyar must be himself presented by Woronzow as the representative of his father. The young man of course submitted to the dictates of his friend, but much did he lament the circumstance, and, in his frank admission of how much he owed to his highly-valued mentor, Woronzow, whose discernment of character and appreciation of merit were remarkable, became captivated by his ingenuousness, and determined to watch over him as a younger brother, in points where he would necessarily be a better guardian than Brukenthal could be.

The following day they repaired at an early hour to Count Woronzow's mansion, and the good minister, accustomed to look with a parental eye at the children of his friend, could not help gazing with pleasure on Alexovitch, and wishing that his parents could see him, for he had, with admirable tact, combined in his dress the stiff forms but splendid materials used in the Russian court, with the flowing drapery worn on state occasions by his ancestry. The novelty of his situation, and perhaps the looks which the countess exchanged with her husband and Natalie, frequently suffused his cheek with a modest yet manly glow, and Brukenthal could only wish, for the sake of those far-distant dear ones continually on his mind, that his own reception might be as gracious as that which he could not doubt would be granted to his handsome, noble, and artless young friend.

CHAPTER XLI.

The empress had not yet quitted the Winter Palace, but as it was known that she would soon set out for Moscow, the *levée* was expected to be better attended than usual. Brukenthal found the anteroom crowded by foreigners, military men, heads of provinces, and many of the old nobility, among whom certain persons whom he considered to be ministers of state, or pre-eminent for their influence, were moving, and apparently receiving the most obsequious attention or abject servility. He had never visited this scene since the time of his first campaign, but he well recollected that the same eager desires for notice, the same breathless gaspings after favour, the same condescending smiles or haughty indifference, were floating in the atmosphere of that day as this. Even his own sensations of eager expectation and gratified pride recurred to his mind, and his heart rose in gratitude to Heaven, that from that time to this he had not experienced them, nor would have been subjected to them now save for a high and holy purpose.

His revery was interrupted by the entrance of a party of newly-advanced officers, who had lately distinguished themselves, and now endeavoured to press towards the doors of the drawing-room, so as to enter with those nearest it; in the commotion thus made, an opening was formed, and the eye of Brukenthal (who remained near the place where he entered) was drawn towards a young man of distinguished appearance, whom he fancied he had seen before. He was tall, pale, and of serious, almost mournful aspect, which was partly accounted for by his dress, which was black, with lawn ruffles, and a sword-knot of black crape. A brilliant star on his left side indicated nobility, and the gold collar of the order of St. Andrew surrounded his neck. The same honourable distinction, together with that of St. Alexander Newski, and a mareschal's baton, were in his hand.

So striking was the figure, so intellectual yet melancholy was the countenance of this nobleman, that the minister could gaze on no other, though he had understood additional strangers of note, and even Biron, the beloved of the empress, were passing close to him; and he could not forbear looking to the person Count Woronzow had consigned him to, with the question of "Who is that fine-looking man in black, with the orders in his hand—he who speaks to nb one, and whom nobody looks at: is he a foreigner?"

"It is Prince Theodore Dolgourouki: the family are very important, but at present under a

cloud, for his first cousin is banished to Siberia. His duty brings him hither, in consequence of the death of his great uncle, whose orders and baton he must deliver to the empress."

"But what fault has this prince committed?"

"None whatever, for he has only lately returned, after an absence of several years; he is an excellent man and a brave soldier, but how he will be received no one at present can guess."

Brukenthal scarcely heard the last words, so eager had he become to make his way to Theodore, and whisper words which he trusted would dispel forever the cloud that hung upon that noble brow, but at this moment the doors were thrown open with a thundering sound, and the nearest were compelled forward by those behind. Brukenthal did not advance, for his present object was completely defeated, and from his commanding height he had now a perfect view of the empress and her surrounding court, exceedingly impressive, and eminently grand and beautiful.

The Empress Anna Iwanowna was seen reclining on a throne of crimson velvet, surmounted by a canopy of the same, ornamented by gold trimmings of the most dazzling description. Rising, she saluted the company with graceful courtesy and an urbane and smiling countenance, thereby displaying a fine form, which, although not tall, was full of dignity and elegance. Her features were small but intelligent, her complexion fair to brilliancy, and her eyes large, blue, and full of gentle light. She wore a velvet dress of pale yellow, powdered with silver stars, which was fitted to the fine outline of her person; over this was a loose robe of green satin (the favourite colour of the country), which was lined throughout with the purest ermine, the sleeves being surmounted with the richest and darkest sables ever brought from her northern dominions. A stomacher of the finest brilliants, from which chains of the same costly material hung to her feet, had a truly royal effect, and on her round white throat and open chest they also shone with dazzling brightness. A coronet of many-coloured precious stones mingled with the full tresses of light brown ringlets which adorned her well-placed head, and were the especial gift of nature.

On either hand stood about twenty ladies magnificently arrayed, and literally glittering with gold and jewels, yet not thereby eclipsing their noble partners, for the numerous diamond-hilted swords, brilliant buckles, stars, orders, and gold chains seen on every side, conveyed an idea of wealth and splendour unrivalled by any court in Europe, and contrasting in a manner altogether unparalleled with that rude, starving, and yet industrious people which then constituted the bulk of the population. Again poor Menzikoff, in his magnificent habiliments and his sheepskin coverings, rose to the memory of Brukenthal.

There was a sudden silence, the crowd parted, and Theodore Dolgourouki stepped with stately yet modest bearing towards the throne. Gracefully sinking on one knee, he presented the orders lately worn by the venerable grand maréschal, whom he termed "the loyal and devoted servant of his country, and its greatest sovereign."

"That the deceased nobleman was such the annals of Russia will bear witness," said the empress, as she received and then handed the orders to the proper officers, "and we are well pleased to receive these honourable memorials of his worth from a relation whom we can esteem so sincerely as Prince Theodore. It would be hard if, in so powerful a family, we possessed not one faithful subject."

Theodore essayed to speak, but there was a wave of the hand, a glance of the eye, which for the present arrested his petition, and he fell back into the crowd dispirited and disappointed. Far different was the impression made on others by a reception they considered unexpectedly gracious, as it was well known the Dolgourouki had always been attached to the Holstein family; on every side smiles and congratulations awaited him: some courtiers declared that his long absence had so altered his person that till that moment they had not recollected him; others were delighted at seeing him look so well, and many desired his company most earnestly who ten minutes before had not been able to see him at all.

One person alone understood him and sympathized with him in that crowd of the great and the educated; and, despite of the interest excited on behalf of the *protégé* he regarded so warmly, and who at this moment was presented by Woronzow, and received with such peculiar graciousness as to awaken universal admiration, pressed near as Theodore retreated from the Presence, and said in a low but distinct voice,

"Count Ivan has been ill and suffered much, but his health is restored; he has a home and friends who will not suffer him to want."

The position of Theodore was such with regard to the empress that he could not turn to the speaker, but he started and said in an under tone,

"Friends! Is he, then, no longer in Siberia?"

"He is near Berenzof, without a ruble in his purse, or, perhaps, a sheepskin to cover him; but be easy—the son of Menzikoff will feed him and clothe him."

"The son of Menzikoff!" exclaimed Theodore, thrown off his guard, and suddenly turning at the moment, when Alexovitch, enraptured by the approving smiles and gracious words of royalty, with all the emotion most honourable to his unsophisticated feelings, on withdrawing from the throne had fled to Brukenthal, and, seizing both his hands, was now withdrawing him forcibly from the spot where he stood towards an empty place in which he could listen to him; but at this very time the chamberlain addressed the pastor, and inquired his reason for desiring an audience, as now requested by Count Woronzow.

At this moment Brukenthal, distracted by rival claims, solicitous almost to misery for the opportunity of saying a few more words to Theodore, and imparting that precious secret he had determined to confide to no other ear, found himself so agitated that he could only say, "Give me time, noble sir, give me time. I am a stranger to courts, yet my business is of the last importance; life, ay, more than life, is in the issue."

Everything is mysterious with the mysterious; Count Razumuffski, whom he now addressed, instantly conceived that the simple Lutheran clergyman might be connected with a conspiracy against the reigning sovereign; several had recollected him as a friend but censurer of Prince Menzikoff; he had heard him utter words of the most startling nature to the only Dolgourouki admitted to court, and had arrived in town with the wild son of the most northern Boyar: what could be the motive of his conduct?

Another view as rapidly succeeded; the Boyar's son had been most graciously received, and the smiles of beauty were at this moment beaming on him. That of his sovereign had transformed him, as by magic, from being "the unlicked cub of a Siberian bear," into all that indicated natural grace, gallant bearing, and manly beauty. While the chamberlain was thus halting between two opinions, Woronzow, at the suggestion of his lovely bride, relieved both parties by taking the hand of Brukenthal, and leading him, with a dignified air, immediately to the empress, who had now resumed her seat.

"For what would you petition, holy man?" said the sovereign; "we oppose not the ministers of Heaven, whatever name they bear. What do you ask for your Church that we can grant consistently?"

The words of the empress recalled the bewildered senses of Brukenthal, and, rising from his knee in obedience to the motion of her hand, he stood before her free and unembarrassed, yet evidently affected, as he answered,

"Nothing, great sovereign, have I to request for my people or myself, but your majesty has subjects in the wilderness, spotless as the snows which environ them, and of loyalty untainted as the air they breathe. For them I kneel—for them I hold up these feeble hands in supplication."

The hitherto complacent countenance of the empress became overspread by a frown; her quick eye had marked the short communication he had made to Theodore, for they were both too tall and *distingué* to escape observation; and she saw the prince still lingering near the entrance, with his eyes anxiously bent on the father. She felt assured, or, at least, afraid, that he was interceding for one she had determined to punish, and hastily, but in a low voice, she said,

"For *them!* for whom?"

"The children of Prince Menzikoff—the faultless, helpless survivers of a mother your majesty knows to have been virtuous, and of a father who is now incapable of ever giving offence again."

"Then Menzikoff is really dead? dead in Siberia!"

"I performed the last offices over his corpse seven months ago, and his weeping children laid him with his wife and daughter."

Tears struck into the eyes of the empress, and, by a look towards the chamberlain, the room became immediately cleared of all save the hoary petitioner and Count Woronzow. After giving a few moments to agitating but tender recollections, she said, in a plaintive and encouraging voice,

"And thou, good man, wentest forth into the wilderness to share their labour and soothe their sorrows: I now remember thee well. A proud heart, but yet a great man's heart, was broken when poor Menzikoff's head was laid low!"

"He died an humble penitent, a happy Christian, forgiving his cruel enemies."

"That is more than we shall do," said the empress, firmly; but adding, soon after, in a gentle, almost familiar tone,

"Father Brukenthal, saw you aught of Ivan Dolgourouki?"

"I have seen him myself, in want and misery, suffering the pains inflicted by rheumatic fever."

"Was he left to die of cold and hunger?"

"No, please your majesty, he was tended and restored, that so your merciful intention might be fulfilled, and time given him for repentance."

The empress smiled most blandly, yet turning to Count Woronzow, she said, "Count, it is our pleasure that this friend of the criminal Dolgourouki shall be consigned to custody within the palace till the truth of his statements can be proved—not that we have any doubt of his integrity, or desire to render his imprisonment painful (for, in truth, we think it will be serviceable to such a wanderer), but it is our duty to examine facts so remarkable and conduct so unexampled."

Brukenthal would have prostrated himself before the empress, and referred her for the truth of his assertions to the son of the resident Boyar, whose loss of himself could hardly fail to be a great one; he would have said a thousand things to change a determination so inconsistent with the kindness evinced; but in another moment the empress had disappeared: the gorgeous scene, the desired explanation, the awakened hope, had vanished like a dream; still it was a reality, for two of the imperial guards stood on each side of him, and desired him to follow them.

The apartment to which he was conducted was situated in the highest part of the palace; but beyond this circumstance, and that of having a sentinel at his door, there was evidently nothing to complain of. In a short time he was waited upon by the librarian, who brought him a few books, and inquired what would be his choice when ready for more, intimating, at the same time, that he would soon receive a visit from the secretary, whose duty it was to examine him, the librarian politely adding "that he had himself no such unpleasant duty to perform, and that his own calls were only those of intercourse with a learned and good man."

The perfect innocence, and, indeed, magnanimity of his conduct as regarded his late visit to the exiled family, and the submission to an unjust, cruel, and capricious sentence which he had inculcated to Menzikoff, left him without the shadow of fear for that part of his conduct which belonged to his journey to Siberia; but since it was very evident that Ivan Dolgourouki was an object of abiding anger to the empress, and, being at a considerable distance, he had not known what passed between her and Theodore, he concluded that his supposed connexion with that family was the cause of his coercion, and he therefore examined all his past connexion (which had always been attended with pain and difficulty) as regarded Count Ivan with the most scrupulous exactness, alike anxious to act with strict integrity, and that prudence which would farther his views for the orphans, whom he became every hour, if possible, more solicitous to benefit.

When, however, the secretary really questioned him, it was entirely concerning Menzikoff and his family, more particularly as regarded the disposition and talents of his son; and the speaker did not hesitate so to praise the deeds and eulogize the abilities of Menzikoff as to prove the feeling of the empress on his behalf, thereby encouraging Brukenthal not only to speak with all possible freedom, but to trust (however appearances were against *him*) the exiles for whom he laboured would not eventually be abandoned. His anxiety, therefore, reverted to Alexovitch, whom he heartily desired to see; but, that not being permitted, the gentleman promised to inquire after him personally, and was not long before he conveyed very sat-

isfactory accounts of his movements, which appeared to be wholly under the guardianship of Count Woronzow, in whose house he was now fully domesticated.

Although Alexovitch had, in the first place, eagerly sought to share his overweening pride and happiness with the venereble friend he alike loved and respected, yet, when this temporary excitement subsided, his mind reverted, with much natural acumen, to the scenes which had been passing around him, and which he had innately commented upon with a tact for which few might have given him credit. Struck with the appearance of Theodore, his keen eye never forsook him, and was, therefore, rendered fully sensible of the universal flattery of his reception, on retiring from the Presence, as contrasted to that constrained politeness or positive indifference which had preceded it; and this, on his arrival at the count's, he did not hesitate to mention, adding, "Well, I heartily thank you, sir, for taking me to court, and the empress for receiving me so pleasantly; but yet, I never desire to go again. Commend me to a troop of howling wolves rather than a bevy of false courtiers: a keen blast is less deadly than a cold smile. I will use the advancing summer, and get back to Siberia."

When he learned that Brukenthal was imprisoned, these feelings were so vividly increased, that scarce any promised pleasure could prevent him from immediately executing his design; but, having been informed that the empress was about to visit her ancient capital, and would be followed by Brukenthal, he consented to remain till he also could join in attendance, considering that perhaps the minister might then receive the liberty so causelessly denied, and that he should once more have the joy of seeing him; and so fond had he been of Moscow, that he felt as if nothing short of happiness might be expected there. He thought, with sincere sorrow, that the mission of Brukenthal might be considered as frustrated, but he did not the less hold the injunction he had given him as sacred; and, frequently as he was drawn to speak of his late interesting neighbours, he was never led to refer to Mary's secret or his own.

Woronzow being appointed ambassador to Vienna, and not likely to return to his country for some years, became kindly anxious to secure friends who might add to the pleasures, and have an eye on the movements of the young Boyar during his stay at Moscow; and the countess was still more solicitous to procure a suitable home for her orphan cousin, who was very poorly endowed by fortune, though abundantly by nature. A maiden aunt at length offered her a home, but it was under so many restrictions as to be grievous to the countess, though received thankfully by Natalie. During these transactions in the early part of the day, the two young people were left much together, to amuse themselves as they might; and the morning generally glided on very agreeably between the music of Natalie and the many warlike encounters related by Alexovitch, while the evenings were frequently not less interesting to him, from those conversations of the countess which dwelt on the merit of her friend, and the future inconveniences one so young and gentle might have to encounter. At length she had the pleasure of saying "that, at any rate, the dear girl would get a trip to Moscow, in attendance on the empress, which was a great consolation."

Alexovitch felt it was such to himself undoubtedly, and he resigned himself to a few months' attendance on courts, and society with courtiers, with remarkable facility, considering the disgust he had received, and the resolutions he had expressed.

CHAPTER XLII.

So perfectly quiescent was the empress with regard to her prisoner, that Brukenthal was frequently persuaded she had forgotten him, and, what was of more consequence, forgotten those for whom he had vainly pleaded; and, since he was permitted to walk twice or thrice a day in the gardens under a single sentinel, he could not forbear, at times, to meditate on the chance of escaping, and once more reaching his distant home and his pastoral charge in Lithuania. His attendant visiters never answered any question which could throw light as to the motives for his incarceration, much less its probable duration; and their own information turned wholly on the impending journey of the empress, and the celebration of her coronation in her ancient metropolis, to the great joy of her subjects. He was, ere long, consoled (in one sense) as to the idea of having slipped the royal memory, by learning that orders had been given to bring him after her as a state prisoner, but with all due observance of his comforts; and, in fact, so far was he from being forgotten, that his tall, thin form, sacred habit, long silken locks, his pleading looks, and those accents in which truth and compassion animated every inflection of tone, were continually present to the empress; and it was even difficult to her to forbear seeing him again, and conversing with him personally, although she had, of course, heard the answers he had given to the many queries she had dictated to her secretary.

At length the splendid *cortège* set out, and Brukenthal followed, but under such easy *surveillance*, that several times, to the great satisfaction of both, Alexovitch enjoyed a short interview with him, and communicated, in a low voice, those resolutions he had formed on the subject of returning home, but still with the salvo of preferring Moscow to all the world. Any other person would have perceived that another preference was owned by his heart, and hung upon his lips; but Brukenthal saw only that he was what the fashionable world would have called "immensely improved," and he looked into his face to see if any corresponding errors (as is too often the case) accompanied such improvement. No; Alexovitch blushed slightly, it is true, but the eye looked brightly and frankly forward, and the very circumstance of seeking out for him bespoke the prevalence of his former feelings and honest confidence. The old man's heart was cheered by the recognition; he trusted he should return better, not worse, for his trial.

Many magnificent coronations had been celebrated at Moscow, but none like this. The empress, as the daughter of Ivan, the brother of Peter the Great, and who, for a time, shared the crown with him, was desirous of obliterating the traces of the last two reigns, and, so far as possible, reuniting her memory with those of the older sovereigns, whom Moscow had been in the habit of lauding; and, since there had been royal persons weak enough to think she had conceded too much to the people, she determined to establish her claim to be considered great by assuming additional splendour: a happy medium, by which vanity is reconciled to humanity, and the privileges of tyranny exchanged for those of admiration and personal attachment.

The amazing concourse of people pouring into Moscow on every side, but more especially from the Asiatic dominions of Russia, was such as not only to crowd the houses, but the fields and gardens of Moscow; and the glittering of white tents, variegated temporary pavilions, and newly-painted wooden houses, erected on every tenable place, altered for a time the character of the city, by rendering its vast outline filled by human habitations. The wild music of the atabal, and other instruments from the mountain tribes, the ringing of not only all the numerous bells of Moscow, but many introduced for the occasion, filled the air with sounds of perpetual gayety, though questionable harmony; and the prancing of steeds, the glittering of assuazas, the glancing of diamonds, by no means unfrequent in the streets, from milk-white turbans and costly embroidered headdress of various forms, rendered the scene on every hand one of equal novelty and splendour. Whatever might be thought in other parts of this immense empire as to the legality or expediency of placing the present sovereign on the throne, there was no doubt in Moscow that everything was justifiable; and the appearance of the empress, with her personal captivations and liberal grants, rendered her the most popular of all the royal personages who had ever filled a throne.

All the riches of the Kremlin,* the various crowns belonging to various nations, and sceptres inlaid with jewels beyond even the wealth of India, and which would reduce to comparative insignificance any similar royal collection in Europe, were exhibited on this occasion. The dresses of the archbishops and the other dignitaries of the priesthood concerned in the ceremony, in their dazzling splendour exceeded even that of the pope, and every circumstance connected with a ceremony imposing even under its simplest forms, combined to render this impressive, for the taste employed was of the first order, and the wealth lavished unbounded, seeing that subjects and strangers from many countries came expressly thither to contribute to the expenditure or partake its benefits. On every side of the vast city might be seen innumerable flocks and herds, and caravans of fruits and vegetables; while the river was covered with the produce of distant lands, among which an amazing quantity of flowers presented the appearance of a moving garden, and at once charmed the eye and breathed perfume through the air.

As the little property of our good Father Brukenthal had been carefully removed to his comfortable prison, and now brought with him to Moscow, it struck him that this was the time when he had a good opportunity to present poor Alexander's prize to the empress, thereby at least reminding her both of the existence of the exiles and his own; for, although nothing could exceed the respect and kindness with which he had been treated, and his personal appearance was so much improved that he seemed twenty years younger and stronger than he had been when consigned to pleasant imprisonment, he sighed for liberty. The greater number and variety of people he beheld from his high window in one of the palaces of the Kremlin, the more was he impressed with the idea that, if he could wander among them, he should be able to learn some news of those dear ones of whom he was perpetually thinking; and since the very ends of the earth seemed moved to attend this mighty festival, there were more impossible things than that the Boyar himself should once more venture into the world, less for the coronation, perhaps, than the sight of his son.

To his great satisfaction, the skins he had refused to barter were found in the most perfect state, and got up with that attention to neatness, and a proper display peculiar to female care, so that, if laid before the empress even at this busy time, they could scarcely fail to attract attention. They consisted of the skins of black foxes, considered more valuable than the finest sable, and of ermine of extraordinary beauty, together with several tails of blue foxes of the most exquisite tint. These were committed to the care of a page who was frequently in the Presence, but who had been of late so perpetually engaged, that the usual attendants on the prisoner could not obtain an interview with him till the evening of the day preceding the coronation.

From all Brukenthal could afterward learn, it appeared that he had been indeed forgotten; for the empress at the same moment expressed herself enraptured with the furs, and gave orders for him to be placed in the Cathedral, where he could be near her person. She likewise (late as it was) commanded these beautiful furs to be employed in facing the royal mantle, and more than once spoke affectionately of Alexander as the "dear little fellow" who had sent them; so that if all the observations made by the empress had reached the ears of the anxious friend, he could not have entertained a doubt of her kind intentions eventually; but beyond her gracious acceptance of the furs, and her considerate commands for his accommodation, he could learn nothing, and greatly did he fear that the name of Alexander had actually been forgotten in the business.

It is utterly impossible for us to attempt any description of that gorgeous and awful spectacle which placed the crown of all the Russias upon the head of a young and lovely woman, thereby endowing her with a power which, although diminished in her person as compared with her predecessors, amounted to a far more absolute control over freedom, property, happiness, and life, than reason or religion should vest in any human being. Absolute sovereigns have frequently been excellent sovereigns, and become blessings to their people; but we question whether they were themselves happy: would not their conscientious solicitude destroy their tranquillity?

Velvet draperies, with gold fringe, covered the walls of the Cathedral, save where shattered banners proclaimed the victories of Russia; the altar and the priests made the eye ache with splendour, nor could it find relief in resting on the nobles and their ladies; yet it sought one "bright particular star," now kneeling, in apparent humility, to receive from the King of kings that responsible sceptre which would render her God's vicegerent on earth, the governor and guardian of uncounted millions. Perverted would have been the understanding, and cold the heart, that did not rise to heaven for one so weak by nature, so mighty by situation—one who could neither err nor suffer without inducing thousands to partake her fault or share her misery.

Brukenthal prayed for her sincerely, for he felt that her burden, however gilded, was too heavy to be consistent with happiness; and while the trumpets were pealing, the cannon roaring, the multitude, within and without, rending the heavens with their acclamations, his

* The treasures of gold and jewels long kept in the Kremlin were happily removed, by the vigilance of the guards, a few hours before Bonaparte reached Moscow.

abstracted spirit was silently invoking that of Menzikoff, as if in reproach for having desired to load his gentle Mary with cares she was not born to expect nor fitted to encounter: while all around him considered their young and beautiful empress in the light of divinity, whom it was their glory to serve and their happiness to obey, he the more fervently prayed "that wisdom from above might be granted to her," and "that she might find her own happiness in that of her people."

Gardens and squares, every open place and every public building save churches, had tables "spread with costly food;" and when Brukenthal returned to the palace, he was conducted to a place where he might view the returning procession, and invited afterward to a seat reserved for him, where he would be likely to find the son of the Boyar. For this young man he naturally looked among the splendid train who walked along a decorated platform from the Cathedral to the principal palace (there being five royal residences within the Kremlin), but his eye was first arrested by the graceful figure of Natalie, who was one of twelve fair damsels of rank and pre-eminent beauty employed in strewing flowers before their lovely sovereign, who was followed by another twelve supporting her train. In casting his eye over them, Brukenthal could not forbear exclaiming, "Ah! Menzikoff, your daughters should be with these!"

The principal ministers of the crown and their stately wives passed onward, when, lo! a venerable man, yet less aged than infirm, advanced, leaning upon a staff on the one hand, and on a tall and noble-looking son on the other: that son was Theodore Dolgourouki.

From that moment Brukenthal could see no other object, and his desire to approach him, to speak with him a single moment, became more intense than could have been conceived possible in a spirit so regulated as his. At the time, forgetting entirely the circumstance of his being a prisoner, he made an effort to leave the room, in order so far to intercept Theodore as to give him a sign as he was entering the door, and with great simplicity told his keeper his wishes, to which the other replied, "In that case, my good sir, it is my duty to conduct you to your own apartment; the empress did not suppose you capable of abusing your liberty by speaking to any one."

Brukenthal remained a few minutes in rumination, and then said, "I will return thither, and by locking me securely, you may yourself, I hope, enjoy the gay scene around you; as a trusty servant, I honour your vigilance."

The man did not forget Brukenthal when he had consigned him to the only silent spot in Moscow, or, we should say, lonely spot, for the air was redolent of sound, and it is certain, men

> Bade the cannon to the trumpet speak,
> The trumpets to the heavens, the heavens to earth,

on this festal day, while our good minister, wondering why he was thus environed with mystery, burning with desire to communicate with Theodore Dolgourouki, and dreading some unfortunate slip in the well-meaning speech of poor Alexovitch had produced all this trouble, felt that, let who would be happy, he was not among the number. There were even times when he wished he had never forsaken the children of his adoption, thereby leaving them, or, at least, one of them, to the probable corruption of Ivan Dolgourouki, whose influence over Alexander he had long dreaded.

Leaving him to the alternations of hope and fear, which necessarily attended an imprisonment at once so liberal and so exacting, and which, to a person in his state of mind and his habits of freedom, appeared of interminable, or, at least, hopeless length, we return to our banished family.

CHAPTER XLIII.

When Mary had, as we have seen, somewhat recovered the powers of her mind, she became sensible that she could live, and that, therefore, it was her duty to live on, if only for the sake of Catherine, who would, in a manner, be utterly lost without her. She thought Alexander, as a man, might struggle through life, more especially now he had got a companion, but that to leave so sweet a child in the wilderness would not only imbitter her last moments, but, in some measure, be a reproach to her, as it was certain, much as she had had to struggle with in sorrow, climate, and various privations, she had borne up under all till the knowledge of Theodore's life had unsettled her spirits, by renewing the hopes and fears of renovated love.

She now anxiously followed the steps of Brukenthal and Alexovitch, calculated on the rapidity of their journey in comparison with her own, or with the far longer one which the good man had taken principally on foot, when he came, like the angel of mercy, to their desolate dwelling. No one can know the value of a letter from a far-distant friend but those who are utterly hopeless of receiving such a treasure; there were neither posts nor messengers to Siberia; even the Boyar seemed to have cast his son upon the deep, hopeless of hearing tidings of him till he should return; and though, from time to time, he visited them with great kindness, and spoke encouraging words, yet they well knew that he was ignorant, not only of his son's movements, but of the situation of Russia as regarded the government, on the stability of which it was probable their only hopes of liberation depended.

The long and terrible winter under which they suffered at length began to disperse, and the usual sudden restoration took place, to the astonishment and especial delight of Ivan, who, although he had not seen nearly the worst part of the Siberia winter, was subject to inveighing bitterly against the climate, and denying its power of change. At this time its great promise to the exiles was that of hearing news, and never did a fond wife look to see the messenger from a battle-field more than they desired to see the wonted pedler, who might give them tidings of the capital, and, by some barely possible chance, tell the fate of Brukenthal, who, they well knew, would seek for such travellers by every possible medium.

Long did they wait in vain; either the severity of the winter had been spoken of and scared them from their usual journey, or some better market was opened in the neighbourhood of Tobolsk; and even the prospect of finer furs at Berenzof would not tempt them. At length one solitary tramper arrived after the fair at Nishnei Novogorod, and to him they looked as to a messenger from another world.

They now learned the reason of every other pedler's absence: all the world was gone to Moscow, where the Empress Anna was to be

crowned amid her ancient and adoring people; everywhere the magnates of every land were pouring forth; he had met thousands in the Ukraine, and beheld them on the Volga; they were traversing the steppes, they were skimming the rivers. Tradesmen of every description were taking their wares to the great mart; himself and one or two more visited the desert, in order to obtain good bargains from those dealers who had no chance of securing choice of customers.

The unusual length of the winter had enabled Alexander to secure some furs, since he had been assisted by Count Ivan, but they were of a far inferior quality to those taken by his friend, and would do little more than pay his own tax; but he entered on the sale with spirit, because he thought that, at a time of public rejoicing, the empress would be likely to perform acts of mercy; and he trusted that, as the news of the coronation would have reached Moscow by the time of the travellers' arrival, they would remain there until this magnificent ceremony gave an opportunity of petitioning the empress. Little did they think that poor Brukenthal had twice traversed three hundred miles of his wearisome journey, and as little that the Empress was even now wearing the furs which Alexander had procured; still, much in the dark as they remained, since they knew the same causes existed for hope as before, and had a perfect reliance on their revered friend, their hearts were cheered by the pedler's communication, and, as usual, he became, for a short time, their welcome guest.

As the man drew towards the table on which Mary placed bread, meat, and the common drink of the country, Ivan, who was mending a fishing-net, turned with an indignant air towards the window, muttering something that seemed to be "Prince Menzikoff's daughter is strangely employed." The man caught the first words (though her for whose ear they were designed did not), and he said, with a tone of great feeling,

"Yes, the good prince is gone; God rest his soul! our country will never see a greater man, I take it, and we have lost another very good one, the grand mareschal Dolgourouki."

Ivan started, but turned farther from the table; but, in doing so, he cast a beseeching look to Alexander, who was smoothing his skins in order to make them appear to advantage. Feeling assured that Ivan desired to hear more of his family, but was unwilling to expose himself, he said to the trader, "Of what complaint did the good mareschal die?"

"Marry, sir, of old age, to my mind; but there are not a few who say that the disgrace of his great nephew, Count Ivan, was the death of him; not, as I suppose, he loved him, for nobody did that except the Czar Peter, and he found him out towards the last, they say."

"Let us talk about the furs, friend," said Alexander.

"Why, for the matter o' that, they are the better subjects; and the name of Count Ivan must needs be a bitter word to you; besides, they say one should never speak ill of the dead."

"The *dead!*" exclaimed every one, involuntarily.

"Why, if he isn't dead, he soon will be: he was sentenced to the mines by the new empress afore she'd reigned a month, and I spoke with several who saw him in chains at Nishnei Novogorod. 'Twould have been a strange thing if he had escaped; there's a Ruler higher than the emperor, though many of the great seem to forget it."

When Ivan saw the man sit down in easy fellowship with the household, his pride rendered him extremely indignant; and when he first mentioned the name of his family, he used threatening gestures, which Alexander repelled by signifying that the stranger was under his protection; but now his spirit instantly quailed, though he knew the assertion to be false, and the mere idle chit-chat of the common people, yet the very word "mines" had a thrilling effect on his nerves, and he hastened to leave the cottage, lest any suspicion of his identity should arise, and the pedler, in the hatred he had conceived for him, so speak of his apparent welfare as to lead to a severer sentence.

Mary saw him depart with much satisfaction; for, although desirous of saving him from the mortification the pedler was likely to inflict in reflecting on his past conduct, the name of Dolgourouki was music in her ears, and she could not lose the opportunity of inquiring whether Theodore had returned to Russia.

"Yes; that prince who was gone so long, the people about Pozeck feared he would never come back, has returned; and, as I am told, is such a favourite with the empress, it would be no great wonder if she married him."

"Married him!" gasped Mary.

"Why not? he is a born prince; no bit of an upstart, made yesterday: he is handsome, and good, and brave. I wonder where she could do better; all I fear (and many other fear too) is that she will not do so well, dear heart."

Our trading politician cast a fearful look around, lest the walls should whisper to the winds his audacious surmise; but, too much imbued with the spirit of his class to be silent in a place where his information, whether true or false, was listened to with deep interest, he could not forbear to add, in a low voice and with marked emphasis,

"Biron is recalled; I passed him on the road near Pultava. I fear much our great empress will never wed the prince I spoke of."

Alexander, who had seen the receding colour of Mary, and felt for poor Ivan's self-inflicted hunger, hastened to converse with the trader as such, thinking justly no news from the world they had lost was better than that which was, probably, false and certainly embarrassing. Finding that Ivan was determined to skulk in the coppice till the trader had departed from the premises, he accompanied the unconscious alarmer to the village under pretence of business, and took care to leave him there, after accepting from him very inadequate exchanges for his peltry.

When Ivan had returned to the cottage in consequence of having seen the departure of the stranger, Mary could not forbear remarking the effect of that suffering he had doubtless endured during his few hours' absence; for he appeared as if years had passed over him, and reminded her of her father in his first days of affliction. Full as her mind was of other things, yet she could not forbear looking upon him with sincere pity, and advised him, after taking food, to compose himself by sleep, adding that he must be prepared for such visitants, for, since one had ventured, others might be expected."

"I shall always hide myself the moment I see any human being approach the place. I had rather be torn to pieces by the wolves, or starved to death in the desert, than be condemned to the mines; and who can say that, if an or-

der to that effect were sent, your brother, my benefactor, might not be condemned along with me?"

Mary shuddered as she ejaculated "God forbid!" The thought was horrible; she sought to shut it out by saying, with a half smile, "Whom do you suppose the good folks of St. Petersburgh would give the empress for a husband?"

"Not Ivan Dolgourouki, I apprehend: Siberia has another *rara avis*."

"No; they say Theodore is the chosen."

"Would to God they spoke—"

Ivan had started from his seat, his eyes flashing fire, and his lately shrunken form expanding to its full height, as if by sudden inspiration; but, as he checked his strange exclamation, he sank down on his seat, and covered his face with his hands for some time, when he arose, and, without uttering another syllable, either from a sense of shame or grief, retired to his usual couch in Alexander's chamber.

Mary felt offended, surprised, and unhappy. She could not doubt but Ivan had wished, though he did not fully express it, that Theodore should marry the empress; and the sudden flash of his eye seemed like the rekindling of an aspiring courtier's hopes; and how did the tones of his voice at that moment differ from the deep and mournful ones in which, but just before, he had spoken with such horror of the mines, and such grateful tenderness towards her brother! While thus musing, the words escaped her, "Can this be ambition?"

"No, lady, it is love," was replied in a low but distinct whisper.

Mary started, and beheld Katinzka (her good help) close beside her, looking upon her with all a mother's solicitude. She in general moved about her employments so quietly, and had attended to Mary in her hours of languor so affectionately, that she was not only valuable, but dear to her; and, having received abundant proofs of her good sense as well as her good disposition—knowing, too, that there are few family secrets where all are dwellers in one room, though fluttered, and, in fact, alarmed, she replied, in a confidential tone,

"Count Ivan could not experience such agitation from a passion which he had long known to be hopeless. No; it was the bursting out of that flame which, in his nature, was always the strongest—the love of power, the exercise of pride."

"No doubt he has plenty of that; but his astonishment at that moment gave birth to hope he had never felt till then; though suddenly checked since it has been awakened, it will be so again, and may be a source of great trouble to you all."

"To himself it will doubtless be such; but, as we cannot help him in his trouble, we are not likely to be teazed by him. Indeed, he has never mentioned the Princess Elizabeth but once—never even alluded to her."

"Nor ever will again. *You, you only*, possess his heart. Is he not happy even here? with all his burning pride, his indignant hatred, his luxurious habits, and even his frequent personal sufferings, he is happy: love alone could render him so. Even since I came I have seen him change from a lion to a lamb, but it was from the humbleness of his station, from the hopelessness of his passion. Should any circumstance occur, or even a false report of any circumstance, which destroyed your prospect of recall, or gave Prince Theodore to another, ah! what would become of you if he resumed the nature of the lion? Some men are cruel in their persecution of those to whom they give their hearts—they wound whom they woo."

Every word of the usually silent Katinzka made a deep and most painful impression on Mary, for her eyes, thus painfully opened, saw, even in the friendly pains taken to restore her spirits, in which Ivan had talked continually of Theodore, a gradual increase of the interest with which it had been her misfortune to inspire him. Of late he had never mentioned his name, or listened to those allusions by which she had, in the modest fondness of her heart, sought to draw him to the old subject; he had many times returned abruptly to the house when Alexander was at a considerable distance, and had been more affectionate to Catherine than he was wont, as if seeking for a medium through which to conciliate her sister. Every circumstance tended to increase her disquiet, since she could not fail to be sensible that, as a companion, Ivan Dolgourouki was every way serviceable to her brother, and had undoubtedly been so to herself, although she never could divest her mind of a certain dread of him, from which Alexander was entirely free—he had only heard of his evil influence, she had witnessed it. At this time she felt as if he were an awful demon, born for the destruction of herself and family; and, sinking with a gesture of despair into her father's chair, she exclaimed in equal perplexity and sorrow,

"What shall I do! what shall I do!"

"Take refuge from a bad man with a good one," said Katinzka; "though Alexovitch is distant, he is not dead."

These few words of the young Boyar's attached nurse occasioned almost as great a revulsion of feeling and opinion in Mary as her longer declamation; she felt assured that the good woman had conjured up one lover as a scarecrow to frighten her into the arms of another, which considerably relieved her as to those fears of Ivan she had sought to awake. Nevertheless, enough remained to exercise thought and prudence, and she so far called upon the latter, that, when Alexander returned, he could not read more uneasiness in her ingenuous countenance than that which he himself experienced in consequence of their continued ignorance as to the progress of that friend who was their sole dependance.

Though it was now late, since they were alone (for Katinzka had retired when she had performed what she deemed a duty, and Peter had long been asleep), Alexander sat down to look, as they had often done before, into their own sad situation, and endeavour, by rekindling hope, to preserve fortitude. After talking over all they expected, and more which they scarcely dared to expect, young Menzikoff said,

"I now wish very much, my dear sister, that you should visit the Boyarini; they have been wishing for you and Catherine all the summer, and as it will now be very soon over, we must lose no more time. You will have some news to carry them respecting the coronation, which will render you the more welcome, and, in the course of your stay, they may receive some. We have both been too busy to meet of late."

"I am ready to go to-morrow," said Mary, eagerly.

"You are always ready to be kind, dear Mary, and attend to my wishes; and, since I am certain it will do you good to go, I am aware that I have been selfish in never taking you before. But, indeed, it was not altogether my fault, for I have often talked of it, but Count Ivan has al-

ways opposed it most violently; he insists that it would be a very indelicate thing, a kind of forcing you upon the family; whereas I told him that we thoroughly understood each other, that you had declined their son, yet they still continued their affection. I even told Ivan he was gone a long journey; but he objected, for all that. Surely it is great nonsense for poor people like us, living in the desert, to bind ourselves by mere etiquette, in cases where there can be neither mistake nor impropriety; but you know I am necessarily very ignorant of the forms of society."

"But I am not, brother; and, as I am the principal party, and know I am the obliged party also, I shall accept the invitation."

"But I must tell you the truth: when I spoke very strongly on the subject, saying 'I would take you on the morrow, as the weather was so charming,' he gave me to understand it would injure you irreparably in the eyes of his cousin. Now consider seriously before you resolve."

Mary coloured very highly, but less from the mention of Theodore than from indignation towards Ivan for a *ruse* which she considered one of the old tricks by which he had proved the bane of all her family. As she also considered it another proof of his unhappy attachment to her person, she held absence to be necessary for all their sakes, and therefore observed that her prospects for the future were not bright enough to render her unmindful of the present, and, if he could spare her, she would go for a week or ten days, at all hazards.

"Thank you, dear Mary, for being firm. I have bought you a mantle and a hood, and Catherine a manteau. I could do no more; but you are both so pretty, the chief of Ostrokoi cannot be ashamed of you, though his house may be full of summer friends."

"I have the good father's present of last year in perfection, dear Alexander; besides, no one expects an exile to be well dressed."

"Such troubles as belong to personal appearance are, strictly speaking, perhaps, great weaknesses, and I think I am philosopher enough to despise them in my own person; for, though I have envied my dear friend Alexovitch his horse, yet I never did either his booshe or his vest. Nevertheless, Mary, it goes to my heart to see *you* in sheepskins, and it is when you are milking and churning I recollect my father was Prince of Ingria before either of us was born, and of course the change is affliction. I trust, however, these will be deemed merely passing vanities, purified by the affection with which they are combined."

"Or lessons of virtue, dear brother, showing us that even our virtues are so combined with our failings, they ought to lead to humility. Dear, excellent Brukenthal, shall we ever again hang on thy lips for instruction?"

CHAPTER XLIV.

Alexander slept soundly, awoke refreshed, and, hoping his sister had done the same, did not hesitate to desire Katinzka would awake her for the purpose of proceeding to the Boyar's before the heat of the day came on.

This humble friend was a person of importance in her way, and it was in the first place necessary to propitiate her by entreating her stay until the return of the mistress of the house, a plan to which she readily acceded, because she conceived herself to be, in fact, the cause of the movement; therefore, everything concerned moved with celerity. Mary was not well, for she had slept but little; nevertheless, she exerted herself to the utmost; and when out in the sweet morning air, with that most refreshing of all sights, a world of boundless green around her, and the memory of Ivan Dolgourouki being left behind her, she became renovated and equal to her journey. That unhappy man, after tossing through the whole night in the turmoil of various passions, slept when he should have awoke, and, favoured by the stillness, lay so far into the day, that our young friends had nearly completed their design when he became apprized of their intention.

Katinzka knew nothing beyond its having long been the intention of the princess to go, and believed that she had at last insisted upon her brother's attendance. Ivan saw in this that he had alarmed her; therefore, happily for them all, he determined to watch himself with even more than his past caution; and, as nothing could be extracted from Alexander on his return, because he knew nothing, he was content to render that amiable young man as uncomfortable as he could contrive, by throwing things wrong in their domestic *routine*, and ascribing the confusion to Mary's absence, at the time declaring "there could be no pleasure when Catherine did not cheer the scene with her merry laugh and her infantine gambols."

Still day after day passed on, and two other pedlers made their appearance, to the horror of Ivan and the trouble of Alexander, who really wanted the advice of his sister as to the future wants of the family, yet he would not be harassed into setting out for her to the abridgment of her health and pleasure. He was also extremely busy; and Ivan, necessitated to labour as well as his young master, had the advantage of finding that love and idleness could not be enjoyed in Siberia. By the same medium, fear was also dispelled; and, during the hay harvest, in which they were now engaged, he ceased to tremble at the sight of a fellow-creature, several of whom gladly assisted one whom all his neighbours sincerely loved and desired to benefit.

In the mean time, Mary was at least rendered as happy as the lady of the good Boyar could make her, and Catherine was in a state of such perfect felicity, every kind heart must of necessity sympathize with her. The worthy couple were thankful to hear of the coronation being celebrated at Moscow, because they doubted not that their son would be present, and that it placed him a fifth of the dreary way nearer to them; and they pleased themselves with thinking that, having seen the grandest sight the world had ever witnessed, he would be inclined to relinquish all others, and return home immediately. More acute observers of human nature might have expected that the enjoyment of pleasure would give a taste for pleasure not likely to be soon satisfied; but, as they knew Alexovitch had hitherto found his highest gratification in the exercise of his affections, they expected he would continue to do so, and they were not wrong.

Mary had been with them ten days, and had often wished to see Alexander appear (for she found it altogether impossible to feel satisfied in a state of separation from one attached by so

many ties), when there was a universal confusion through the whole of that everlasting edifice, and it was announced that "Paul had arrived." Well might Paul's appearance cause a sensation, for he was one of the two servants who accompanied the young heir, and had been by him consigned to the command of Mr. Brukenthal.

As this circumstance, together with every other which belonged to their setting out, had been repeatedly mentioned to Mary, she was more than commonly interested in the honest serf's arrival, and felt as if all her future fate, now more than ever eventful, hung on the news she was likely to receive, and was about to fly after the Boyar, when he entered the room with a letter in his hand. That its news was joyful could not be doubted, for he instantly walked up to his wife, kissed her affectionately, and said, "You are the mother of a knight of the order of St. Alexander Newsk. I give you joy of your son's preferment."

"But where is he? When may I see him again?"

"He is now at Moscow, and there is no saying when you will see him again, for I may add (since I shall not grieve our fair guest by the announcement) that there is a lady there by whose side he loves to linger, so far as I can make out; besides, it is plain that his sovereign looks on him with favour, and we cannot tear him from so many attractions."

"Most sincerely do I congratulate you on both accounts," said Mary, "and, indeed, on every present and future circumstance which can arise for the pleasure and benefit of your beloved Alexovitch, who well merits all which fortune or the empress can bestow. But surely he mentions our good Brukenthal?"

"He does indeed mention him," said the Boyar, with a sigh.

"Is he ill? Was the journey too much for him?"

"Neither, neither! he bore it admirably; he exerted himself at Moscow to make money, which at Petersburgh he expended properly; introduced my son to Count Woronzow, went himself to court, and—and—but you shall see Paul; you shall question him as to what followed, for my son is in positive ignorance as to the matter."

"Matter—what matter?" Such was the agitation of Mary, that, when Paul made his appearance, not a single question could escape her lips.

"Tell us all you know respecting the good pastor; my son merely says he is in confinement."

"So he is, please your highness, but he has a palace for a prison; and the people tell me he never was half so well off in his life, for he has plenty of victuals all of the best, and books without number, which, they make account, he likes as well."

"What, is he then imprisoned?" cried Mary, in agony.

"Why to be sure it is a kind of a sort of an imprisonment," said Paul, "because neither master nor anybody else has ever seen him since he went down on his knees to the empress, and said something that made her cry, on which he was shut up all in a hurry, and nothing has been heard of him since save what I have got at times o' the servants; and, so far as I can learn, the good gentleman has nothing to do but sleep and eat—only he must neither speak, nor write, nor be seen by anybody."

With this vague account poor Mary was compelled to be satisfied; but as it was one calculated to render her full of vain conjectures, which yet it was impossible to repress, and which were of a nature to cast a damp on the otherwise unmixed satisfaction of the Boyar's family, she entreated her kind friend to send her home, saying "she could not be happy till she had communicated to her brother the news she had received, especially that part which related to the welfare of Alexovitch."

As the good couple sincerely sympathized with her feelings, a litter was immediately provided for her, and Catherine, there being very little night at this time, though the summer was nearly over. In consequence, she arrived at the cottage when all the family were asleep, but her return was too agreeable not to be hailed with rapture; and Alexander soon welcomed her bearers in the most hospitable manner in his power, and heard with pleasure of the honours bestowed by the empress on his young friend. Katinzka and Peter gladly assisted him, but Ivan kept out of sight, though he listened eagerly to every word that was spoken.

During the little journey Mary had made up her mind not to impart to Alexander the sad news which pressed heavy on her own heart, since the more she considered the matter the more puzzling it appeared to her, and she could not fail to see that Alexander must be as much at a loss for a solution to it as herself. It is hardly likely she would have kept her resolution, since every hour increased the pressure on her spirits, and we know how naturally we all seek the relief of sympathy in cases of suspense and solicitude; but her intention was frustrated by one of the men, who, in the moment of departure, said, "That as Paul had brought good news of the young Boyar, he trusted his fellow-servant would bring better of the old minister, whom they all loved so dearly, and prayed for constantly;" adding, "and he will be here in six weeks, as he will be sent home to give us an account of the coronation."

The word *better* alarmed Alexander, who had thought it strange that his sister should have travelled at so late an hour, and from his anxious inquiries the whole of poor Mary's burdensome story was soon elicited, Ivan now eagerly joining in his inquiries, as everything and every person had, of course, the deepest interest in his eyes, exclusive of his own hopes or fears for the future. Of that which they considered afflictive, the imprisonment of their dear friend, he thought little, saying, "the empress had merely prevented the old man from playing the fool once more, and setting out again for Siberia."

"Then you conclude she will not recall us?" said Mary; "yet Paul says she wept when Brukenthal spoke; her tears must have flowed from pity, not anger, as the foolish man supposed."

"That is more than we know—women's minds run rapidly from one feeling to another, and from the kindest conclusion to the most vindictive intention: it is evident to me that there is nothing to hope for, and that the only consolation you have ever enjoyed is denied to you."

In his own mind Ivan did not believe this; on the contrary, he thought that the emotion ascribed to the empress proceeded from pity, which,

in the course of time, would be displayed; and believed that it was probable the good man, pleased with his success, had ventured to suggest mercy to *him*, which had been rejected, and the petitioner punished, though lightly. He encouraged himself in the belief that liberation would not come during the present year, at all events; and, since he was certain it would not come to him, most sincerely desired it might not arrive to them whose departure would increase the horrors of banishment tenfold. It is possible that on his first arrival, when gratitude alone possessed his mind towards his benefactors, he might have rejoiced in their liberation; but love is a selfish passion, and, in the bosom of a selfish man, forbade even a glimmering of generous emotion.

It had, however, the effect of rendering him more desirous than ever of securing the scanty harvest, increasing the safety and provision for the animals, and assisting Alexander to secure fish and other creatures for winter-stores; but so severely did the young man suffer from the turn affairs had taken, that he could scarcely rouse himself to action. He knew not till now how much he had expected ever since the outset of Brukenthal, though he had dwelt upon it in silence rather than mislead his sister or wound the feelings of his companion, for whom he could not reasonably suppose any effectual intercession could be made. His own hopes arose from the perfect innocence of himself and sisters in all that concerned the affairs of government; but Ivan Dolgourouki, however he might pity him, was unquestionably punished as a criminal, and must continue to suffer until the empress held justice to be satisfied.

The deep despondency evinced by Alexander induced Mary to urge him to steal a day from his avocations and visit the Boyar, as a perusal of his son's letter (which would probably be submitted to him) would at least divert him from those sad thoughts which evidently were sinking his energies, and must incapacitate him from exertions absolutely necessary for them all. Every recollection of the last winter filled her with dread of the advancing one; but no personal suffering was so appalling as the idea of that noble spirit being borne down, that young hope utterly quenched, which had hitherto been so conspicuous in her brother, and which she felt to be her own constant source of exertion and reward also. Eager to escape from the despair which every circumstance seemed to gather around her heart as if to crush it, and feeling as if a more inseparable bar than ever was placed between her and Theodore, she sought to meet him again in the only way possible, by borrowing his letters once more from Ivan, in order to read them during her brother's absence; but she was now civilly but peremptorily refused, and to her dismay, and indeed horror, those precious documents, so inestimable in her sight, were thrust into the stove and consumed before her eyes.

Mary had always dreaded Ivan; but she now added to that dread dislike of so decided a character, that she again felt his residence with them a source of misery she was ill prepared to endure. He made, it is true, many glozing speeches on the necessity of giving her this pain; "since all hope of ever again seeing his cousin was now at an end, it was the part of wisdom to reconcile ourselves to circumstances; that, although he had not endured the whole of a Siberian winter, he had experienced enough to show him the extent of its evils and enable him to bear it; therefore, *she* who had borne so much might surely bear more: it was certain her worst trials were over; the grave had closed upon the sorrows of her beloved parents; the friend she had valued so highly was provided for, perhaps as happily as declining life admitted; the child she loved so fondly was in high health and of exceeding loveliness; her brother was strong to labour and of most amiable temper, and admirable both in principles and abilities; and he possessed a friend, a most devoted friend, one who for *her* would think the sacrifice of wealth, rank, pleasure, life itself—"

"Stay, Count Ivan, stay," cried Mary, in great agitation; "do not degrade yourself even in Siberia: time was you loved Theodore, and acted most honourably between him and his father. The remembrance of your generous conduct at that time has never failed in my eyes to cast a redeeming halo around your character, injurious as your influence has been on me and mine. I have remembered it when the very sound of your voice has been to me terrible as that of a demon—do not compel me to forget it. You must be aware that the daughter of Menzikoff can only tolerate your presence as the relation of Theodore."

"She may nevertheless find me useful, nay, positively necessary, should Alexander be recalled: think of your situation in such a case!"

Mary instantly saw that Ivan Dolgourouki believed that the mission of Brukenthal had sped, notwithstanding his affecting to deny it so positively; and, as she gave him credit for understanding the puzzling and often crooked policy of courts far better than herself, it brought to her heart so much of hope that she could allow for that despair which prompted him to practise deceit, and endeavour at any hazard to secure himself a companion. As the thought rose to her mind, and gave her countenance a perplexed and troubled expression, he repeated the question, and added, in tones of the utmost humility and tenderness, that, if she were committed to his care, in the course of a few years Alexander might be enabled to secure the liberation of both; whereas she would, as dowager empress, be so decidedly an object of envy to one (who, being a usurper, would always dread the usurpation of others), that he was convinced she had no possible chance for release.

"There can be no fear of me, for I am believed to be Ulrica, and I am willing to pass for Ulrica; and, if recalled, will gladly retire until I can be received as a nun: even if Alexander were compelled to leave me, I should not be destitute, for the governor would appoint me a keeper, the Boyar would be my friend, and I may add, my property in this poor country would ensure me attention. God forbid that I should be tried by such a terrible loss as my invaluable brother! but if I am, he will, I doubt not, support me under it. I have lived through so much, that I will not doubt my own power of sustaining more."

Ivan was extremely disconcerted by the calm tone she assumed, and which would have been impossible to her if she had for a moment believed that Alexander would have been taken from her, or that Ivan should have become

through any circumstance the arbiter of her future destiny. His eye was continually upon her, for he felt as if she were alone; his eloquence and tears could not be withstood by one so gentle and so defenceless; but Katinzka was always by her side, and, as he now feared that Alexander, when told of his conversation, would deem it right to discharge him, he affected to consider all which had passed as the idle badinage which an unhappy exile might adopt to while away an hour of misery.

"You have destroyed letters which would have solaced many hours of sorrow to an unhappy exile, made such by your wickedness, Count Ivan!"

"Simply because they were injurious to her: hearts and hopes are unnecessary and injurious in Siberia, and the wise will abandon them as adding to their tortures."

Mary made no reply; she well knew that in that poor cottage the holiest affections of the heart had been happily exercised, and the hopes of Heaven given happiness on earth, despite of the troubles of situation and the infirmities of nature. How much were the sorrows and anxieties of even Siberia increased to her! What would she not have given to have beheld Brukenthal in the place now occupied by Ivan Dolgourouki! and how strange did it seem that the same man who had driven her from society should make solitude hateful to her! that the serpent, whose winding coils had crushed her in the palace, should poison her in the cottage!

Scheme after scheme rose to her mind for relieving herself of the presence of Ivan, but were quickly dismissed in consequence of the actual fear of his power which still hung over her. She could scarcely forbear to think he still held some mysterious, indefinable, but positive influence in the Russian court, and, strong as her mind had proved itself in bearing up so bravely against the tempest, she now sunk under a superstitious belief like that of the evil eye, and almost conceived the handsome and elegant Ivan Dolgourouki, the accomplished courtier, who had lifted his eyes to royal beauty, a personification of the great principle of evil.

Never had the step of Alexander been so welcome as now; and, though he entered weary and hungry, Mary was not slow to perceive that his countenance had lost much of its despondency, so that it appeared as if his hopes were rekindled, or his resolution strengthened; and, after a time (seeing that Ivan did not depart, but sat in dogged silence, as if waiting an opportunity for satirical remark or covert insult), she ventured to say, "Have you seen Alexovitch's letter?"

"I have read it twice over, and found all as you said, save one little bit, just under the seal, which to me was worth all the rest ten times over."

"What could it be?"

"These words: 'Tell Alec, Count Woronzow has seen his black foxskin, the fox we ferreted out under the low rock, being sewed on the Czarina's coronation robe.' Now, what do you think of that? Is it not a proof that she has accepted it, and that she will remember me by-and-by?"

"It is a proof that you are an excellent shot, have sold good skins, and that the empress knows what is good," said Ivan, in a caustic tone.

"Well, the Boyar thinks as I do, and is sorry he could not decipher these words before. I am quite sure our good friend *gave*, not *sold*, that particular skin to the empress, and I am determined to believe she will remember us and recall us. We can have no enemies at court now, you know."

Alexander spoke without any allusion to the past; but, seeing the countenance of Ivan, with his usual good-nature he was about to apologize, when Mary interrupted him by saying,

"If, brother, you do not suffer your hopes for the future to interfere with your present labours in providing for winter, I cannot help thinking it is well to entertain them, even if you are disappointed for the next seven years; but Count Ivan has suggested the possibility of your being recalled *alone*. Had such a thought ever entered your mind?"

"Never, Mary! *never:* in fact, I would not leave you for the world. I promise to be a voluntary inhabitant in Siberia to my last breath, rather than abandon you. I believe that, even had you married Alexovitch, I could not have parted from you; but now, oh, Mary! your own heart tells you the thing is impossible. Count Ivan has little idea of the bonds which unite brethren in Siberia: our hearts do not freeze, if our fingers do."

Mary could not forbear to cast a triumphant look towards Ivan (for she had felt assured he underrated Alexander when he had so cruelly harassed her a few hours before), but so wretched did he now appear, so beseechingly did his eyes entreat her to spare him, that she did not say a single word which could irritate the feelings of her brother, or add to the misery of the count. It was enough that her reliance on the one was strengthened, and her expectations increased, even by the evident fears of the other.

CHAPTER XLV.

The next morning Alexander urged Peter to labour with more than his wonted industry in all points connected with their farm, as if to prove that he had imbibed no false notion of his situation, but was determined to make all possible preparation, not only for winter, but a long and severe one. He had always acted with great delicacy towards Ivan, who had, in general, been much on the alert, and really of great use, but who now appeared indolent, and frequently in a cold and scornful, though quiet manner, would observe, "it was foolish for one on the eve of emancipation to toil so severely."

Provoked at length, Alexander said one day, after their usual dinner, which was taken about noon, "Surely it is both foolish and unkind, Count Ivan, to reproach me for entertaining hope for the future, which animates me to the performance of duties for the present. You have never once heard me say that I expected release this year or next, though the innocence of my conduct, and the justice of my cause, might surely excuse my thoughts wandering in that direction. I may, perhaps, have said too much of my prowess as a hunter; but, remember, I am only eighteen, and I am the son of a man you acknowledge to have been brave and active, qualities which our dear pastor said made all men somewhat vainglorious. Besides, where

is the man that would not be thankful by any possible medium to contribute to the benefit of my sisters?—one all beauty and goodness, the other all innocence and sweetness."

"There are few persons of your age with so little of the fault you speak of as yourself, Alexander," replied Ivan Dolgourouki, in an altered tone; "and, if I seek to check your expectations, it is only because I know better what belongs to courts than yourself, and cannot bear that you should suffer from self-deception. Innocence and merit are so far from being pleas to favour, that they are reasons against bestowing it, because they imply power in the possessor, and the active, clever owner of a crown concentrates all power in his own person; nor can I blame him; still less can I censure the same spirit in a female, for it is natural that her demands for personal admiration should be added to her love of rule."

"You look only on the dark side of things, Count Ivan. Peter the Great loved power, because he required it to effect lofty purposes; yet he delegated it freely to my father, because he saw in him a worthy instrument of assistance: his widow, who was surely a beautiful woman, was equally liberal, and I have no right to doubt the present empress having some good points in her character."

"Brother, brother, don't be talking," cried Catherine, rushing into the cottage, followed by Peter; "come here, and look at a big litter, and one, two, oh! many a man."

"Master, master, I knew it would be so; *he* said it would, and he was always right," was heard in the voice of the serf.

Ivan was near the little window: he looked out, and became blanched by terror as he exclaimed, "The mines! the mines!"

"No, no," cried Peter, in an exulting tone, "men go to the mines in fetters, and are guarded by foot-soldiers; these are on horseback, and our own keeper pointing out the way. Master knows I said long since they would die thousands of versts from hence. I, Peter Peff, said it when I begged for the empty grave—and why did I say it, but because the good prince felt that God himself put it in his heart."

"Peace, fellow! the wagon is coming here, indeed. Oh, Theodore, are you too banished, and for my fault! Now may they take me when they will."

Mary and Alexander, though trembling exceedingly, rushed to the door, and stood silent and almost senseless with surprise and solicitude. In a few moments, their guardian, with an air of the most joyous gratulation, had pointed out the young man to the officer, on which the stranger presented to him the firman of the empress, commanding "Alexander Menzikoff and his sisters Ulrica and Catherine to surrender themselves to Lieutenant Paul Chichekoffe, to be by him conducted to the presence of her majesty, at her residence in the Kremlin at Moscow."

The light forsook the eyes of the dazzled yet transported youth, but he felt that the sense of the command was gracious, and rushed to the arms of Mary; they wept for joy, so overpowering in its suddenness that it might never have entered their minds as a possibility till now, much as, in fact, it had occupied them. There was a kind of terror mingled with their thankfulness; the gift seemed too vast for their comprehension, too valuable for them to grasp and to rely on; it seemed as if a flood was pouring on the parched throat, that was only capable of receiving a stinted stream.

Their conductor was a man of feeling, but his perceptions were limited, and his orders strict; and, long before either of our liberated exiles could utter a word to each other, or address those thanks to the Most High which were swelling in their bosoms, he said to Alexander,

"Your highness will excuse my saying that my orders were peremptory; you must depart immediately, and be all dressed in the regular sheepskins of the country, exactly resembling those originally provided for you."

As the parties were not thus arrayed at present, because the winter had not yet set in, it was evident that beyond the few minutes necessary for adopting this change they must not remain; but at this moment Katinzka, with the ready wit of a woman in a dilemma, advancing, said hastily,

"Good officer, yourself and your men must be fed, and his highness's cottage can yet provide both for man and beast. I am a soldier's widow, and can cook quickly. Come, Peter, Peter, let us bestir ourselves."

Thus roused to consider their situation, and ever alive to the voice of humanity, both brother and sister instinctively recollected Ivan Dolgourouki in his overwhelming fears, and the actual misfortune their removal must be to him. Alexander, therefore, led the officer into the cottage, and, seizing the arm of Ivan as he was darting into the chamber, said, in a low voice, "Do not excite attention by betraying fear; you are unknown to all but the keeper, who regards you only as my servant; no one will injure you if you do not injure yourself; try to seem busy by feeding the soldiers' horses."

Ivan obeyed mechanically in the first instance, for his faculties were as bewildered as those of his friend had been; but he soon became sensible that it would be wise in him to appear indifferent to what was passing, and abstain from presenting his name or memory in contact with that of Menzikoff, and he hastened out, thankful to escape eyes which might have seen him before in the circles of royalty, but were not likely to recollect him in sheepskins.

Mary was kneeling at the tomb of her parents, and in broken accents now pouring out her thanks to God, now bidding an eternal adieu to those blessed remains still hallowed in her eyes, and connected with all the most affecting and afflicting incidents of her unfortunate life. Most earnestly did she desire to have spent hours in this seclusion, but she knew her duty forbade, and she was compelling herself to rise, when she heard the words "Forgive, forgive!" whispered close to her ear, and, starting, saw Ivan kneeling beside her.

"It was not well, Count Ivan, to intrude on such a moment as this."

"It was not, but misery like mine cannot stand on forms: do not injure me with Theodore; forget all I have dared to urge; remember only the miserable are rarely very wise or very good."

"I am not vindictive, and at such a moment as this I cannot retain anger or suffer from fear; therefore, depend upon it, you will find no enemy in me; do not detain me another moment."

She flew past him, ascended the chamber,

which had so often witnessed her tears, and found Katinzka dressing little Catherine in her rugged garments, to her great annoyance, as she had a little milk-white kid in her arms, which she insisted on carrying with her. In a very short time Mary herself was equipped, and had bestowed all her own little stock of clothing on her kind assistant, whom she charged with innumerable remembrances to the good Boyar and his sweet lady. Just as she stepped down where the men were taking a parting glass, Alexander thus addressed Ivan, whom he had called from the little chapel.

"Ivan, before I depart, I present to you, in the presence of your good guardian, and in the belief that he will guarantee the possession to you, those excellent firearms which have been of so much use to myself; also my cattle and goats, and the furniture of this cottage: you will find or make a well-stored cellar before winter, I doubt not. To Peter I give my sheep and my horse, as he grows old, and needs one; my excellent fishing-tackle I give to our keeper, whom I request to see my faithful Peter buried in our sepulchre. In this house I trust he will both live and die."

In the language of Holy Writ, it might be truly said, Peter "lifted up his voice and wept," for he was at once delighted with the blessing bestowed on his young master and her he deemed his angel mistress, and distressed in the extreme by the pain of parting with them. Perhaps there was yet a severer pang experienced than all beside in losing the beautiful child, who had delighted in being carried in his strong arms, and who was now fondly stroking his beard, and calling him her dear old Peter, who fed her lambs, and gathered her cranberries, and who must follow poor Catherine, or she should cry.

The officer gave Mary his arm to conduct her to the wagon, which, on account of the inequalities of the ground, was obliged to stand at some distance from the cottage, and which was now surrounded by every creature belonging to the village which had the power of walking thither; and though all *said* they rejoiced, the women were weeping, and the men condoling each other. All felt alike a sense of loss in the kindness and benevolence, the good advice, the patient attention, the sympathizing tenderness, and the holy lessons they had each, at one time or other, received from some member of a family which they honoured and loved in every branch, but lauded most highly in the person of the departed. Of course, Aishey and Katinzka held themselves especially privileged to mourn; and, though the parting kiss of the princess was a consoling honour, it was likewise a touching one, and Mary herself was utterly overpowered by her feelings.

It had been Ivan's earnest wish to wait upon her to the last moment, but the officious subaltern defeated his intention; yet, at this moment, his feelings would not be repelled; therefore he rushed forward, and, lifting her up in his arms, carried her to the wagon, and placed her carefully on the comfortable seats which had been provided; then, conscious that his action might draw remark, he took Catherine out of Peter's arms, and placed her also within. The poor man looked surprised and grieved, and the child grumbled, for she had dropped the kid in the flutter of the moment.

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"You are very good, Count Ivan," said Mary, "but must add to your services by telling Peter to come to the carriage."

As the old man drew nigh, Mary leaned forward, and, putting both hands out of the carriage, she said, "Peter, give me your hands; you were the first person in this country to whom I spoke, and you shall be the last. I will esteem and thank you as long as I live; and those who are good to you, Peter, will never fail to be respected by me. I give you this little book of prayers to keep for my sake, not doubting but Aishey, or some other friend (perhaps Count Ivan), will read it for you."

As Mary spoke, she looked confidingly towards Ivan; he felt and bowed in the lowliness of a heart breaking with various sorrows, and, as yet, untaught to seek for their only consolation. Just then Alexander seized his hand, wrung it, and jumped into the wagon, which instantly set out with celerity.

The little crowd moved off in the same track, keeping the vehicle in their sight as long as it was possible. Ivan looked like a statue, gazing in the same direction, pale, gaunt, and frozen, the impersonation of despair. Peter was on his knees, his hands clinched, his face turned up to heaven, huge round tears gathering in his eyes, and rolling slowly down his furrowed cheeks and grizzly beard, while his tongue incessantly repeated, "Glory to God for his blessing to his servants, but Peter has lost them all—*lost them all!* the sheep are good sheep, the horse a good horse, but what can they say to Peter?"

"Go home, honest man, go home," said Ivan, who wished to be alone.

"Not yet, not yet," sobbed Peter; "she taught me to pray, and I will pray for *her*, had she done as much for you, we would have knelt together."

Ivan turned on his heel and walked slowly towards the coppice, convinced he was the most injured of human beings, at once desiring to set his heel on the neck of Peter and crush out his ignoble soul, and determining so to act towards the reptile serf that Mary should tender him her thanks, and seek his liberation in return for his kindness. Sorrow, mortification, vindictive rage, and chilling despair by turns flitted through his bosom, in which a sense of hopeless love rested as the predominant feeling. "Had she not been sent for at that express moment, surely she had listened to his suit; her parting look bespoke her pity; and at one time he had won her confidence, and rendered her sensible of the efficacy of his services, the qualities of his mind. Alas! that was only when he spoke of Theodore, to whom every hour was now conducting her."

Long did he wander, compelled to shrink from the future, and abhor remembrance of the past; but the present, at length, induced him to return, for the breeze of evening was that of Siberia, and its whisper told of the winter which was hastening to envelop him in all its horrors. Cold and comfortless, he returned to his cottage, and in an authoritative tone commanded Katinzka to prepare his supper, and Peter to replenish the stove.

"I have done my duty for the night, and a heavy heart wants sleep," said the serf, turning round in the corner where he had stretched himself.

"While you fetch some wood, I will get you some food," said the female, "because it is the last kind office I can do you. Before you wake, I shall be four or five versts on my way homeward."

"Homeward! You cannot mean to leave me, Katinzka?"

"I mean nothing else, depend upon it, Count Ivan. This is not a place for anybody to winter in used to our sheltered valley and warm mansion, to say nothing of the comfort of half a hundred fellow-servants to talk with. I came here by command of my lady; I have fulfilled her bidding, and I return to my own regular service about her person."

"But here you will be your own mistress, Katinzka, and I will give you—"

"Give *me!* Lord help you, man, I would not take even yourself as a gift; no, I would not marry you for the wide, *wide* world; every time the wind blew loud, I should think the devil was coming for his own, and might take me along with you by mistake. I am very superstitious in dark weather; and, now the good are all gone, I should fancy the old prince sat night and day in that chair, with his white beard and silky locks, his bright eyes and his feeble hands turning over the leaves of his Bible."

As the good woman spoke, she shuddered, and put her hand over her eyes, as if sensible she had raised the apparition she feared. Ivan would have ridiculed her fears, but he was weary and hungry, and only felt that a new and unforeseen source of trouble was added to the evils before him. Peter, "the log Peter," was the only human being to whom he could speak, and even he would not obey him; and who could say that, in such circumstances, his own mind would not become weak, and be haunted by horrible phantoms! The bones of Menzikoff were indeed near him, the wrongs of Menzikoff were continually pressing on his memory—his conscience. If, indeed, the spirits of the murdered could revisit earth, and gaze on their destroyers, what more likely than that Menzikoff should seek to appal the enemy who had pursued him and his family to death and destruction, especially when he dwelt in the very spot that had witnessed his long sufferings and received his latest breath?

A new day, and the exertions it must call for, would doubtless restore the powers of Count Ivan for the present, though the words of Katinzka might often, in the howling night, and the long dark day, recur to him. She had fulfilled her intention, and departed some time before he rose; and henceforth silence, which appeared palpable, rested on that cheerless habitation, which so lately rejoiced in the gentle reasonings of Mary, the spirited relations of Alexander, and the innocent laugh of Catherine: this was, indeed, to drink the poisoned chalice which imbitters exile, and be, in all its severest sense, banished to Siberia.

CHAPTER XLVI.

For a considerable time the wagon trotted merrily on which bore our exiled family towards that native country all hold so dear, for the ground was dry, the short grass was unbroken by impediments, and the horses refreshed. But astonishment still sat on the lips of the elder travellers, producing silent thanksgiving, now and then interrupted by a kindly remembrance of the cottage, or, rather, of the creatures connected with it, and a reverential affection for the bones of those beloved ones who hallowed it.

With the child, all that belonged to her late home was matter of lamentation, for she had no recollection of any other, and her many questions induced them to experience what might be called the reality of the change they experienced; and Mary confessed to herself that, such had been the overwhelming nature of the surprise, she had even forgotten Theodore more completely than at any period previous to their parting. In recovering her usual train of thought, she felt more happy than she had done before, yet she wept abundantly, and Alexander wept with her, as if his overburdened spirit could only thus gain the power to be thankful and happy.

Exhausted nature found refuge in sleep; and, when the relays of horses were obtained, the officer, seeing their situation, pushed on for another stage, well knowing that the roads, even in this best of all seasons, would soon become very trying to the females, and they had got two stages beyond Berenzof before he sought for the rest required for himself and his men.

The post-house where they stopped was so miserable a place that they were earnestly advised to remain in the wagon, which was also entered by their guide, as a far more comfortable resting-place than the suffocating post-house, which Mary shuddered to recollect as the spot where the pestilence had been caught by her family. When they set forward again, she became anxious to see the face of the country and recall places to her mind, but both Alexander and herself found scarcely one view that appeared in the least like that which dwelt on their memory. In one case they had met the terrible winter of the country, increasing in its horrors; in the other, they were pursuing the beauties of summer, which, although fading in fact, appeared to them increasing in fertility every verst, and giving to their young hearts the promise of happiness eagerly grasped, but yet existing in a form undefined and indistinct, an enchanting promise rather than an existing good.

On the third day, no care on the part of their driver could preserve them from those terrible pitches they well remembered enduring on their former journey, and therefore, when the child was satisfied to remain with her pet kid, the brother and sister walked within a little distance of the vehicle, and were thus enabled to enjoy each other's conversation, which was apt to fall on the sufferings their dear mother had experienced on the same route, though neither could remember whether she had advanced thus far into the country they were leaving. When, however, they stopped for the night, both recollected that in that post-house her corpse had been coffined, and that here they had received all possible attention from the poor inhabitants around, and Alexander first felt the evils of that poverty under which it seemed he was doomed to labour for the rest of his existence. The joyous expression of his countenance vanished as he exclaimed, "Alas! Mary, we have nothing

to give them, and how soon shall we find that we have nothing for ourselves !"

"We can thank them, and rejoice their kind hearts by proving that we are now returning. I greatly prefer sleeping in the wagon, but I will certainly go in, though I fear the place is full of men who may be drinking."

The late terrible winter had proved fatal to the man and his wife who were the former inhabitants, but the young woman they found there well remembered Mary, and hastened to show her a little article which had been part of the dress of the Princess Menzikoff, and given to her by Ulrica in reward for her attentions on that eventful night. How gladly would Mary now have purchased this riband—how fully did she enter into the feelings of Alexander !

"The men that are now coming in," said the hostess, "are those who are come to make the thing they call the monument for the grand lady who died about six versts below ; they are good customers to us, for the prince who sent them is a bountiful master to his serfs."

"A monument to my mother ?" cried Mary, in great agitation ; "this is the work of Theodore Dolgourouki."

"Yes, that's the name, sure enough, as the master builder, who is now coming in, will tell you."

Mary could not address this person, but Alexander did, and learned with a sensation of the most lively gratitude that the intention mentioned in his letters by Theodore was at this very time being fulfilled. He was told that a very simple inscription would dedicate the monument "to the memory of the Princess Menzikoff, who died near that place, on her road to Siberia ;" the prince having observed that "comments on her journey must entail infamy on his own name, and he was inadequate to any description of her virtues."

"Excellent, excellent Theodore," cried Mary; "the world has not changed you, and while you are in it we can never want a friend : place me in the wagon, brother, that I may have the liberty of praising him unwitnessed."

But it was not so easy for Alexander to quit the rural architect employed on this memorable erection, for he was a young man of ability and good feeling, and delighted to meet in such a garb one so intelligent as the young stranger, and who, on revealing his name, became so interesting. Mary had, therefore, the power of soliloquizing on the virtues and endearing qualities of her long-loved Theodore till morning, when the officer acceded to their wishes of hastening to the monument, whither the builder gladly accompanied them.

The first glance Mary cast on the stones which were dedicated to this hallowed purpose made her earnestly desire to alight and fly towards them, but this her brother resisted, saying, "No, dear Mary, I will go first, for my claims supersede yours. I never was parted a day from my mother for my whole life ; I was her only son, and received her daily instructions ; her last words were addressed to me ; she bade me obey you, and I have done so till now, Mary—have I not ?"

"You have been worthy of her indeed, my brother : go and receive in the edifice that honours your mother the freedom to which manhood and circumstances entitle you ; henceforward I promise to obey *you*."

Alexander jumped from the wagon, and was concealed from every eye within the little tower which constituted the principal part of the unfinished edifice ; for some minutes not a sound was heard save the half-suppressed sobbings of poor Mary ; but at length the officer gave his hand to her, the builder lifted little Catherine to the ground, and they proceeded to view the monument.

The morning was glowing beneath an autumnal sun ; the air was pure and refreshing ; and an open country, vast and sublime as the ocean, was around them. Alexander took the clasped hands of Mary in his own, led her within the sacred enclosure, and, by the waving of his hand and the motion of his eye, seemed to accept the peace and the sunshine which reigned over all, as a happy augury for the future.

"It is, indeed, a contrast to that most terrible day when we lost her," said Mary ; "but we will not look back at a time when Providence opens a promise of good before us so much beyond our hopes : let us thank this kind and sensible young man for the pains he is taking."

It was by few words that the deeply-affected son could express the mingled feelings which overpowered him, but they were gratefully accepted and well remembered by the artist, who long stood leaning against the building as the little cavalcade wound away in the distance, every eye gazing on the monument in the wilderness, devoted to the name of their idolized mother.

Catherine alone could talk on this day, and even she, poor child, had a sense of sorrow on her mind she could neither account for nor elude ; it was so far well that it checked her speaking of Count Ivan, who was her most general subject (because she pitied him much more than Peter, who was always happy with the sheep) ; and it must be supposed that, under the influence of those emotions so powerfully awakened, the name of their mother's destroyer could not be tolerated.

The empress had been so considerate for the feelings which might be supposed to affect the minds of the exiles as to command that they should return by way of Pultava, and rest there for a week, thereby affording them time to inspect the scene of their father's most momentous success, and of the ruin of Russia's greatest foe. This permission was thankfully received, and produced the excitement, the exultation, and also the pain, so natural to the hearts of children called upon to the contemplation of a beloved father's glories, and led thence to his sufferings. As, however, they had not been permitted to alter their dress, and it formed a portion of the ignominy inflicted on their father, and their persons were too remarkable even under that disguise to escape observation, they soon became desirous of having their term of rest abridged, for Pultava was a gay town, full of soldiers, and it was every day more necessary to their comfort to arrive at the end of their wearisome journey.

The more they advanced into the populous part of their country, the more anxious they naturally became as to the situation it was intended by the empress they should occupy. Alexander exceedingly disliked the idea of going into the army, but he feared he should be provided with a commission as the means of bread for himself and sisters, though each of them had

claims on the crown for support. Mary looked forward with better hopes as respected her subsistence, for she knew that Theodore's friend had secured her from want, but she dreaded a degradation which might place her below the situation required for the wife of an ancient Knezer's descendant. The father of Theodore was as much an object of fear to her as Ivan had been; and as one of her first sources of satisfaction on her recall had arisen from removal far from him, so did she experience, in a lesser degree, fear of encountering his relation.

These and many other sources of solicitude gave way, as proofs of a fruitful and beautiful country appeared around them; and in passing through a considerable part of the Ukraine, they were never wearied of gazing on the cornfields and orchards, chatting, when occasion served, to the peasantry, and expatiating on the prosperity of the country, the blessings of society, and their own peculiar sense of its enjoyment; and much as there really might be in their state to fear or to desire, they felt for the present that they could never be again unhappy if permitted to remain in their own country.

With all the advantages of travelling they had enjoyed, yet eight long weeks had passed when they drew near to Moscow, and they well knew that snow had long hurtled in the air, and that piercing winds blew round their late cottage, for symptoms of winter were gathering around them even here. It was evening, but not dark, when they arrived in the precincts of Moscow, and as horses were procured without difficulty, and the roads good, they now pushed on rapidly, and their hearts beat almost audibly with the anxieties inevitable at such a period. "Where was their dear Brukenthal? Should they be welcomed by one to whom they owed so much? Was the empress still kindly inclined to them, or had the cares of her station rendered them of less value in her sight, and would she neglect to foster what she had designed to save?" were questions passing both their minds continually, yet in Mary's was one paramount to all, "Where is Theodore? and can he still love me, altered as I must be?"

In the course of their journey, Alexander had been frequently struck by the calmness and confidence evinced by Mary when she looked forward to the future, friendless and impoverished as they were, remembering how gentle were her manners, how timid by nature, and how long her enforced solitude had lasted, and the glances he occasionally gained of her troubled countenance at the present awful crisis afflicted him exceedingly. Recollecting that they might soon be parted, and not knowing whether a palace or a prison was before them, he seized the opportunity of assuring her that no circumstance in future life would ever be capable of shaking his esteem for Theodore Dolgourouki, who was probably a sharer in the disgrace of Ivan, however innocent of his faults; and he added, passionately, "Surely, surely, I shall never be drawn into the vortex of ambition, never belong to any party, or seek to rise above others; perhaps I am about to enter on a scene of trial, of temptation, to which I am unequal, and you, dear Mary, tremble for me."

"No, my dear Alexander, for you I have no fears, and not many for Theodore, since his innocence must be apparent to all. You will never engage in the crooked paths of politics, because your principles and your taste alike lead you to far different pursuits. I trust you will live long and happily in Moscow, and die amid your children's children. For myself, should I become the wife of an exile, since I know the worst, there would not be much to fear, for I have learned to labour and to submit."

"Ah! Mary, we are now in Moscow; once more in our dear father's native city, which he loved so well. How numerous are the domes and spires which glisten in the lamplight! and now we are passing lines of gardens. How I love a garden! not all we have seen in our everlasting journeyings of fields and forests delight me like a garden."

Alexander ceased to speak, for Mary had no power to reply; and, in truth, little Catherine was the only person in a state of felicity, every succeeding object of grandeur and novelty transporting her with delight, which was increased when, at length, they reached the Kremlin; for within its magnificent circle of palaces and cathedrals, an artificial day was supplied by innumerable lamps, giving to every object that air of joy and splendour communicated by an illumination meant for the celebration of a victory or other public rejoicing.

Coaches and britzkas, containing persons about the court magnificently dressed; officers in uniform, glittering with gold, now passed near them in rapid succession, and compelled them to remember the extraordinary and degraded spectacle they must present to persons of this description, and each unconsciously drew the coarse booshe of Siberia more closely over their sheepskin jerkins and trousers. Mary trusted that the empress, with a woman's kindly consideration, would give orders and attendance for the refreshment of the bath, and the comfort of decent clothing before she was admitted to the Presence; but Alexander feared that his garb of servitude was meant to be retained upon him as the memento of his father's original state. The child alone was unconscious of shame, and the rose paled not on her innocent cheek; but even she seemed awe-struck by the tall buildings and the passing sentinels, and spoke to her sister or her kid only in a whisper.

After many turnings, their useful though humble vehicle drew up at a small door in the gable end of one of the ancient palaces; and the young officer, to whose kind attentions they had been uniformly indebted during their long journey, led them into a small room, and bade them a hasty but most respectful adieu, saying he must not lose a moment in announcing their arrival to his superior.

A small lamp, which stood on a low table, showed the place to which they were thus consigned as gloomy, though not large, and almost without furniture; if it had not been so near the outer door, and devoid of bolts and bars, they might have thought it a prison; but a second thought would have shown it as a spot where sentinels might rest, or beggars receive alms.

Sometimes the sound of music pierced the thick walls for a moment, and this circumstance, combining with the arrival of company without, and the general appearance of splendour they had witnessed, induced them to conclude that the empress was giving a ball, which in some measure engaged even the lowest of her

vast retinue, and that probably they would be entirely forgotten till morning. Catherine, no longer amused, became weary and hungry, with difficulty forbearing to cry; and scarcely could Mary muster a smile to cheer poor Alexander, who was evidently drooping; and it was only by whispers and gesticulation that either party could make known their fears or feelings to the other; a kind of mysterious awe, arising from their inhospitable reception, fell upon them as a tangible weight, crushing the spirits, and substituting the anguish of fear for the expectations of hope.

At length the door was slowly opened by a ponderous and pompous personage, whom Mary thought she recollected as a gentleman in attendance on the Empress Catherine, although he now laboured under a considerable addition of corpulence and consequence. After a long and cautious survey of their figures, he addressed Alexander:

"Are you the persons brought by Lieutenant Chichekoffe from Siberia?"

"We are."

"Follow me."

Happily, their conductor did not hurry them, for his breath was short, and he had many steps to ascend, and passages to traverse that appeared almost interminable; and, on reaching the end of one, they were ordered to leave their cloaks. Mary now hung heavily on the arm of her brother, and the child clung in terror to her sister's jacket. Every moment the former trusted that she should be consigned to the females of the household, for, to her great dismay, it was found that they were approaching the place whence sounds of festivity had reached them when below, and in which both music and dancing were heard; and she was trying to make a request to that purpose, when a door was pushed open, and they were commanded to enter a room blazing with lights and glittering ornaments—inlaid jewels, hangings enriched with gold, and whatever Eastern luxury could assign to the boudoir of female royalty.

On every side were tall mirrors multiplying their own *outrè* figures and coarse garments, but they had not the pain of meeting any eyes than those of each other. While they were alike wondering to what their position would lead, the music near them ceased, and in another moment a door they had not seen was opened, and a lady richly attired, and with a countenance replete with joy and benevolence, entered the room.

"Oh! how beautiful!" cried Catherine, clapping her little hands, on which Alexander drew her suddenly back, while Mary, stepping forward, fell prostrate at the lady's feet, saying only "My gracious sovereign!"

The empress drew back, advanced again, looked long and earnestly in the fair, pale face turned beseechingly towards her, and said,

"You are the daughter of Menzikoff—you are indeed like him."

"I *am* his daughter, my liege. This young man is his only son; this child the little one to whom—"

"Good God! the voice is also that of the young empress. Rise, take off that hideous coif, and let me see your hair."

Mary arose, threw off the wool bonnet, and drew out the bodkin, around which her long, silky, curling tresses had been wound the last three years, saying, at the same time, in a low but distinct voice,

"Your majesty sees before you Mary Menzikoff, the betrothed of the late emperor. Poor Ulrica died of the smallpox, which I had in the palace, where I was honoured with your friendship."

"My poor girl! my dear sufferer!" cried the empress, clasping her arms around and eagerly kissing her, "it must be so—there is no denying it; yet you have ruined my romance; had you arrived sooner, perhaps you had ruined my accession."

"Not so, madam," said Mary, with seriousness not devoid of dignity; "for to me royalty brought misery only from first to last; and thus, madam, I divest myself of its only relic, resigning the gift of the crown to the crown."

In so saying, she unclasped the diamond necklace, so long unseen, from her neck, and presented it to the empress, who, hastily wiping her eyes, exclaimed,

"Is it possible that these jewels have once more come to light? We knew they were in Peter's possession, and always believed Ivan Dolgourouki had got hold of them. In that respect it appears we wronged the wretch."

"The emperor himself clasped them round my neck when he parted with me, and had undoubtedly arranged everything for my banishment."

"They were then given as a salvo to his conscience. They have been of little use to you, my poor Mary, in Siberia."

"Ivan Dolgourouki was certainly ignorant of their appropriation, madam."

"True, my good girl; but he does not the less remain where he is. I know your heart would plead for him, bad as he has been; but that which you, as a private Christian, ought to forgive, a Christian empress ought to punish. Enough! Gather up your tresses, never more to be so disgraced. We now speak to your brother."

Alexander knelt before his sovereign, who looked with an inspecting and gratified air upon those features which greatly resembled his mother's, when, suddenly recollecting herself, she gave him her hand to kiss, saying,

"You are studious, Alexander, and can do me much good by examining and correcting our barbarous code of laws. I therefore wish you to reside near Moscow, in order that you may examine the archives, and have the advantage of libraries. I also know that you are a good shot, and it is well that a studious man should at times participate in country sports; therefore I endow you with one seventh part of your late father's property, which will include the estate near Pozeck. For this sweet babe," continued the empress, taking the muffled hand of Catherine, "what can I say, but that, from this night, I receive her as my dear, especial charge."

"I will give you my own kid, lady, you are so pretty. I call her Siberia, because she is white like snow. But Catherine is so sleepy."

The empress clapped her hands, and the attendant already mentioned appeared.

"Conduct Prince Menzikoff to the bath. Furnish him with clothes suitable for his rank, and with whatever he requires."

Alexander retired, after exchanging a look with his beloved sister at once expressive of his

approbation of her and his gratitude to the empress. He led Catherine and her four-footed friend away, and it is unnecessary to say that the flattering attention, the absolute servility, with which he was supplied with every luxury and comfort, far exceeded the coldness of his first reception.

"Mary," said the empress when they were alone, "I have many a sorrowful story to listen to from your lips; have you no questions which mine can answer? Your heart, I trust, did not become all ice in Siberia?"

"Oh, no, my gracious sovereign, for it is now aching with anxiety for the fate of a good man named Brukenthal."

"He is perfectly well, and shall have the satisfaction of telling you so himself the moment you have got out of those hideous casings. I confined him, and even deprived him of the pleasure he would have received from knowing I had sent for you, lest he should communicate his expectation to another, whom I desired to surprise, and, what is more, to charm, by the appearance of Ulrica, whom I remembered as a very lovely girl, greatly resembling you. Can you form any idea for whom I thus designed my *protégée*?"

"It must—it could be only Theodore Dolgourouki; and yet—"

"And *yet* he is the kinsman of Ivan, you would say. True; but light and darkness, truth and falsehood, mercy and cruelty, are not more opposite. Oh! Mary, that blush becomes you well; it casts a lustre even on—"

As the empress spoke, she vanished through the door by which she entered, and in less than a minute the sound of music and dancing was again heard, to the surprise of the bewildered traveller, who thought that the royal hostess had again joined the circle. Soon, however, she was sensible that a man was approaching; and, trusting it was the good pastor, she started forward, ready to throw herself upon his bosom. But lo! the empress and a noble cavalier of the court were before her; disappointed and confused, she retreated, covering her face with her hands.

"I have drawn you from a gay scene to a grave duty, my good prince," said the Czarina. "Behold this stranger! she appears a savage of the desert, yet seeks to palm herself upon us as the dowager-empress—as Mary Menzikoff. Remove her hands, examine her hair, her eyes—speak to her, Prince Theodore—she shall be forgiven or condemned from your sentence."

"It is Mary! my *own* Mary! given from the grave."

"Not so, but given from Siberia, the region of death. May her present resurrection be to all earthly happiness!"

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The empress left the long-parted lovers to themselves, and the reader will be willing to follow her august example; nevertheless, many a young and tender heart will follow each party through the details of their many sorrows, and some fair girls sympathize with a princess in sheepskins, thus suddenly exhibited to one on whom the brightest eyes in Russia had that very night been gazing.

A summer day in Siberia would have been far too short for their sorrowful details, their interesting conjectures, the endless hopes and fears they had fostered, and the constancy they alike felt; yet neither exhibited vexation when they were interrupted by Alexander and the venerable Brukenthal, who drew Mary to his bosom, and wept over her with all the tenderness of a parent that has recovered the offspring he had lost. When Theodore learned the wonderful exertions Brukenthal had made on behalf of this banished family, and saw his bending form, his milk-white hair, and trembling hands, he beheld in him an object of such profound veneration and lively gratitude, that he could have fallen at his feet; and Alexander, on his part, was not the less inspired with love, admiration, and thankfulness to Theodore himself. When Mary had disengaged herself from the arms of the good old man, whose forehead she fondly kissed, she gazed in astonishment on Alexander, who, in his new habiliments, seemed another creature. Shocked at her own contrasting appearance, she quitted the apartment abruptly, and was not long before she found obsequious attendants, elegant dresses, and whatever else the munificent kindness of her royal friend could supply for comfort or magnificence.

It will readily be conceived that the empress not only cherished the family she had restored, but extended her royal favour to all connected with them; so that, if Theodore Dolgourouki had (as many men do) gained in manhood a taste for the ambition he renounced in youth, undoubtedly he might have fully shared with Biron the power and grandeur of Russian government. To such rewards he had in his wife's behalf the greater claim, because they were both willing that her distinction as the widow of Peter should be suffered to lie in oblivion, and the report of her death remain uncontradicted, her title of Princess Theodore Dolgourouki covering her name, and her more perfect development of form and peculiar purity of complexion only inducing the remark "that she was even handsomer than her sister, the young empress, and had a much happier countenance."

There were also many who observed "that the haughtiness of Ulrica, which had much resembled that of her father, was entirely subdued by the severe remedy under which she suffered, and that she now resembled in every respect her pious and amiable mother, by which means it was evident she had won the affections of her husband as entirely as her sister had done. Indeed, he frequently called her Mary, as if in her he had found so perfect a substitute for his first beloved, that he had actually forgotten her loss."

The only person Mary had dreaded in her new connexion proved the one most tenderly attached to her. This was the father of Theodore, who, now being advanced in years, and long declining in health, also bitterly mortified by the disgrace his favourite nephew had incurred, began to see the conduct of his son in a far different light to what he had done a few years before, and readily to accept the tenderness and duty of a heart eminently calculated to display every endearing affection, and "smooth the passage to eternal day." He had heard of Mary's kindness to Ivan through the lips of Alexovitch, and, considering it a species of superhuman benevolence, he received with sincere respect a daughter-in-law so magnanimous and compassionate; and when his own observations unfolded the beautiful simplicity, sincerity, and piety of her character, the untiring kindness of her affectionate heart, and the soundness of her understanding, he became more attached to her than he had ever been to any human being. He

could not tear himself from the place she inhabited, and therefore established himself at Pozeck so soon as Theodore fixed his residence on his estate near that city, where Alexander also became soon settled. He found, with equal joy and surprise (which was more than partaken by his sister), Madame de Rolack still living unmolested in his father's confiscated mansion, and continuing to receive from the serfs on the estate the same obedient attention they were wont to pay her as representative of the family. Once only had the produce of the property been demanded, for Ivan had been too busy with more material things; and, beyond her sorrow for the exile of those she loved (which was an abiding affliction), the good governess had known little trouble.

When the young Boyar had made the fair orphan we have mentioned his bride, their first visits were to Mary and Alexander, but with the latter they wisely stayed the longest. The happiness of Brukenthal was of a less temporary description, as for the remainder of his life he dwelt in a cottage built for him by Theodore near to the mansion, and in a great measure resembling that in which he had lived with our banished family in Siberia. "It will be," said he to the dear princess, "a memento of great trials and great mercies, for both of which we should be thankful, since never was a human being more evidently blessed by chastisement than my dear friend, your father."

In this cottage the young were taught, the old comforted, the benevolent plans of Theodore examined and assisted; the same generous ardour and hallowed energy which had borne the friend and pastor through the trackless wilds of an unknown and repulsive land, continued to animate him for the remainder of his existence; and though it is probable that life was abridged by his exertions, it could not be deemed so as to usefulness or happiness; he died one Sabbath evening, after performing all his duties to a loving and venerating congregation.

The Empress Anne dearly loved the fair orphan she had adopted, and married her happily just before her own death, which took place at a very early period. Her appointment of an infant in the cradle being dissatisfactory alike to the nobles and the people, the Princess Elizabeth was called to the throne. Resembling her amiable mother, Catherine, in disposition, and with a mind far more enlightened, she made a most excellent sovereign. To Alexander Menzikoff she was always particularly kind, and forwarded his marriage with a noble and wealthy lady, whose disposition resembled his own. As if she retained good-will to all who had been really or nominally her admirers, not long after ascending the throne Ivan Dolgourouki was once more recalled to Russia, though never received at court, or noticed by any but his near relations.

All others might, indeed, be well excused for passing him unheeded, since time rarely "writes such defeatures on the brow" of the Russ, who lives his century, as the mortification and misery of exile had laid on Count Ivan Dolgourouki. His tall and once elegant form was bent almost double, his head was bald, his hearing imperfect, his face pale, wrinkled, and ghastly. Evil passions and bodily sufferings had written indelible marks in his countenance, but love and hate, grief and rage, had long passed away, and with them the commanding faculties, the general knowledge, which had once characterized him. Though neither idiotic nor deranged, he was become an aged child, pleased with what could gratify the senses, and anxious to preserve life or property, but alike dead to the friendship which might have blessed him, and the ambition which had been his ruin. In the presence of either Theodore or Mary he appeared to labour under a sense of fear or shame, but when with their children the premature old man seemed happy. His frozen faculties would apparently revive to scan a long-forgotten lesson or watch a boyish sport, and his pitying relative trusted that oblivion rested on that long portion of life which had been marked by error and sorrow, and that he often mistook his son for himself when he exclaimed, "Remember, I am older than you, and I can teach you."

The patient reader who has followed Mary through her many trials, and, we trust, rejoiced in the development of her virtues as a daughter and sister, will not doubt that she became exemplary as a wife, a mother, and a mistress. They will be aware that her humble historian has not exaggerated the sufferings of her early life, for, in truth, she had not the inventive faculty necessary for doing it consistently, neither did she choose to exhaust the compassion of those who were willing to follow her through a sorrowful, but, she trusts, an *interesting* story. The Dolgouroukii are now, as they have been for many ages, a great and powerful race of nobles,* the descendants of Alexander Menzikoff, dwelling in honor at Moscow, and she trusts neither party would object to her delineation of the beautiful, the pious, the unfortunate, but eventually happy Mary Menzikoff.

* One of this noble family is now in England.

EXTRACTS FROM HISTORICAL WORKS

RESPECTING

MENZIKOFF AND HIS FAMILY.

Alexander Mentchitkoff, Mentzikoff, or Menzikoff, for his name is thus differently spelled by different authors, at thirteen years of age was apprenticed to a pastry-cook in Moscow, and accustomed to cry tarts in the streets. The extraordinary sweetness of his voice drew the attention of Peter the Great, who, having conversed with the boy, and found him naturally very clever, caused him to be taken into his palace and educated, in consequence of which he obtained such a knowledge of modern languages as to fit him eminently for diplomacy. In his seventeenth year he became a soldier under Le Fort, the emperor's great favourite, and rose rapidly to the rank of major-general. At Pultava he saved the Russian army by a skilful manœuvre, and preserved the lives of the conquered Swedes by securing them as prisoners. He was rewarded on different occasions with the principalities of Ingria and Plescoff, but, being accused of embezzlement, Peter took from him the first, and laid a heavy fine upon him, but he remitted the one and restored the other, finding the accusation false. He was not less active for his great master in works of peace than in the field of battle or the duties of ambassador, as, under his inspection, Cronstadt was made a seaport, and the metropolis of St. Petersburgh founded on a marsh, which required immense labour before it could be rendered a safe foundation. His abilities were great, his energies unceasing, his ambition grasping, and his taste for grandeur not less remarkable than his love of glory. When Peter entertained ambassadors from foreign countries, and the Knezers and Boyars, the princes and generals of his own court, Menzikoff did the honours of the entertainment, being of fine person, elegant manners, and great powers of conversation. Catherine, the second wife of Peter, had been patronised by the wife of Menzikoff, and was taken from his house to that of the emperor, and after the battle of Pruth, which he professed to owe to her prudence, he crowned her with his own hands, and frequently spoke of her as his successor. At the time of his death, Menzikoff so disposed the soldiery, who were much attached to him, and so exerted himself on her behalf, that she was proclaimed empress, although no will appeared, and the grandson of Peter was evidently the legal heir, then a child between nine and ten. Catherine was grateful; she knew that Menzikoff had suggested her conduct at Pruth, which was the stepping-stone of her elevation, and knew, also, that the real government must be vested in a person of more knowledge and ability than she possessed. She was humane, and recalled many from Siberia whom Peter had banished, but she also banished some at the suggestion of Menzikoff, who was subjected to many insults on account of his humble extraction. She presented him with her palace of Oranienbaum, then, as now, the most beautiful residence of the Czars. She caused his daughter to be betrothed to Peter, the heir of the throne, a sickly boy, of poor abilities, but she died, after a reign of two years, having irreparably injured her constitution, at the age of thirty-seven.

The young emperor had been accustomed to receive his pleasures from Menzikoff, and at one time loved him; but, having a great desire for athletic exercises, to which his constitution was quite unequal, and which Menzikoff, as a sincere friend, opposed, he chose another counsellor; and Count Ivan Dolgourouki, after a time, succeeded in causing Peter to command Menzikoff and all his family to reside upon his estates at Plescoff. He left the capital in the style of a governor going to exercise regal sway, which, when reported to the emperor, he banished him and all his family, including the young empress, to Siberia, confiscated all his vast property, and caused him to be placed in covered wagons, clothed in the sheepskin garb of the peasantry, and his servants and carriages sent back. His wife died on her journey to that far-distant and horrible country, and on arriving, three of his children were seized with the smallpox, and one of his daughters died. Some unknown friend sent him cattle, sheep, and poultry, which greatly assisted the recovery of his children. His misfortunes inspired him with devotion; he built himself a little chapel, became vigilant in his religious duties, and happy in the exercise of them, but sunk under his misfortunes, and was buried beside his daughter.

Some time after this event, which took place November, 1729, his daughter was returning from the neighbouring village, and heard herself accosted by a peasant from the window of a cottage, and, to her great surprise, recognised in this man the persecutor of her family, Dolgourouki, who, on the accession of the Empress Anna Iwanowna, had, in his turn, become a victim. On relating this to her brother, they were both exceedingly struck with the instability of fortune, and, when they were recalled, left him in possession of their cottage and property. The empress made Alexander the possessor of one fifth* of his father's property, which was immense, and she married his sisters to great advantage.

Such is the substance of all I have been able to gather respecting this extraordinary man in the British Museum, where the works best calculated for my purpose were kindly pointed out by a reverend librarian, whom I have the honour to call my friend,

B. Hofland.

* Some say one seventh.

THE END.

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THE

LAST OF THE FAIRIES;

A Christmas Tale.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE CONVICT," "MARGARET GRAHAM," "RUSSELL," "THE CASTLE OF EHRENSTEIN," "BEAUCHAMP," "HEIDELBERG," ETC., ETC.

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THE LAST OF THE FAIRIES.

CHAPTER I.

There was an old house near Worcester on the very highest part of the hill, which is not very high after all. It was not a gentleman's house, nor a farm-house, nor a cottage. Heaven knows what it had been in former years. It was nothing at all in A. D. 1651, but a moderate sized brick building, lined with old wainscot, with broken windows and latchless doors, and one portion of it a great deal taller than the other.

There were eyes in the upper room of the tallest part of the old house; and to them was exposed an exceedingly beautiful scene, such as is rarely beheld, except in the vale of the Severn. Worcester, with its walls, and gates, and churches, and sunny fields, and pleasant places round; and the wide valley studded with little knolls, and monticules covered with turf still green, and plumed with feathery trees. It was a pleasant and a cheerful sight,—a sort of fairy scene; and indeed the rings left by the feet of the Good People, in their merry moonlight dances, attested their frequent revels in the meadows and under the trees.

But there were other objects besides those which nature's hand had formed that gave additional cheerfulness to the scene. On both banks of the Severn, the eyes gazing from that high window could discern colours flaunting in the light wind, banners tossed about, and plumes, and gay dresses, and glittering arms; so that in that part of the landscape, as a cloud or two passed over the sun, the effect was like that of rapid light and shade sweeping across a garden of flowers. And merry notes were there too: the fife, and the drum, and the clarion, rising up from below, softened and entendered by the air and the distance. The bells of the cathedral chimed cheerfully, and altogether it was a pleasant scene to look upon, and these were merry sounds to hear.

About ten of the clock, a horseman, followed by two or three others, spurred up from the bank of the Severn, towards that house upon the hill. He came gaily along at a good quick canter, and his horse was a fine one, and well caparisoned. His bearing, too, was firm and soldier-like: but when one saw his face nearer, although he could not have counted more than five or six and thirty years, there seemed to be traces of many cares and anxieties upon his countenance, as well, perhaps, as a certain degree of constitutional melancholy, not to say gloom. It was a very grave face —very grave, indeed, yet high and noble in expression, with a tall straight forehead, somewhat broader, perhaps, at the top of the temples than over the brow.

Some servants came round from the back of the house as he approached, and ran to hold his horse and his stirrup. He sprang lightly to the ground, and walked into the house, saying, "Take the basket from Matthews there behind me, and bring it up. Take care that you don't break the wine bottles, for there is but little to be had at Worcester. The Puritans have drank it all up in a very godly manner;" and mounting the old stairs as he spoke, he ran rather than walked up to the higher chamber. There was an embrace for each of the two persons it contained—a lady of seven or eight and twenty years of age, still in her full loveliness, and a little girl of nine or ten, exceedingly beautiful, and very like her mother. Their faces were full of affection towards him who came; but yet there could not be a greater contrast than between the expression of his countenance and theirs. Cheerful hope and glad expectation was upon the face of the girl and her mother, and melancholy thought upon his.

"Here is some breakfast for you, Lilla, dear," he said, "and for my little Kate too. I was resolved to come up for half an hour, and take it with you, for Heaven knows where our next meal may be."

"Will there be a battle to-day, father?" said the little girl; "and will the King win? Oh! yes, I am sure the King will win."

"I trust he will," replied the soldier, "if there is a battle, my Kate; but of that I begin to doubt, for the Roundheads have a long march before them, and cannot get here very early."

"Then we had better come back into the town," said the lady, looking to her husband inquiringly, while two of the servants laid a napkin in one of the broad, open window-seats, for table there was none. "I should not like Cromwell's people to cut us off."

"No, my Lilla," answered her husband, you must not come into the town again. There is much confusion there; and as soon as the enemy appear, you had better retire with the servants to Pershore, where you will have speedy tidings of what follows. If we have to stand a siege, or repel an assault, it would be a pain and a burden to me to have all I love pent up within those old and crumbling walls."

There was a look of remonstrance came upon the lady's face, but her husband interrupted her with a smile, saying, "Come—to breakfast! to breakfast! for I must soon get back. What, not a chair to sit down upon! Well, we must make the best of our campaigning;" and standing by the side of the window-seat, he proceeded to distribute the homely breakfast he had brought up from Worcester; ate a small portion, but not much, himself; and gazed with a look of thoughtful delight upon his innocent child, as she seemed to partake of the meal with double zest, from the rude and hasty way in which it was served.

Perhaps five minutes had elapsed while they were thus employed, when a quick light foot was heard coming up the stairs, and a lad some seventeen or eighteen years of age, richly dressed and accoutred, with his long dark hair flowing down over his laced collar to his shoulders, entered the room in haste, exclaiming, "Lord Eustace!—My lord! Cromwell is in sight—Hark! you can hear his trumpets!"

The gentleman he addressed instantly started to the window and looked out, while his young visitor, with a slight affectation of manhood, patted the little girl upon the head, saying, "Ah! my darling Kate, drinking wine at ten in the morning. That's to make you a fit wife for a dashing cavalier. I hope your ladyship is well this morning. You will soon see some warm work down below; but I trust before night we shall have one-half of the Roundheads in the Severn, and the rest in the gaol."

A slight cloud came over the lady's face, and she was answering, with a sigh, "I trust so," when her husband turned round from the window, saying, "I must to horse, dear ones. Remember, you must ride to Pershore, as soon as you have seen them upon the ground. Come, Denzil, we must away."

"Do you see them, Charles,—do you see them?" asked the lady, clinging to his arm.

"Not their whole force," replied her husband, "those trees there hide them; but I caught a glance of steel caps through the brake; and if you listen for a moment you will hear. There! there!"

The distant sounds of a trumpet rose upon the air; and with one brief embrace he tore himself away, ran down the stairs, followed by his young friend, mounted his horse, and galloped back to Worcester.

The lady's eyes were full of tears when she gazed forth from the window, first marking the course of her husband towards the town, and then turning an anxious look over the distant wooded landscape, where the forces of the Parliament were advancing towards the fatal field of Worcester. In a few minutes she beheld a dark moving mass—with catches of light here and there upon breast-plate or steel cap—come forth from behind one clump of trees and disappear again behind a little wood. Another, and another body passed, foot and horse in very equal numbers; but regiment after regiment, troop after troop, till the lady's heart sunk at the conviction of the great superiority of their numbers; and her eyes turned to the royal army below.

A good deal of bustle was then ob-

servable; and, by the aid of fancy, she thought she could discover her husband, and the King, and Leslie, and Middleton, and Hamilton, and Derby.

Long and anxious was her watch, till passing in and out, now seen, now lost as before, the army of the Commonwealth, growing more and more distinct in all its parts as it advanced, swept on—halted for a moment—marched forward again, and assumed its position as if for battle, taking possession of the slope of the very hill on which she stood, and interposing between herself and the town.

Her heart sank a little, and she gazed down upon her child; but then a look of high resolution came into her face, and putting her arm round the fair delicate form of the little girl, she said, "We will see it out, Kate; we will see it out."

"Oh! yes, mother, let us see it out," answered the child; "do not let us run away while my father is fighting."

"Never," answered the lady; and there they stood, while the servants gathered themselves together at another window, and gazed forth likewise.

All seemed tranquil for about half-an-hour. An occasional horseman galloped along the line, trumpets sounded from time to time, a slight movement took place amongst the infantry, some stragglers were seen moving about upon the rear of the Parliamentary army, and a stout heavy man, with ten or twelve other horsemen following him, moved slowly for a little distance up the hill. Then halting, he gazed over the plain, and over the town, for a moment or two, spoke a few words to one of those near him, and instantly a horseman dashed away, taking his course towards the left. A large body of cavalry detached itself at once, and rode along the bank of the river; a fire of musketry began from the centre of the line, and a cloud of smoke spread over the scene. It interrupted the sight sadly, but the lady saw several large squadrons of horse put into a charge, and they whirled down like a bolt from a cross-bow against the Royalist troops on the nearest side of the river.

From that moment all was confusion, to eyes unaccustomed to seek out and judge the events of a field of battle. Large bodies of men riding fast, were seen through the clouds of sulphurous vapour, the flashes of the musketry, the gleam of waving swords, and the slow movements of some bands of pikemen were caught indistinctly from time to time; but all that the lady and her child could gather as to the result of these movements was, that the Parliamentary army was pressing down steadily and strongly upon Worcester, and that the waves of battle rolled nearer and nearer to the town.

It was a sight that made her heart sink, and her eye ran along the course of the river, towards a spot where she knew that a large body of the Royalist cavalry had been posted. She saw them there all firm and in array upon the opposite bank, but a little further on she saw—what they could not see, on account of a thick copse and a wooded hill, which screened the operations of the enemy—two regiments of Parliamentary horse galloping rapidly towards a ford, where the stream took a sharp turn. She clasped her hands together, and pressed them tight. What would she have given at that moment for wings to fly and bear her friends intelligence of the manœuvre she had detected and understood right well. But it was all in vain. The enemy reached the ford, dashed in, gained the meadows on the other side, re-formed, and taking ground a little to the left, became suddenly apparent to the King's cavalry.

An instant movement was observable amongst the latter; two gentlemen drew out a little way from the rest, gazed at the squadrons which had so suddenly appeared, and rode to the opposite extremes of their own line. A slight change of disposition immediately followed. The right of the Royalists was somewhat extended, the left was brought a little forward at a slow pace, and then there came a temporary pause. The sound of trumpets was heard the moment after; and both parties dashed forward against each other with furious speed. They met in full career, while a fierce and wild hurrah rose up into the air and reached the lady's ears as she gazed upon the struggling mass, now all mingled and confused. Her hands pressed tighter and tighter together as she saw masterless horses break away from the line and gallop across the plain, and knew that some

one, as loved and dear to others as he whom she loved best was to herself, had fallen beneath the chargers' feet in the midst of that fierce conflict.

"They give way, mother, they give way," cried the little girl, touching the lady's arm, "the Roundheads are routed —See, they fly, they fly!"

It was true. The temporary success of Middleton and the Duke of Hamilton for an instant promised to change the fate of the day. Cromwell's cavalry did give way, the Royalists pursued fiercely and drove them back fighting, almost to the very ford. But at that moment a small group was seen to separate itself from the rear of the King's soldiers, and the lady could distinguish two or three troopers supporting a gentleman upon his horse. "That looks like the Duke," she murmured; "No, it must be Middleton."

Another group detached itself, but these were on foot—dismounted soldiers bearing a dead or wounded man in their arms. Then the uncertain tide of battle turned. The Parliamentary forces rallied, charged again, the Royalists were beaten back over the ground they had just traversed, broken, scattered, and flying hither and thither in parties of ten and twelve.

The lady clasped the child's hand in her own—tight, very tight; and the little girl wept. They turned their eyes to the part of the field immediately below them. A terrible change had come over the scene. The Royalist forces were not to be discovered—unless, indeed, the fragments might be distinguished in those small bodies of horse that were seen galloping away over the distant fields. The troops of the Parliament were at the gates of Worcester.

"Pardon, my lady, but it is time for you to go," said an old servant, approaching from the other window; "the day is lost. You had better betake yourself to Pershore, as my lord directed. The horses are all ready."

The lady raised her eyes to heaven for an instant, and seemed to ask strength from above. "No," she said, at length, "we will hide in the wood, Isaac. I will not quit this ground till I know his fate. Come, Kate, we may help your dear father yet. God give us courage and success!"

CHAPTER II.

It was night—dark night. There were stars out but no moon, and across many parts of the sky long lines of dull grey clouds were drawn, hiding the twinklers of the heavens. The clocks of Worcester had struck nine, and the dull vibration of the great bell was sounding, as if with pulses, through the heavy feverish air. The scene around the city lay wrapt up in shadows, while the fugitives sped far away from the field of their defeat, and the pursuers with hot spur hurried after. The dead in their last rest lay in the meadows round—three thousand as gallant gentlemen as ever drew a sword. The wounded untended shared the couch of the dead, and lost part of their own sufferings in the sense of their royal master's disaster. Here and there was a light upon the field, sometimes seen wandering about, sometimes stationary; and the low creaking of rude cart-wheels could be heard seeking for the less dangerously wounded, or for those prisoners who had not yet been taken into the town of Worcester.

Near a low wood, broken and irregular in its external form, stood two or three Parliamentary musketeers, with a group of some seven or eight prisoners, disarmed and tied. A torch was stuck into a hole in the ground, casting its red unwholesome glare around, over the rough stern features of Cromwell's soldiers, and the sad countenances of the captives, and the green branches of the trees, and the turf dabbled with blood, and the corpses of five or six gallant companions fallen; for the spot was one where a fierce and last effort at resistance had been made.

The armed soldiers were standing, resting on their guns; the captives were generally seated, though some who had received wounds were stretched out upon the grass. Few of them spoke, but one man, a Scotchman, in the garb of a Royalist foot-soldier, who was upon his feet, nearest to the musketeers, seemed anxious to ascertain the fate reserved for them. He had put several questions without receiving an answer; but, at length, one of the men, seemingly irritated by his pertinacity, replied in a loud harsh tone, "If you want to know what is to become of you, Scot, I will

tell you, though methinks you would learn soon enough: you are to be sold for slaves into the plantations."

The poor Scotchman hung his head, and sat down dejected by his fellows. At the same moment a heavy cart came grating along towards them, and one of the soldiers said, "Come, get up, get up; here is your conveyance."

The cart had not yet indeed become visible, but the next instant the faint outline thereof was descried wending slowly forward, and there seemed two or three people with it. The soldiers, as they looked forward, thought they perceived a woman's garments, and in about a minute after, they saw a child also.

That sight was seen by another likewise, and it told to a heart oppressed with grief and despair, the sweet consoling tale of love and devotion true to the last. He raised himself a little from the grass, and the light of the torch fell more strongly than before upon his fine form and noble countenance. The expression was still the same, and any close observer could not have doubted that there was a man of noble lineage, and of gentle breeding, although his gay and plumed hat was cast away, and the coat that he now wore was that of a common foot-soldier.

Slowly the cart rolled on, but when it came nigh, though the child still appeared, young, and fair, and graceful, the woman's form was no longer seen. It seemed to have dissolved into thin air, or as if the darkness had swallowed it up, even as she came forward. So suddenly and completely did it disappear, that one of the soldiers took two or three steps forward to meet the cart, bending his eyes fixedly upon the obscurity before him; and when he reached the little group walking together at the horse's head, he demanded, sharply, "Was there not a woman with you?"

"No," replied the carter, "there has been no woman here, unless you call this babe a woman."

"And what does she want here?" demanded the stern voice of the soldier; "this is no place for children, or women either."

"I am seeking my father, sir," said the sweet low voice of the little girl. "I am sure you will help me to find my father."

The soldier gazed at her for an instant, as the light of the torch, somewhat softened by the distance, fell upon her fair countenance and her rich dress; and he shook his head with a look not altogether unfeeling, replying, "Ah, poor child! your father is not here; we have none of your gay gallants amongst us; your ruffling cavaliers and dashing lords have all been taken into the town; we have got none but the poor foot-soldiers, who have been led like sheep to the slaughter by those who should know better."

"But I am sure he is here, living or dead," said the little girl in reply; one of our servants saw him here just after the battle, and he told me where to find him; pray let me look for him by the light of the torch;" and she clasped her fair small hands together with the gesture of earnest entreaty.

"I am here, my child, I am here, my Kate," cried a voice; for, although it was ruin to all his plans, the captive could resist no longer; and the child darted forward unopposed, for the soldiers had not the heart to restrain her under the impulse of filial affection.

The poor captive tried to rise from the ground to press her to his heart as she sprang towards him; but his hands were tied, and before he could effect that purpose, the child had cast herself upon his bosom with one arm round his neck, covering his face with kisses.

The stern soldiers looked on much moved; but the captive was surprised to find that while with her left arm she clung closely to him, the right sought out the bonds upon his hands, and something cold, like steel, glided down his wrist. The next instant the cord was severed, and his hands were free; and the child's mouth pressed close to his ear, whispered, low but clear, "There's a horse at the corner of the wood. Mount, father, and away!"

His brain seemed to turn giddy for a moment, and the pulsations of his heart to stop. But the child unclasped her arm from his neck, and whispered once more, "Away!"

It was the only chance for safety. The concealment he had hoped for was no longer possible. The bloody axe which had struck so many of his noble friends was the only fate before him;

and, springing suddenly on his feet, he darted away into the gloom.

As his tall figure disappeared, however, the stern soldiers, with a fierce cry of indignation, raised their muskets to their shoulders, and fired in the direction he had taken. A shrill scream burst from the darkness, at the very same instant that the sound of a horse's hoofs at the full gallop reached the spot where they stood.

"He is down, he is down!" cried some of the men, rushing forward, while two of their comrades remained with the prisoners. But they found no one, though they searched diligently around; and still the quick beating of the horse's hoofs was heard, growing fainter and fainter in the distance. When they returned to the spot where the captives were, they found the child lying prone upon the ground, pale as monumental marble; nor did she recover from the swoon into which she had fallen, till the prisoners had been all placed in the cart, and the party were about to proceed upon their way. The soldiers threatened and reproached; but they had not the heart to hurt her; and one of them, who was a father himself, took her by the hand, and led her into Worcester. He said he must take her before the Lord General, but she besought and prayed him to let her seek shelter in the house of an old servant, and when he left her at the door, he said to himself, "If I should be ever in such a case, may my child do as she has done."

"How the hours fleet away! Be they dull and heavy-footed, overburdened with sorrow—be they winged with joy and mirth—be they even-paced and tranquil in the path of life, still they go, they go; and when they are gone they diminish into a mere speck. Nine years have passed away and it seems but a span; and yet if I come to think, my hair, which is now white, was then just turning grey, and my eyes, that are dim now, were as clear as an eagle's. But come out of the way, lad, come out of the way. There's a stranger riding down the hill, and I have not liked the sight of a stranger for many a long year."

Such were the words of an old man, dressed in a black coat, with a broad-ended handkerchief round his neck, and bearing a respectable and even reverend appearance, to a good-looking country youth of two or three and twenty years of age, as they stood together upon the green sward beneath an old castle wall.

Many a strong fortified house had been besieged and ruined by the cannon of one or the other of the contending parties in the great civil war, but the dilapidation of this building dated from a period long anterior, and the ivy had grown thickly over even the fragments which had fallen from the walls, marking that centuries had passed. Yet these walls were very thick and strong, and one could not suppose, to look upon them, that the hand of time alone had broken them as they now appeared. It was evident, in short, that some of man's desolating devices had overthrown the place of strength before its time—when, I know not—perhaps during the contentions of York and Lancaster; but however, there it stood, a ruin. The most perfect part of the building was the old gateway, with its two tall machicolated towers, and guard-room over the arch; but yet, guard-room and towers were both unroofed, and the wind whistled through the empty window-frames—the voice of desolation calling to the dead.

From either side of this gateway stretched forth walls, with other towers, surrounding perhaps an acre and a half of ground; and the court within showed many a fragment of feudal times in the crumbling masonry of the late keep, and the broken tracery of the chapel windows. A seedling ash tree had planted itself here and there amongst the ruins, and three tall elms in a group stretched their wide branches over the well in the castle court. That well had once been covered by an arch of richly wrought stone-work; but some forty years before the period of which I speak, the mortar having fallen out and some of the stones dropped into the water, which was the finest, the clearest, and the best in the whole neighbourhood, the inhabitants of the adjacent village, who loved the well with a degree of almost superstitious affection, cleared away the ruined fragments from around it, and left it nearly as nature had formed it, with no covering but the branches of the three elms of which I have spoken.

The castle well was in fact a spring

of very beautiful water which issued bountifully from the turf in the castle-court. Old hands long gone had dug a little reservoir for the waters of this spring about three feet deep, and of the same width, with a length of about four feet—it might be five, but I never measured it. The sides of this reservoir were lined with flat stones, to prevent the earth from falling in; and a semi-circular piece cut out of the slab at the west side, suffered the superfluous water to flow away into a little conduit underneath the castle wall, and so over the side of the hill down to the stream in the valley. From the distance of more than a mile, people would come to fill the pitcher at this well; and, indeed, so limpid was the water, that although at most times the smooth surface reflected the leaves and branches of the trees above, yet through these transparent coloured images one could see the little pebbles at the bottom as distinctly as if no medium but thin air had been interposed: indeed, it only seemed to render them brighter, as if encasing them in polished crystal. All around, the turf was short and thick; and the elms and the well they shaded were so placed as to be clearly seen through the archway of the great gates, by any one who was standing on the castle-green in front.

I have been obliged to dwell upon these facts particularly; for the reader must remark and remember them as necessary to the due understanding of this tale. It may be also as well to point out that the castle stood alone, on what may be called the step of a hill, occupying a position about half way up the ascent, which was long but not steep. This step was a flat piece of some twenty or thirty acres; and upon it, at the distance of three or four hundred yards from the old castle, were built several neat cottages. Below them again, on both sides of the road, which, after crossing the castle-green in its descent, wound gently down to the bottom of the valley, appeared the village, following all the sinuosities of the path, and so closely embowered in trees, that from the old gates nothing could be perceived but a roof or a chimney here and there, and the tower of the church rising up from below.

It was as pretty a rural scene, indeed, as ever the eye fell upon; and, whether in sunshine or in shade, under the blue sky or the cloud, there was something of homely peace and tranquillity about it which had a tendency to soothe the mind of the beholder, and call up images of a calmer and happier kind than the heart was ordinarily conversant with in those days of strife and faction.

The village had fared well, too, in many respects. At some distance from any of the channels through which the tide of war had flowed, few of those pertinacious heart-burnings had been engendered in it which had sprung up in most parts of England, from the struggle of parties in the civil war. The old clergyman of the place, it is true, had been dispossessed; and a Presbyterian minister occupied his place; but good Doctor Aldover was a very meek, peaceful, timid man, and he had made no struggle to retain what the powers that were thought fit to take away from him, having been scared almost out of his senses by being apprehended as a malignant, while on a visit to a neighboring town, and examined by a party of Parliamentary Commissioners. He promised them on that occasion, with all the sincerity of terror, to conform as much as in him lay to their good will and pleasure, and, consequently, resigned his benefice, without a word, at the very first summons. He had studied medicine early, as a means of benefitting his parishioners; and now, as was frequently the case with dispossessed clergymen in their days, he studied the healing art more deeply, for the purpose of maintaining himself. He acquired skill and reputation, too, and, at the time I speak of, was the only physician or surgeon in the place. It can not be said that, though he bore his fate so meekly, he looked at his Presbyterian rival at first with any great affection: but it so happened that the minister, though somewhat starch and caustic in his manner, was a good man and a kind, at heart; and when he discovered all the high qualities of his predecessor, he felt half inclined to be sorry that he had been the means of depriving him of his cure. He made sundry attempts to win the friendship of good old Dr. Aldover, which, though shyly viewed at first, were rendered successful in the end by various accidental circumstances which tended

to bring them together; and now they would not unfrequently sit in the parlour of the one or the other, drinking a moderate glass of good ale, and conversing learnedly of this or of that, sometimes with much simple shrewdness, when the topic was one with which their studies had rendered them familiar, and sometimes very nonsensically when they ventured upon ground of which they had no experience.

Such was the state of the village on the day I speak of.

I know not whether the poet intended it as the most perfect picture of human felicity when he described a man as "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," but certainly, dear reader, such is to many men, and to all men under certain circumstances, a very blissful mode or condition of life. We all know that in this great world that we inhabit, there are a great number of jealousies, fears, animosities, hatreds, strifes, confusions, riots, massacres, crimes—that men in the world pick each other's pockets of their purses, their snuff-boxes, their handkerchiefs, their reputation, their honour, their peace; and we all know, moreover, that there are certain times—stormy times in the world, party times—when the winds of faction blow high, and the clouds of rancour gather over the state, and men see in the fanciful vapours, strange images of patriotism and freedom, and devotion and renown, which after all turn out shapes formed of mist, that change with every puff of prevailing gale; we all know, I say, that there are such times, and that then the devil is exceedingly busy in stirring up the confused caldron of human passions and bringing hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness to the surface.

Surely, at such epochs as these, a man may well wish to live, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot." But it is not very often that he can find such a state in its completeness as might have been done at the time I speak of, in the village that I have mentioned. The Presbyterian minister was at the height of his ambition. There was nothing more for him to have or to desire. He had dispossessed an Episcopalian of his church and benefice, he had sat himself down amongst a knot of his co-religionists, to whom he could hold forth continually upon predestination, and election, and free grace. He met with no opposition and very little dissent from his doctrines, and he did not at all want to be disturbed in the exercise of functions which worked so easily by Baptists, Anabaptists, Independents, or Fifth Monarchy men.

Doctor Aldover had still greater objections to any interruptions of the quietude of the place; and he it was, to say the truth, who, standing before the castle gate, with a youth, the son of one of his patients, was struck with so much terror at the sight of a stranger, and hurried away so precipitately towards his own house in the village.

In the mean time, the horseman whom he had perceived coming down the hill, descended slowly; and it would appear that his quiet pace was the effect, more of curiosity in regard to the country, than of apprehension for his horse's knees, for he stopped altogether more than once, and seemed to gaze over the surrounding scene. He took no notice whatsoever of the two who turned away at his approach; and, at length, he reached the step in the hill which I have described, and drew in his rein before the castle gates. Whether it was the beauty of the scene that attracted him, or some personal interest in the spot, I cannot tell; but, after looking round him for a moment, he dismounted, threw the heavy stirrups across the saddle, and leading his horse under the shadow of the old walls at the northern angle, where the grass was luxuriant but somewhat rank, he left him to feed, as if there was a perfect understanding between man and beast, as to their pilgrimage together through this world. Then, coming round to the western side himself, on which the declining sun was beginning to shine, he seated himself in the shadow of the arch-way, crossed his arms upon his chest, and fell into a fit of meditation.

Now, whether meditation always ends in a conviction of its own inutility, and men, before it has gone on long, come to the conclusion of one of the best of our mocking-bird poets, that

> "Thinking is nothing but a waste of thought,
> And nought is everything, and everything is nought:"

or whether there be something of a retro-active mesmerism in the very operation of thinking, which sends the thinker

asleep, as potently as the communication of his thoughts sometimes sends others; certain it is that reveries, especially after a long ride, are very apt—at least it is so with myself—to end in a nap. The traveller, if one might judge by his dress, which was very dusty, had come that day somewhat more than a good morning's march; and his meditations, after having continued profoundly for about five minutes, concluded in the abandonment of all meditations. His eyes closed, his head leaned back against the angle of the masonry, and his hat pressed off, formed an indifferent pillow, while his dark brown hair escaping from beneath, refuted without words the famous tract upon "The unloveliness of Lovelocks."

In short, he was a very handsome young man, of some seven or eight and twenty; and the bright glossy curls of his long abundant hair, suited his face much better than the short crop of the parliamentary soldier, or the sleek straight cut hair of the puritanical preacher.

He slept there undisturbed for nearly half an hour; and whether he dreamed at all, or did not dream, whether his slumbers were sweet and balmy, or troubled and restless, none knew so well as his horse; for the animal, after having cropped the grass for about a quarter of an hour, came quietly up to his master, and looked at him with a pensive seriousness, very edifying to behold, as if he were reasoning upon the quality of sleep, or wondering what the mischief his master could be about. At the end of the time I have mentioned, however, the horse gave a sudden start, and a stamp with his foot; and the traveller springing on his feet, found the sun upon the very verge of the horizon, pouring a rich stream of purple light straight through the great gates and over the green turf of the castle-yard.

As was very natural with a horse, after having been ridden throughout a dusty day, the beast's nose was extended straight towards the well in the castle-yard; and the young gentleman, turning his eyes in that direction likewise, beheld, with a strange peculiar feeling which he could not account for, a female form of exquisite beauty and grace standing on the opposite side of the little well, and gazing apparently towards the setting sun. She was clothed altogether in white, and though the shadow of the trees fell over her, yet there was at that moment a sort of airy lustre upon her face and person, which spread, as it seemed, through the atmosphere round her, catching even upon the rugged trunks of the elms and the leaves immediately over her head, very much after the fashion of the glory round the figures of saints in pictures of the second or third epoch of art. She was slight and small of stature; but it seemed to the dazzled and surprised eyes of the traveller, that never in mortal form had he beheld so much symmetry and grace. He could hardly believe that he was awake; and yet everything was clear and palpable around him: the old castle and its grey walls, and the green ivy, the yard, the chapel, the castle-green, the horse which had borne him so far. But still he almost fancied that he was sleeping, for the being before him, dressed in a fashion different from that of the day, looked so much like the creature of some brilliant dream, that he could hardly imagine it reality. He took a step or two towards her; and was convinced that he was waking, by seeing the reflection of the same figure in the limpid waters of the well near which she stood. The next instant, another sense was called upon to bear testimony to the truth of what his eyes avouched, for a sweet and musical voice, though somewhat melancholy in tone withal, pronounced three times the word "Back!" But as he still advanced, the figure retreated step by step before him, seeming to become thinner, less substantial, more shadowy; first losing its peculiar radiance, then becoming dimmer in outline, and then being but faintly seen, as it entered the dark shadows cast by the old chapel, still keeping, however, its face towards him.

He was one not easily daunted, and he exclaimed aloud, "Lady! lady! grant me one word of direction, for I am not sure of my way." At the same moment he sprang across the old well, bending down his eyes for a single instant to make sure of his leap. When he raised them again, the figure was gone, and he stood gazing upon the chapel like one bewildered.

In passing from the castle to the

higher part of the village, there was a little lane between two trimmed hedgerows, with gardens on either side, filled not only with fruit-bearing trees, but with several broad oaks and long-armed beeches, and here a poplar towering up and looking, in the shadowy evening, by no means unlike a cypress. The edge on the left ended in a neat paling, defending from the encroachment of dogs and urchins a small strip of flower-garden lying between the lane and a moderate-sized house. As soon as you had passed the house, you found yourself upon a good wide piece of broken turf, flanking the sandy main road, and ornamented with a row of elms; and the eye could range down the highway between houses and gardens and groups of trees and broad patches of waste green, dotted with sundry geese gobbling the short grass, into the more populous part of the village, till, taking a gentle turn, its further course was lost, just when the church came in sight, with the wall of the church-yard extending to the edge of the road.

The house on the left of the lane—I mean the house with the little strip of flower-garden—was both neat and picturesque—a combination not frequently found. The lower story—whether upon the consideration that land was dear and sky was cheap—had been so constructed as to occupy considerably less space than the upper story, which projected on every side nearly a foot and a half beyond the sub-structure, resting on massive beams, which were supported by the walls beneath. The roof was thatched, but in the most perfect order and repair, and the walls were nicely whitewashed, although an immense quantity of superfluous timber, forming a sort of curious pattern upon the front and sides, was still distinctly visible, giving the whole building the appearance of being covered with a damask table-cloth.

Here lived good Doctor Aldover; and towards the hour of sunset on the day I have mentioned, he was sitting, as was not at all uncommon in those times, before his own door, with a table by his side, and a jug of ale upon it.

Close to him, hat in hand, and ready to depart, was the youth with whom we have seen him speaking upon the green before the old castle; but upon the other side of the table, seated on a settle, was the Presbyterian minister—a thin, worn, ascetic-looking personage, of fifty-six or fifty-seven years of age, whose somewhat hard features and fallen cheeks gave an expression of sourness and implacability to his countenance, except at those moments when an accidental smile played upon his lips, serving as a better interpreter to his heart.

The good clerical doctor dismissed the youth with an assurance that his father would do very well if he would take the medicines ordered him. "You see to it yourself, John Brownlow," he said, "for I have a great notion, my man, that more of the potions go under the bed than into the mouth, and I'll call upon him again to-morrow. I shall find out—depend upon it."

"Then you don't think he's bewitched, sir?" said the young man, with a sly smile.

"Bewitched? befiddled!" exclaimed Doctor Aldover; "no such thing—it's all nonsense—get away with you."

The young man retired at his bidding; but the Rev. Gideon Samson shook his head with a grave and doubtful expression of countenance, observing, "I hope, my good and learned friend, your observation just now does not extend to imply a disbelief in the actual existence of witches or in the apparition of the spirits of the dead?"

"Nay, heaven forbid, reverend sir," replied Doctor Aldover. "That witches have existed we know from the Book of books; and that spirits have appeared and do appear is rendered positively certain by direct testimony which cannot be gainsayed; but whether these be mere astral spirits, or really and truly the disembodied soul of a departed person, sometimes puzzles me sorely to determine."

"Astral spirits!" exclaimed Mr. Gideon Samson. "That is a mere fantastic absurdity, Doctor Aldover, a mode of explaining away facts which both Scripture, common sense, and evidence require us to believe. I suppose your sceptical coxcombs would have it that this fairy of the castle is an astral spirit forsooth; but I will ever maintain that it is purely and simply the reappearance on this earth of a person long dead permitted, for some inscrutable purpose, to revisit scenes once familiar. I suppose,

doctor, you do not think fit to disbelieve in this apparition, at least, when it has been seen by so many."

"Heaven forbid that I should disbelieve in the fairy," answered Doctor Aldover meekly. "Have I not seen her myself, which is better than all argument, my reverend friend?"

"I don't know that," answered Mr. Samson, who was in a disputatious mood; "there are some modes of argument, Doctor Aldover, which are more convincing than even the evidence of our own senses."

A sly smile came upon the worthy doctor's face, but the conversation was cut short by the appearance of a third personage on the scene; no other, in fact, than the young stranger, who had passed a portion of the evening in sleeping under the castle walls. He walked forward slowly and gravely in the twilight, leading his horse by the bridle, as if, either weary with a long ride, or busy with deep meditations; and, as he approached the spot where Doctor Aldover and his companion were sitting, he raised his eyes and looked at them steadily, and then, with a graceful salutation, addressed the worthy physician, inquiring if he could direct him to an inn, or any place where he could obtain accommodation for his beast and himself during the night.

"There are few inns or taverns in this neighbourhood, I thank God," said Mr. Gideon Samson, taking the words out of Dr. Aldover's mouth. "We have not here much to do with lewd travellers, and no habitual revellers of our own; those are evils we are free from at least."

The answer was certainly not civil, but yet the young stranger only heard it with a smile. "There may be other travellers, my good sir," he said, "besides those whom you designate by so harsh a name, and I trust I am one of them. There are travellers for business as well as for pleasure; and they needs must find some place of public entertainment if they have no friends in the part of the country where they may be. Such is my case at present, and I shall think it somewhat hard, if with a weary beast and tired limbs of my own, I am forced to journey many miles onward, because some people might make evil uses of an inn, were such a thing tolerated in the village."

This reply seemed somewhat to soothe the worthy Presbyterian, who, as has been before explained, was not by nature a harsh or unkind man, though, as is always the case with sects claiming the utmost extent of free judgment, he was somewhat intolerant of the opinions of others. His second reply, however, though couched in rather more courteous terms than the first, was but little more satisfactory to the stranger; for it only went to show him that there was but small chance of his obtaining any accommodation in a place where, for some reason or another, he was determined to remain.

His face displayed the mortification which he felt very clearly, and just as he was turning away with an expression of thanks for what little information he had obtained, good Doctor Aldover, who had been gazing at him with some interest, but without speaking, came to his relief, saying, "My dwelling is a very humble one, sir, but if you can content yourself with that, such accommodation as it can afford is very much at your service for the night."

The young man's countenance brightened instantly; and after some faint apologies for the trouble, et cetera, he agreed to take up his abode with the doctor, saying, "all that I require, kind sir, is a hard bed, a crust of bread, and a glass of water."

"Oh! we can do better for you than that," replied the worthy old man; "we can give you—"

The doctor did not conclude the sentence as he had intended, for he stood in some awe of his Presbyterian friend, and the catalogue of good things which he was about to enumerate being suspended on his lips, "We can give you," he said, "a cup of as good ale as any in the country, and a frugal supper—it may be of bread and cheese, or perhaps a rasher; and though my beds are not of down, yet they are soft enough to sleep upon, especially for a weary man."

The invitation thus given and received seemed the signal for worthy Mr. Gideon Samson's departure; and to say the truth, his going did not appear at all unpleasant to Doctor Aldover, whose face brightened at his departure. He let him be out of earshot, however, before he made any comment,

talked to the stranger about stabling his horse, talked to himself as to what room he should lodge him in, and then, calling loudly for a personage named Joshua, declared repeatedly that he was very happy indeed to have the opportunity of showing his young guest some attention.

The stranger received his civilities calmly and gravely, waited with his bridle in his hand till Joshua appeared in a gardener's habit, and then, resigning the charge of his steed to him, walked with his host into the house, and entered a little parlour, to which one descended by a single step. When the door was closed, however, he too began to smile; and, taking the doctor's hand as he welcomed him courteously, he said, "I rather imagine, my kind friend, that your hospitality is shown to one not altogether unknown to you, although you have forgotten him. Time has changed you much too, but I can not be mistaken in thinking that I am right in calling you Mr. Aldover."

"To be sure, to be sure," answered that clerical physician. "I will never deny my name; but in good sooth, young gentleman, yours I cannot tell; and yet your face comes back upon my memory like a dream. I wish you would say where I have seen it."

"It matters not, my dear sir," replied the young gentleman. "You saw it last in terrible times, which it were safest both for you and me not to speak of."

Doctor Aldover looked all round the room with a timid glance, as if he expected to see protruding from the wainscot the secret ears which walls are reputed to have; and he murmured in a low voice, "Very true, very true; it is better not to talk of such things. They are a severe and suspicious people here, with very rank and hasty people amongst them. Lord love you! my dear sir, a tavern is an abomination in their eyes; and because the boys and girls used to dance at the inn-door, they called it a tabernacle for the devil, dispossessed the landlord, and shut up the house. I am very glad to see you, nevertheless, and we will have—we will have a bowl of punch. There can be no harm in that surely. I never could discover that there was any sin in a lemon, or the bitterness of malignancy in sugar, or that rum was an evil spirit; except when he got too strong for a man. We will have a bowl of punch, I declare, but with all moderation, for it is many a year since I took a ladle-full with a—a friend."

By what free-masonry it was that he discovered the stranger to be of the same party to which he himself had formerly belonged — whether by the long locks of curling hair, or by the cavalierish cut of his vest, or by the tie of his cravat—I cannot say, but certain it is, that good Doctor Aldover felt a moral conviction that his guest had a great deal more of the Cavalier than the Roundhead in him; and yet it was a sort of timid, half-frightened assurance, which required some sort of confirmation from his own lips. Such, however, the stranger did not vouchsafe to give, but merely replied in a somewhat thoughtful tone, "Punch is no bad mixture, my reverend friend, when both compounded and drank with due discretion;" and taking this admission as confirmation of the judgment he had formed, the worthy doctor hurried out to procure the ingredients for the fragrant bowl, while the stranger looked after him for a moment with a slight smile, and then leaned his brow upon his hands, and closed his eyes with the air of a man exhausted by fatigue either of mind or body. The short sleep which he had obtained under the castle walls was all that his eyes had known for two whole days and nights, and he certainly still felt drowsy. He struggled against it, however, for he was by no means a sleepy-headed hero, and when he felt himself inclined to nod he looked up and gazed round the chamber, trying to find some object sufficiently interesting to the eyes to keep them from closing. The aspect of the whole place, however, was not very enlivening. It was a tolerable sized low-roofed room, panelled with dark oak, and having on one side of it a range of ponderous book-cases of the same material, filled principally with large folios. There is a certain degree of sleepiness even in the very aspect of a great number of big books. They weigh upon the imagination, and make the very mind feel drowsy by anticipation; so that side of the room would not do. He then looked to the other, but he was

almost worse off there. Each panel was surrounded by a wreath of carved flowers, each having been, to all appearance, cut out of the very piece of wood that formed the panel to which they were attached. They were by no means badly executed, but yet there was a certain degree of stiffness about them, a drowsy immobility, which fell oppressively upon the spirits; one would have given the world for a breath of air to stir them. It was worse still with the different carved heads with which the room was thickly ornamented. They all looked not alone as if they were going to sleep, but as if they were sound asleep already. A grim lion seemed to nod at him here; a sleepy-looking cherub hung over another corner, as if its eyes, according to the boys' phrase, were drawing straws; and the devil himself, who was perched up in the centre of the cornice with a fiddle in his hand, was the very picture of Morpheus.

As the stranger gazed the objects became indistinct; and leaning his head upon his hand, he gave himself up to the influence, rousing himself only twice, and at length bowed his head to his fate, and adding his other hand to support his brow likewise, enjoyed a few moments of perfect oblivion.

Oh! where do its waters flow? In what happy land, where the past is forgotten, and the future all unknown? Thirst for what he may in life, man will often desire no other beverage so much as for a few drops from that dark stream,

> "The goddess dipped her mortal son in Styx,
> A mortal mother would on Lethe fix."

Sleep, however, is not always oblivion; and although, as I have said, the young wanderer enjoyed for a few moments that blissful immunity from racking thought, it lasted no longer. The vision came to renew the past, to paint the future. He was in the saddle again, but not as he had lately ridden. There were plumes in his hat, and steel upon his breast, and weapons upon his side. He heard the clang of the trumpet, and the word of command, and the clash of swords, and the rattle of the musketry, and the roar of the cannon. His horse seemed to bound beneath him, his hand to grasp the reins, his arm to wave the bright and trenchant blade. The enemy went down before him, he trampled upon them as he went on in the furious charge —nothing could resist him, nothing stood against him; onward, onward he was hurried, as if some supernatural power gave him strength and command to smite down every thing before him. The pike, and the sword, and the musketoon, and the flaming mouth of the artillery, had no fears for him; victory was upon his arm and triumph upon his brow, and he thought but of success and conquest. But yet he saw his fellows fall around him; the fiery shot told amongst their ranks, the keen sabre hewed them down, they became thinner and more thin, till at length he was left alone in the midst of the fight, still conquering wherever he came, still seeing nothing stand before him. Onward, onward, through the hostile ranks he dashed, leaving a wide space cleft like a pathway through the heart of battalions bristling with arms. Onward, onward, from the front to the very rear, past their artillery, through their tents, till not even a straggler appeared before him. Then he strove to draw in his rein that he might turn again to the fight, but it was in vain he did so. The horse's jaws seemed of iron; and, impelled by a power no human strength could overcome or guide, forward he went at the same headlong pace, through the standing corn, over the fallow field, across the brown moor, and the high hill down into the valley, through the marsh and the deep stream. The forest impeded him not, the very rocks seemed to give way before him; his breath was as free in rushing up the mountain as in galloping across the plain; and miles, and miles, and miles, were left behind, as if the beast had the wings of thought or hoofs of the lightning.

The day seemed to go down, thunder-clouds gathered upon the evening sky; the night came on; but still, in the impervious darkness, forward rushed the steed as fresh as the morning, as unweary as the ever-wandering sun. The rider felt exhausted, fatigued; his limbs ached and lost their strength; he felt he could not sit his beast much longer, when, in the faint grey light of the morning, he saw a wood and an old abbey with its ruined arches and broken tracery, and there seemed thin and airy figures on the walls and at the windows

beckoning him with shadowy hands, as if inviting him to enter. The reins dropped from his hand, his head turned giddy, and he fell upon the green sward, at the foot of the trees, saying to himself, "Here shall I die;" but suddenly a sweet voice, the voice of a young girl, cried, "Denzil, Denzil, rise up and listen!"

And, starting from his slumber, the wanderer found himself still sitting in Doctor Aldover's library. The twilight had faded away into night; but yet it was not dark, for the moon had risen and was looking in at the window. He could see every object around him as plainly as if it were day, but yet he could not perceive whence that voice came. "It was in a dream," he thought; but the moment after he heard it again repeating, "Denzil, Denzil, wake up and listen."

"Am I still dreaming?" he thought; and, to assure himself that such was not the case, he rose from his seat, exclaiming, "Who is it that speaks? Where are you?"

"Near to you, yet far from you," replied the voice; "where you can not come to me yet, though in time you must come."

"What would you, then?" cried the young man; "what would you with me now?"

"Come to the church at midnight," said the voice, "and you shall hear."

"Why not now?" demanded the young man; "why not here?"

"Come alone to the church at midnight," repeated the voice, "and wait in the nave till you are called."

"Who bids me do so?" demanded the traveller.

But before any answer could be given, the door of the library opened, and good Doctor Aldover himself appeared with a light in his hand.

"Why you are talking to yourself, my young friend," he said. "Yet, after so quiet a sleep as you have had for the last half hour, I should have thought you might have chosen some other collocutor."

The young gentleman put his hand to his brow and remained silent for a moment or two, while a neat maid-servant brought into the room a large bowl of punch, together with several plates and dishes loaded, if one might judge by the odour, with contents by no means unpalatable. He permitted her to set them down upon the table, and make all those little arrangements upon which maid-servants are so fond of spending more time than enough, without uttering a word in reply to the worthy doctor's observation; but when that was done, and the room once more clear, he laid his hand upon his host's arm, saying, "My dear sir, I was not talking to myself, and there is something that must be explained here. I was called by my name not two minutes ago; I answered, and received a reply in return. All this in a place where I know no one—am known to no one that I know of! Had it been a man's voice, I might have understood it in part at least; but it was a woman's tongue, and the whole is incomprehensible."

"Pooh! pooh!" said Doctor Aldover, "you have been dreaming, my good sir."

"Dreaming I have been, certainly," replied the stranger; "but this took place when I had awakened from my dream."

"A change in the vision, that is all," answered the worthy clerical physician, who did not seem to like the subject altogether; "it could be nothing else. When I looked at you half an hour ago, your hands were moving upon your face as if your thoughts were very busy, though sound asleep.—Come, let us to supper, my good friend. Here we have got, I think, a young fowl boiled with barley, and a leaf or two of taragon to give it good digestion, and there are some slices of bacon boiled to give a relish to our punch; sit you down, my good sir—nay, take an arm-chair."

The stranger did according to the bidding of his entertainer, and Doctor Aldover helped him liberally to the dish before him; but the young man's appetite seemed to fail, for ere he had eaten more than two or three mouthfuls, he laid down his knife and fell into a deep fit of thought.

"Mr. Aldover," he said, after this had continued for a minute or two, "I cannot rest satisfied with this mystery. I assure you I was awake, broad awake, and I received an injunction from the voice that spoke to me, to go down to the church at midnight."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Doctor Aldover with a look of some surprise; "do you intend to go?"

"I must have some further insight into the case before I determine, replied the guest; "and as this occurrence has taken place in your house, I cannot help thinking you can give me an explanation if you will."

"Have you seen any one since your arrival whom you know?" asked Doctor Aldover; "I mean before you reached my garden gate; for it seems you do know me."

"No one," replied his visitor; "I met no one of any kind, except indeed one personage who puzzled me much, a lady in the castle-yard standing just on the opposite side of the well. When I sought to speak with her, she retreated before me, and in the end seemed to vanish away—at least, I could discover no farther trace of her."

"The fairy of the castle well," said Doctor Aldover, in a low voice and in a very peculiar tone. "What was the hour?"

"Just as the sun was setting," replied the young man.

"Ay, ay! just the exact hour! It is very strange how rashly some people judge. Now I hold this to be merely an astral spirit, but good Mr. Gideon Samson and many of the inhabitants of this village maintain stoutly that it is the spirit of some one dead permitted to return for the purpose, doubtless, of frightening their friends and relations."

The guest leaned his head upon his hand and thought, while Doctor Aldover proceeded to discuss very learnedly the difference between astral spirits and what he termed Hammethim, or the spirits of the dead, and when his worthy entertainer paused for a moment he enquired, "Pray, when did this spirit or fairy first appear?"

"It is some years ago now," answered Doctor Aldover, "in the worst times of a bad age. When first the thing was talked of, we thought it but the melancholic superstitions of the old women of the place, for it was good Dame Deborah Higgins who first saw the apparition as she went to draw water at the well, just as the sun was setting, and left her pitcher there and came away in a great fright. But several have seen the fairy, as they call her, since, and all their doubts have vanished in the place."

"Has any effort been made to speak with or to follow her?" asked the stranger.

"Oh yes!" answered Doctor Aldover; "one young fellow half drunk vowed he would have a dance with the fairy, and went up to the castle for that purpose. The fairy seemed not inclined to disappoint him, for according to his story, he saw her by the well within three minutes after he was there, and followed her across the great court, and suddenly he received a buffet from an unseen hand which laid him at full length upon the grass."

The stranger smiled. "Somewhat more substantial than fairy favours usually are," he answered.

"Ay! I see you are an unbeliever," replied Doctor Aldover. "I, however, believe what I have seen, though you apparently doubt your own eyes, for you admit that they were witnesses of this sight."

"Nay, I doubt not," answered the young gentleman; "I only think it very strange. I see no sufficient reason to suppose either that there are not many intermediate grades of beings between God and man, or that some of these beings may not become visible to us even on the earth. At the same time, my dear sir, I entertain no dread of them; for although every man has many sins to atone for, yet the atonement which has been made is all-sufficient if we have but faith therein."

"Wisely and reasonably spoken," replied Doctor Aldover. "I feel the same. I acknowledge and entertain no apprehensions whatever; but the people of the place have very different feelings, so much so, that you find it very difficult to persuade any of them to visit the church or the castle either after night-fall."

"I am determined to do the former," replied the doctor's guest, "and must use your interest with the sexton to get the keys, which I suppose as rector you can command at any time."

"Alas! my young friend, I am rector no more," replied the doctor; "I was dispossessed just after the battle of Worcester. Nevertheless, I can get you the keys easily, for they are in the hands of one who is under some obligations to me, and I will walk down with you to his house, though it be somewhat far off, and I am not fond of the evening air. Let us finish our bowl first, how-

ever, for you will need all the courage that a stout heart and a good strong cup can supply, to walk amidst those old aisles and ghostly-looking monuments at midnight. There are strange stories about that church, and true ones I believe."

"Pray, let me hear some of them," said his guest; but Doctor Aldover said, "No, no, I never repeat them, though my good successor in the ministry is not a little fond of spreading them abroad, till there is scarcely a child in the village that does not go to bed with his knees shaking, or a girl that will open her eyes for a moment after her candle is out. Here, let me fill your glass."

The young man took his full share of the stout beverage very readily, and the doctor remarked, not without some satisfaction, that he looked grave and thoughtful during the rest of the time they remained in the house. Whether he really entertained any apprehensions or not, however, he steadily maintained his resolution, and in half an hour set out with his worthy host in search of the keys of the church.

There was a nice little cottage in the green lane that turned off from the high-road, about a hundred yards before you came to the castle green. The lane ploughed the side of the hill as with a deep furrow and descended rapidly, passed the cottage itself and a farm-house on the other hand, and then took a considerable circuit to reach the bank of the stream and the lower end of the village, which it accomplished by four or five little paths stretching out like the fingers of an open hand. This lane avoided all the turnings and windings which were taken by the high-road, for instead of circling round any obstruction which might come in its way in the shape of a rise or fall in the ground, it went straight over them all. The little cottage I have spoken of was about half-way between the castle and the stream, a neat, tidy, though lowly building, containing within itself more accommodation than the externals promised; and though it was somewhat lonely, yet in the clear summer days it had a pleasant view both of the church and the castle, and a part of the village, and in the winter a better view still, because the leaves were then off the trees. In the front towards the lane was a very neat parlour—for the personage to whom it belonged aped some of the usages of gentility—and separated by a thick partition that which to him was drawing-room, dining-room, and library, from the offices, although round the latter there ran a sort of trellised portico, which we, in the present day, should call verandah.

In this parlour, on the same night during which, for the first time in eight or nine years, Doctor Aldover consumed a bowl of punch with a guest, were seated two persons of very different age and appearance. We will take the one in the arm-chair first. He was a man of some sixty-eight years of age, but looking a good deal more—heavy, stout, and venerable, but with a dull sort of look, as if intellect, though not altogether gone, were a little drowsy. His face was reddish about the nose and on the cheeks, but rather pale in the intervening spaces; and his black eye, though not so sparking as it once had been, had a good deal of sharp cunning in it, perhaps natural, perhaps acquired by long dealing with the world, that great whetstone of the faculties.

On the broad capacious hearth, although it was summer time—that is to say, the later summer when evenings get somewhat cold—were two or three lighted logs of wood, and over them the old man bent in his arm-chair with his hands outspread, as if the warm flame cheered the icy blood of age.

Before I go farther, however, as I have talked of a parlour and an arm-chair, and a verandah, let me first explain what sort of room, what sort of chair, what sort of verandah it is that I mean. Well then, dearly beloved reader, the parlour was floored with brick; it was low in the ceiling; and a great number of beams, protruding far beyond the rest of the plasterer's work overhead, afforded convenient positions for driving in a nail or a screw to support a number of small articles and some large ones, such as hams, sides of bacon, a powder-flask, a pouch or two of shot, besides several of these things for which we acquire an affectionate regard in passing from youth to age—things which are as if they were friends to us, from our long familiarity with them. The arm-chair, indeed, derived its name from having two wooden arms, one on either side; but if examined closely, it was found to be nothing more than a settle

with appendages. The verandah was a sort of little rustic portico with a trellis-work of rough branches, which in the summer evenings afforded shade to the old man when he thought fit to sit out and drink his glass of ale in the free air.

The other tenant of the room, standing behind the first, with a yard or two between them, and phial and a cup in his hand, was no other than the young man we have twice seen with Doctor Aldover, a good-looking, stout, well-formed peasant youth of about six or seven and twenty years of age, with nut-brown curly hair, a good deal of hardy color, a bright clear eye, and a look of shrewd and merry intelligence. He was in the present instance in the act of persuading his father to take the medicine ordered for him by Doctor Aldover; but the old man resisted stoutly.

"No, John, no," he said; "I'll take no more of it. What's the use, John? I'm bewitched, boy; there's not a doubt of it; and I am sure old Martha Unwin did it, because I took her chamber clock for rent."

"Pooh, pooh, father," answered the son, "you are not bewitched at all: Doctor Aldover says so, and he is both a divine and a physician, so he must know. As to Martha, she is a very good old woman, and would not hurt any one for the whole world. She thought you bewitched for being so hard upon her, but she never bewitched you."

"Then how came I to bring two tin tacks off my stomach?" asked the old man, as if that argument were conclusive; "you saw it yourself."

"Because you put half a dozen of them between your teeth, when you were mending the old coffer," answered his son; "I saw that, too, myself; and if six went in, only four came out of your mouth. Come, father, take the medicine; it will make you quite well the good doctor says."

It required much persuasion, however, before the medicine was taken, and it had certainly not been down three minutes when old Roger Brownlow, as he was called in the village, remarked, in a discontented tone, "I'm no better, John."

"If you go to bed, father, you soon will be," replied his son; and at the end of an argument of five or ten minutes more, the old gentleman was persuaded to follow this piece of good advice and retire to rest. The domestic labors of John Brownlow being thus concluded, he took down his tall, plain, steeple-crowned hat from a peg on which it hung; and, approaching a door which opened from the side of the room within a few feet of the fire-place, said, in a low voice, "Alice, Alice, I am going out for a while."

No answer was returned, and, after waiting for a moment, the young man quietly mounted the stairs and tapped at a door above. Still all was silent, and murmuring, "How provoking! she has gone out!" he returned, and seated himself in the parlour, and leaned his head upon his hand.

"Heaven knows when she will be back now," he said, in a murmur to himself; "and Jane will be gone to bed before I can get out. Then, all to-morrow I shall have no time. Where can she be gone to now, I wonder; she knew I was anxious to go."

He continued in this sort of vein to converse with himself, evidently not very well satisfied with the absence of the person he called Alice, till, at the end of about half an hour, some one knocked hard at the door, and John Brownlow exclaimed, sharply, "Come in."

Before the words were spoken, however, Doctor Aldover and his young companion were in the room; and the former at once began upon the business which brought him, saying, "I want the keys of the church, John. Has your father gone to bed?"

"Yes, sir," answered the young man, with a respectful air, "he has been in bed this half hour or more; but if he were up, I don't think he has got the keys himself, for Alice always keeps them now, and she's out, I don't know where."

"Wherever she is, she is in the right place," said Doctor Aldover, "and she won't be long, I dare say; so we will wait till she comes back, John."

"I was waiting for her, too, sir," said the young man; "for Betty, the girl, has gone to see her father at Crofton, and I did n't like to go out and leave my old father in the house alone for fear any thing should happen, though I wanted to go out for a while very much too; but if you are going to stop, doctor, till Alice comes back, there will be no need of my remaining."

"Ah! Jane Unwin, Jane Unwin!" said Doctor Aldover. "I know where you are going, just as well as if you told me, John; and you are two silly young people, for your father will never consent. I am quite sure of that. Well, go along with you; it 's no use trying to make youth wise. Nature makes us fools, experience whips us into scholars, and then death takes us just as we are getting the last lesson by heart. Go along with you, go along with you. I will stay till Alice comes."

The young man was not slow in taking advantage of the permission he thus received, and without further ceremony or excuses, he put on his hat again and walked out of the door which had given admission to his two visitors.

"He 's a good lad," said Doctor Aldover, as soon as he was gone; "he 's a good lad as any in the parish, but his father is a nasty old curmudgeon, whose whole soul has been devoted to scraping money together all his life. The young man is in love too, like a fool, with a pretty little penniless thing whom his father will never consent to his marrying; so the poor boy is in a perilous way, as old Shakspere calls it. I know not what will come of it, I am sure, and sometimes think it almost a sin to prolong the old man's life, for it is a plague to himself and no good to any one. It is not my business, indeed, and God will take him when he thinks fit."

There was a slight rustle as the old gentleman spoke, and turning sharply round, as did also his young companion, they saw, coming down the stairs, the foot of which was visible through the door which John Brownlow had left open, the form of a young girl of seventeen or eighteen years of age, which well deserved their attention, and that of the reader also. It had all the lightness of youth, and those graces which, given by nature to a very early period of life, are but too frequently obliterated in the poorer classes of society by the labours and the toils to which poverty is exposed. In Alice Brownlow, however, not one of those graces had been effaced, and the perfect symmetry of every limb was only the more displayed by every movement that she made. Not even the prim and unbecoming dress of the day could in the least conceal it, nor the plain mob-cap, showing the smallest possible portion of the black, dark hair, hide or diminish the beauty of the face beneath. The young stranger, at least, thought it the fairest face he had ever seen, and while Doctor Aldover advanced and took her hand, saying, "Ah, Alice! my dear child, your cousin told us you were out, and we have been waiting your return. I thought you could not be playing truant at this hour of night."

"I have but this moment come back, sir," answered Alice Brownlow, "and, thinking I heard some one speaking, I came down to see who it was, or if my uncle wanted anything."

"He is gone to bed," said Doctor Aldover, "so John tells me; but what we want, my dear child, are the keys of the church, which are in your fair possession, I find. This gentleman is going to see if he can find a ghost or a fairy."

"He must go up to the castle for the fairy," said the beautiful girl, turning her eyes upon the young stranger, who then, for the first time, perceived that those eyes were deep blue; and, to say the truth, he gazed into them so earnestly, that the colour came a good deal into her cheek as she proceeded; "but I do not think he would find any fairy there either. I have never seen one, at least."

"Ah! you are a little sceptic," said Doctor Aldover. "Do not let your friend, Gideon Samson, hear you, or he will put you to penance for your incredulity."

The girl laughed, as if she did not much fear such a result, but merely replying, "I will go and fetch the keys directly," she ran away up the stairs again, leaving one at least of the party in wonder and admiration.

"She is marvellously beautiful," he said, as soon as he thought she was out of earshot.

"And not less beautiful than good," said Doctor Aldover; "but there is a very cold heart under that bright face —at least so say the youths of the village, I know not with what truth. She may be cold to love, but she is not cold to charity, that I can vouch for; for she goes about healing the wounds he, uncle makes, and they are a good many. That old man was once the sexton here, and he has somehow contrived to amass sufficient wealth to make himself master

of half the cottages in the village; but here she comes again with her foot of light. So here are the keys, my dear; but you must tell us which is which, for there seems a score of them."

Alice Brownlow smiled; "I will go with you and show you, sir," she said, "if you like."

"He is not going now," answered the good doctor, "but at an hour when even you, Alice, would be afraid to go."

"Oh, no!" replied the girl, "I have no fears at any time."

"What, at midnight?" asked the stranger.

"Oh yes! or at any time," she answered. "I do not know why people should be more afraid at midnight than any other hour, if they have good consciences."

"Then if you will, you shall be my guide," said the young gentleman somewhat eagerly; but Doctor Aldover looked a little grave, saying, "It is hardly fit, I think. What will your uncle say, Alice?"

"Nothing," replied the girl, looking up with a frank smile in Doctor Aldover's face. "He leaves me to do as I please in all things, and he knows I do not use my liberty amiss. Do you think I do, kind Doctor Aldover?"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the old man; "but this gentleman is nearly a stranger to me, Alice. I beg your pardon, sir," he continued, turning to the stranger, "but I look upon this dear girl almost as my own child."

"She is perfectly safe with me," replied the stranger, warmly; "I trust the day will never come when the very thought of injuring or insulting one like her could even enter into my mind."

"I am quite certain of it," said Alice Brownlow; "I never met with insult from any one yet, and I do not think this gentleman would be the first.

"Not for aught on earth," he answered; "but as your kind friend here is still afraid, I see, though it may be a trespass on his time, why should he not come with us?"

"That must not be, I am afraid," replied Doctor Aldover. "My good friend Gideon is somewhat jealous, and were he to hear that I, his dispossessed predecessor, were visiting the church at midnight, there is no knowing what suspicions he might conceive. I must even trust you, I suppose."

"Trust is always best," said the fair girl beside him; "I have found it so, and it will be so to the end. My cousin John will not be home for an hour or more, but if the gentleman will then come down, I will show him the way to the church and open the doors for him. The way back he must find himself, I fear, for I cannot stay, and he can put the keys in the shed by the door."

"Farewell, then, for the present," said Doctor Aldover; and thus the conversation ended, with the exception of a few words of very little interest to the reader, though of more to the young stranger.

"Has your uncle let the two rooms above?" asked the good physician.

"Not yet," replied Alice.

"Nor ever will," said Doctor Aldover; "he asks too much for them, my dear."

The young stranger thought that he should very much like to make the worthy doctor's words prove false. It was a rash, bold fancy that he took to hire those two rooms, and he revolved the subject in his mind all the way back, not forgetting, however, to remark every turning of the road, that he might find his way to the cottage again at the appointed time.

The moon's short-lived reign was over, and the night was dark. There were many stars indeed in the zenith twinkling bright and clear, but round the horizon on every side there were heavy mists, not exactly amounting to clouds, but which shut out all the lesser lights of heaven. There were many trees over the road too, so that it was only now and then that Orion or the Bear could be seen; and the stranger and Alice Brownlow walked on almost in darkness. The whole world was silent around, except when from a great distance the baying of a dog was heard through the clear stillness of the night. There was a strong odour in the air too, as if the flowers were giving out their perfume more liberally to the cool night air than to the warm and eager day; but yet there was a kind of faint sensation crept over the frame under the overpowering sweetness

which seemed to breathe from the flowers and shrubs,—a languor tending to fanciful imaginings, to which the absence of all sight and sound contributed also.

The stranger felt it gain upon him; the stories he had heard told and well authenticated came back to his mind; and many a curious question suggested itself as he walked on. To say that he was superstitious would not be correct, for in regard to beings beyond or above the earth, he believed rather less than more than the great majority of people in his day; but yet he could not help feeling that, in reasoning analogically, there was every cause for believing, first, that the interval between the All-creating Spirit and the first of corporeal creatures was not an unfilled gap—that the upper world, if I may so term it, was tenanted, like the inferior world in which we dwell, by innumerable classes, infinite gradations of spiritual beings; and he then asked himself, "Is it to be supposed that an impassable bar is placed against all communion between the purely spiritual and the next link in the great chain of creation?"

Reason instantly answered, "No;" and, whether he looked to the evidence of Scripture, or history, or the testimony of living men, he found an infinity of recorded facts to bear out the conclusion that communications of various kinds could and did take place, between the free spirit, detached from all earthly bonds, and the immortal essence prisoned in the clay. He thought of all the bold and daring carelessness with which he regarded such subjects at ordinary times, and again he asked himself, if it was not the daily round of business, the turmoil, and hurry of the strife of life, the worldliness of our whole existence, that withdrew us from a sense, a consciousness, a conviction that we were ever in the presence of multitudes of fellow-spirits unseen, unknown, but who might, if we were less absorbed in the dull things of earth, manifest themselves to us in some mode, to warn, to encourage, or to uphold?

Busied with these thoughts, he almost forgot his fair companion for some time, as she walked on beside him, in her grey dress, and with a black silk scarf shrouding her head, shadowy almost as his imaginations. At length, however, his thoughts seemed to oppress him. He asked himself if he were going to turn coward and be afraid; and, certainly, a degree of awe, such as he had never felt before, crept over him, and he felt cold and chilled. He thought conversation might dissipate such sensations, and breaking the long silence, he said, "You are sceptical about ghosts and spirits, I find. Do you not believe in the existence of such beings at all?"

"Certainly I do," replied the girl, with her sweet plaintive voice; "it is a belief I cherish and am fond of. I not only know that they exist, but I know that they appear; but that is very different from fearing them."

"Then have you ever seen one?" asked the stranger.

"Nay," she said, "I did not come to tell you ghost stories. You will see enough, perhaps, to-night to convince you, if you doubt or misbelieve; for many of the hard and incredulous have learned, in the very church-yard to which we are going, to know that there are other things worthy of men's thoughts besides the mere seeking after gain, the strife of ambition, or the empty toys with which grown children amuse the busy infancy of this life."

"You are a strange being," said the stranger, "and seem to have busied yourself with things very different from those which usually occupy girls of your age and station."

"I have," she answered. "Left an orphan at a very early age, my own thoughts have been my companions, and some old books, which, if they were more read, might render men and women wiser than they are. But yonder is the church-yard. Pray, remember, sir, that those who are good have nought to fear from either worse or better spirits. A free conscience and a bold heart need dread nothing on this earth or beyond it."

She spoke in a low and solemn tone, and certainly her words did serve to cheer, though they seemed intended to encourage. The stranger looked forward on the path which they were following; but the darkness was too profound for him to see any thing but the rounded forms of some large old trees, with the dark tower of the church rising above them. In another minute he stood beneath the wooden shedded

portico of the church-yard, where, in the service of the Church of England, the clergyman first meets the corpse; and he could see the low crumbling wall that surrounded the cemetery stretching away far on either side.

"It seems very extensive," he said, in a low voice.

"It had need," replied his guide, "for there are many dead lie here: the great and the humble side by side, the good and the bad, the oppressor and the oppressed, the young and the old; the dust mingling with the dust through far-back centuries; the spirits to their several tasks as God shall appoint them."

As she spoke she unlocked the outer gate, and led the way on as if so familiar with the place that she could not miss her way; but her companion as he followed stumbled more than once over the little mounds of earth cast up upon the breasts of the dead. They passed through the tall old trees which nearly encircled the church-yard, and then the young stranger could see dark masses of the building itself through the dim faint air. It was a large and heavy pile, with many a projecting buttress, and many a tall narrow window, while high up in air rose the large square tower, solemn and mysterious in its look.

"What is that?" asked the traveller as they came near; "there seems a light there—a faint small light."

"Nothing but a glow-worm on a grave," replied the girl; "the image of fame after death;" and she walked quietly on till she stood beneath the low projecting porch. It was evident that the place and the hour had their impression with her—if not of fear, still of awe; and with hasty hand she sought the key of the church in the large bunch she carried, and applied it to the key-hole in the heavy door.

Before she turned it she asked almost in a whisper, "Is your heart still strong."

"Yes," replied her companion; and she opened the door.

"Take care how you go," said the girl, "for the chancel is full of tombs; and remember to shut the doors after you and lock them. I must now leave you."

For a moment he heard her light step retreating in the deep silence of the night, and then all was still again; and he stood before the open door of the church alone. He felt a hesitation—he asked himself if it were not folly to go on at a summons so strangely given; but something impelled him forward, and he stretched out his hand to push the door farther back. At that very instant there was a loud clang that made him start, as with a slow, swinging, wave-like sound the great clock began to strike the hour of midnight. He felt ashamed of his sensations, ashamed of having started; and with a determined step he entered.

All was dark within, and he had to feel his way. The first thing his hand touched was one of the small narrow pillars of a cluster-column, feeling cold and death-like; and then came an iron railing round a grave. That guided him on some way; but then putting forth his right arm, he suddenly laid his hand upon the icy fingers of a statue, and the first impulse was to draw back as if he had touched a corpse. The stillness was overpowering, too; it seemed more profound, more death-like than without. In the free air, there had been a light rustle amongst the trees; the very sigh of the night-wind had taken away from the solemnity of the silence. Here, everything was hushed and mournfully quiet, not a breath of air moved through the gloomy aisles, and there was a chilly sensation in the place, a close clinging coldness, that depressed the heart and filled the imagination with gloomy images. The grave and the worm, and the icy chill of death, and the everlasting silence, and the slow corruption, presented themselves involuntarily to the mind, and he wondered if the disembodied spirit could be permitted to see, and trace day by day the awful changes of that corporeal frame in the powers and beauty of which it perhaps once glorified itself. His thoughts were very dark, and his heart heavy, as he reached the spot as the transept by which he entered joined the nave. He turned to the right and to the left, endeavouring to see the objects around, but at first nothing was perceptible but the tall windows on either side, looking at him like dim strange-shaped eyes, as the less intense darkness without them gave

some relief from the black obscurity of all the rest. The next moment, however, something white, of the size and in the form of a human figure, seemed to gleam upon him at the farther end of the nave; as he gazed towards it he could see it more distinctly. It moved not, but remained without any apparent change in one spot; and clasping the fingers of his left hand round the sheath of his sword, he took a step or two towards it. The figure was now more defined, apparently that of a woman, habited in a long white robe; but still it was perfectly motionless; and the young stranger said in a low voice, "I am here! what do you want with me?"

There was no answer, and with a hasty determination, advancing straight towards the object he beheld, he found that it was a figure of white marble upon a low sepulchral monument.

"Can I have been the sport of my own fancy?" the young man asked himself; "can I have been still dreaming as the good old man said when I thought I heard this voice calling me? no, no; that is impossible!" and turning towards the other end of the church, he repeated aloud, "I am here! who is it sent for me?"

There was a momentary silence, and then came a low, sweet, beautiful strain of music, solemn and sad, but exquisitely touching; and the young traveller stood listening in silent delight. But yet there was something unearthly about it too. Now it seemed far off, now it swelled nearer to the ear, now rose into the high treble, now sunk muttering down in the bass. Suddenly it ceased, and the same sweet tongue which had spoken to him before said, "Denzil, Denzil, follow, follow!"

"Where?" asked the stranger.

"To the grave," said the voice.

"To mine?" demanded the young man.

"To the grave of one who loved you in boyhood," replied the voice again. "Denzil, Denzil, follow, follow!"

"I will," he replied; "show me the way."

The moment he spoke a faint light gleamed through the church, and he could see dimly around him the gloomy aisles, and the tall columns, and the numerous tombs, with the sculptured memorials of the dead. His heart beat a good deal, but he had no time to question with himself, for the voice repeated from the other end of the church, "Denzil, Denzil, follow, follow!" and with a strong resolution, and a quick step, he hurried on, guided by the voice. The church had been stripped of many of its monuments, the rich screen had been torn down between the choir and the nave, the seats of sculptured oak had lighted the fires of the Puritans, and all was free and open from one end to the other. But just beyond the northern wing of the transept, Denzil could see the spot from which the light seemed to issue, still faint but stronger there than anywhere else; and as he approached, it appeared to him to rise from the ground. A step or two farther showed him a large flat stone, like the covering of a vault raised high, and the gleam coming up from beneath; and when he reached the edge of the aperture, he could perceive the first steps of a stone stair-case, descending apparently into the vaults or the crypt of the church. He hesitated for an instant as to whether he should descend, but the voice again called him by name, and repeated "Follow, follow!"

"I will," murmured the stranger to himself, "whatever be the consequence;" and with a feeling of awe, for I will not venture to call it fear, he leaped down to the top, or landing-place, of the small stair-case, and began the descent. "I shall soon see whence this light comes," he said; but he was mistaken, for he found the faint rays still gleaming up, casting a long shadow behind him as he went down. Near the top the steps seemed new and fresh, at least compared with those below; for although they were somewhat stained and green as if no foot had trod them for many years, yet they were sharp-cut and firmly set in the mortar. After the first ten or twelve, however, they became rough, broken and irregular, slippery with cold damp, and with many a foul insect crawling over them. A large toad, bloated and swollen, crept slowly across almost under the wanderer's feet, eyeing him in the unaccustomed light, with his large brilliant eyes, as if wondering what he did there; and numerous bats hanging together in clusters from the mildewed walls, took flight at his approach, and skimmed away upon their filmy wings.

The descent was long, at least fifty steps, turning upon a common centre, led him down, as if towards the very heart of the earth, and still the light receded before him, seeming as far off at the bottom as the beginning of the descent, till at length a small round arched door appeared at the foot of the staircase, and he saw the faint rays, gleaming as before amidst innumerable low pillars and intersecting lines of masonry. At the same moment the voice said again, "Follow, Denzil, follow!" but to obey was somewhat difficult, for the ground was obstructed, not only by loose scattered stones and fragments of falling masonry, but by the rolled up bones of the dead. Skulls with their grinning white teeth, and wide staring, eyeless sockets, lay upon the path, and more than once he felt the bones of beings like himself cranch and crumble under his tread as he marched along. It made his blood run cold to think that his steps were upon the ruined relics of mortal men, and he strove to see where he set his foot, but the light receding fast, left him in a sort of semi-darkness, while a hooting owl flapped past him on its downy wings, and stirred the damp-smelling air around.

Smothering his repugnance, he strode on hastily, perplexed and bewildered by the numerous arches and the low columns that supported them, and unable to perceive in what precise direction the light was carried, while a low murmuring sound, as if of a multitude of voices talking at a distance, met his ear, and a cool fresh air came and waved about the curls around his brow.

"This is indeed strange," he thought, "I know not whether I am dreaming or awake. What can be the object of bringing me hither! Yet it is vain to think of retreating now," and on he went till suddenly he came to what seemed the cold face of a rock, roughly hewn and fashioned, into what the old architects called rustic-work, with a small narrow archway through which the light still streamed, though it was partly obstructed by a heavy stone door, left half open. The young stranger pushed it back, using all his strength, but it rolled easily on the pivot which supported it, and striking against the masonry which lined the passage beyond, produced a hollow sound and a sharp clang like a groan and a scream. The light was before him still, and he could now see a small pale bluish white flame moving onward at a distance, but could distinguish no hand that bore it.

"Follow, Denzil, follow!" said a voice which came sweetly, almost in a whisper, along the passage, and the next instant there was a sound like the baying of a large dog, while another voice exclaimed, "Down, fiend, down!"

Silently the young man drew his sword out of the sheath, and paused for an instant, but immediately the voice he had first heard said, "Fear not, Denzil, follow! nothing living has ever cowed you; fear not the dead."

"I fear not," answered the young man, aloud; but yet, if the truth must be told, he felt cold and chill, and his heart beat quicker than was its wont. Onward, onward, he went for nearly a quarter of a mile, the light still preceding him, casting a bright glare upon the yellow brown damp that hung about the walls, and the drops of moisture that every here and there percolated through the stones of the vault overhead. At length the passage seemed to open out, and he caught a faint sight of what seemed a large octagonal chamber with something that looked at first view like an altar in the midst, and the moment after the light was suddenly extinguished, and he stood in total darkness.

"Twenty steps farther," said the voice, "then ask what questions you will, and they shall be answered."

With his sword still in his hand, the young man strode on till nineteen steps were measured, and as he took the twentieth the blade of his weapon struck against some hard substance, and produced a ringing sound around him.

"Why have I been brought hither?" he said aloud.

"To receive advice which may lead you to fortune," answered a deep stern voice.

"I must know the giver of the advice before I take it," said the young man; "yet let me hear it."

"It is written down," replied the same tongue which had before spoken. "Those who give it, know what you know not, see what you see not, understand what you do not understand. They are with you, but not of you; they have guided you, and will guide you, they

have watched over you from youth to manhood; they would fain see that manhood great and good, but your fate must be of your own shaping, they can but help."

"Where shall I find this writing?" asked the young man.

"Will you obey the words that you shall find written?" demanded the voice.

"That will depend upon what they are," was the answer. "I will do nought against my country, or the cause which I have always served."

"If you would free your country from a yoke more burdensome than that of the bloodiest tyrant that ever ruled, if you would render triumphant the great cause in which you have fought and bled—if you would raise yourself high in honour, and merit gratitude and renown, you will follow the advice given, unquestioning and unhesitating."

"If I understand you right," answered the young man, "I will do so; but tell me who and what you are; I would fain see you face to face."

"Him you cannot see," said the sweeter voice which he had first heard. "Denzil Norman, ask not what is not permitted."

"But you, you," said the young man eagerly; "you, I think, I have already seen; show yourself now."

"So be it," replied the voice, and instantly a light shone through the old place, again displaying the octagon stone chamber, with its vaulted roof, and niches as if for statues, all around. Exactly in the centre was a plain stone tomb with an inscription on the slab of free-stone on the top, and over it were scattered a profusion of fresh flowers, in the midst of which lay a small roll of paper. One object, however, attracted the whole of the young man's attention. One of the large niches, some five or six feet from the ground, seemed open like a Gothic arch, and filled with light, in the midst of which stood the same beautiful figure he had beheld by the castle well, clothed as before entirely in white from head to foot, with long rich curls of glossy, light brown hair, falling over her neck, and breast, and shoulders. He paused in deep silence and amazement, and then, stretching out his hands towards the figure, he was about to speak, when the sweet voice said, "Pray for an instant by the side of the tomb of her who guarded your youth, and was a mother to you when your mother was laid in the grave. Then take up the paper, begone, and obey."

The young man knelt by the tomb, catching sight of one name inscribed upon it as he did so, and bending his head, with the tears streaming from his eyes, upon the cold gray stone, he prayed for an instant as fervently as he had ever prayed in life. Then, rising, he stretched out his hand and took the paper, and the moment he had done so all was darkness.

Denzil Norman stood bewildered for a moment or two beside the tomb, with his thoughts all troubled and his heart beating fast.

"Stretch forth your hand," said the deeper voice of the two which he had heard, and without reply he obeyed. The moment he did so, his fingers were clasped tight in the grasp of another hand; but it was not a hand of flesh and blood. The hardest-working artisan in all the world never had a hand like that—cold as that of the dead, and hard and stiff as adamant. He would have withdrawn his fingers from those that clutched them, but he could not; and the voice said, "Follow, follow!"

On he went, as the cold hand guided, slowly and silently; for though the young gentleman spoke twice, he received no answer. The way seemed interminable in the darkness and the silence, and there was an oppressive feeling in the air which showed him that he was still in the vault. At length, however, a gust of fresh night wind came upon the young man's cheek, and the moment after he perceived a low door open before him, with the faint external light just marking it out in the darkness. He turned quickly in the hope of seeing who was his guide, but at the same moment the hand relaxed its grasp, and the voice said, "Forward!"

Three steps more brought him upon the green grass of the church-yard, and the instant he had passed through the archway the door banged to with a loud clang, which made the whole of the old building echo with the sound.

At day-break Denzil Norman sat in his room at Doctor Aldover's alone with the dove-coloured light of dawn streaming in through the window, and falli

upon a table before him, on which was stretched a scroll covered with characters written in very black ink. The paper was yellow as if with age, and part of the writing, at least, was in a tongue or a cypher which the eyes that looked upon it were unacquainted with. A few lines at the top and at the bottom of the page were in the ordinary English hand and language, though there was something cramped and stiff in the formation of the letters, which gave them a strange and antique look. The young gentleman gazed on the paper with a thoughtful air, and repeated in a low voice, "Stay here a week, and then journey as a messenger to the north! Well, it matters not where I stay or or whither I go. In all places there are dangers; in all places there is a Providence. I will obey these strange commands; but where can I find lodging in this place without an inn? I cannot trespass longer on the hospitality of this good old man."

He then remembered the conversation between Doctor Aldover and Alice Brownlow, just before they parted, regarding the rooms her uncle had to let, and his resolution was soon taken. Ere mid-day he was installed the tenant of Roger Brownlow's lodgings; and the old man acknowledged, with the simplicity which not unfrequently accompanies a single passion, especially that of avarice, that he did not know which had done him most good—the having let his rooms, or Doctor Aldover's last dose.

Alice, who was present, smiled gaily, and the good doctor laughed, saying, "The money, Roger; the money! that is your disease and medicine too. But come, Roger, the young gentleman has given you two gold twenty-shilling pieces, out of which you owe him ten; go and get him a couple of fresh Olivers out of your coffer, or you may forget that he has not had his change."

"I'll go, I'll go," answered the old man; "but just let me have a word with you, doctor, before you go;" and away he walked, taking Doctor Aldover with him. Left alone with his fair guide of the night before, Denzil Norman took the opportunity of thanking her; for he had remarked that not only no word of his visit to the church in old Roger Brownlow's presence, but that Doctor Aldover himself, no longer under the exhilarating influence of a good glass of punch, had been exceedingly shy of the subject. Not so Alice Brownlow, however, for she not only spoke freely of his expedition, but questioned him as to what he had seen, in a tone so light and gay as to form a strange contrast with her demeanour on the preceding night.

Denzil Norman found it somewhat difficult to parry her quick inquiries, and only succeeded in doing so by assuming the same tone himself. A little gallantry certainly mingled in his manner too, whether he would or not; for he thought her even more beautiful by daylight than he had done on the preceding evening, and the sparkling grace of her whole manner, in this more cheerful mood, seemed to render her only the more engaging. "I think," he said, "that I shall call you the fairy of the cottage, as we have got a fairy of the castle on the hill above."

"I wish I were a fairy," said the girl with a sigh; "I could do many things then, that I cannot do now."

As may be supposed, Denzil Norman did not let slip the occasion of inquiring how she would exercise her fairy powers if she possessed them; and she answered, "In healing wounds, in making the good and the wise happy, when an adverse fortune dooms them too frequently in this life to sorrow and disappointment."

"Nay," replied the young man, "that, according to the old legends, is more the function of one of the nine orders of angels than of an inferior being like a fairy. But have you no one in particular you would benefit?"

"Oh, to be sure!" replied Alice Brownlow, with a gay smile; "every one has somebody whom they would wish to serve."

"And who would be this favoured one with you?" asked Denzil Norman, not quite well satisfied with the reply. "It is perhaps a bold question to ask a fair lady like yourself."

The girl laughed. "How curious men are!" she said. "The lions are the painters, and they have represented women as all curiosity, while in truth it is man's peculiar vice; but you shall not be disappointed, noble sir. Some day I will show you the person I would

wish to benefit, but it must be after longer acquaintance."

The young gentleman, as may be supposed, pressed hard for speedier knowledge, although, to say the truth, he had many doubts whether that knowledge would be pleasing to him; for since the day when Adam ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, down to this present time, an insatiable thirst has been upon the mortal lip for knowledge, knowledge, knowledge—not only of good but of evil; it is knowledge that we want, whether it be a curse or a blessing, and the devil has ever, as then, an excuse ready for our seeking it.

"I would fain know," said the young man to himself, "whether her heart is given to any one, and to whom. I feel she might be a dangerous companion in this secluded place, and if I find her love has been won, I shall be sufficiently armed against the peril. It is strange that I, who have moved amid the brightest and the fairest, in courts and cities throughout one half of Europe, should never see one who seemed to me so fair and bright as the cottage girl; but it is nonsense thinking of such things—Denzil Norman in love with the niece of Roger Brownlow! That is out of the question. I would give a great deal to see her lover, and I will, please Heaven—some mere boor, I dare say;" and he continued to press her on the subject, till she answered, in the same gay tone in which she had hitherto spoken, "Well, well, sir, you shall be satisfied if you will take a walk forth with me this evening—quietly and secretly, remember, inasmuch as my good uncle must not know anything of the matter; for 'thereby hangs a tale.'"

The answer was not pleasant to him. He almost wished that he had refrained. He fancied he caught a fluttering blush upon her cheek—that he detected a slight embarrassment in her manner, gay and cheerful as it was; and yet he was determined to carry the inquiry to the end, for, let sceptics say what they will, uncertainty is the most painful state of life.

"Give me some sign, then," he said; but before he could finish, or Alice could reply, Doctor Aldover returned with old Roger Brownlow, and soon after took his leave, promising his late guest that his horse should be well cared for at his stable, and that his saddle-bags should be sent down immediately.

The rest of the day passed very pleasantly to Denzil Norman; for although he wandered forth for a short time, yet, as had been previously arranged, he returned to take a homely meal with the family of his host, and sat long, to say sooth, in the parlour of the cottage, conversing with the fair Alice; while the old man nodded in his chair hard by, and left his lodger and his niece to amuse themselves as best they might. Denzil found that that conversation was not without its peril; but there are some men fond of standing on the brink of a precipice, and though he felt a little giddy, yet he would not withdraw. It might be asked, what they talked of? but to be answered by another question, what did they not talk of? for, although he was evidently a high-bred cavalier, and she a country girl, she led him to a thousand themes, and through a thousand courses of thought, which her mind seemed to tread with ease when his had almost lost its way. Sometimes it seemed to him like the course of a butterfly, sporting from flower to flower, and resting but a moment on each; sometimes like some brilliant dance, through which the feet of imagination played sparklingly, seeming all wild and uncontrolled, and yet with a form and plan in every movement.

At length, however, she started up, saying, "I must away, I have an errand to perform;" and passing through the door which has been mentioned, on the left of the fire-place, she ascended the stairs, as it seemed, to her own apartment. A moment or two after, however, while Denzil was looking at the old man, who was just rousing himself from his slumber, he saw a wimple and hood pass the window of the cottage; and taking his hat, he issued forth and looked for the fair wearer. She was nowhere to be seen, however; but that was not at all wonderful, for the manifold lanes and alleys, and their thick hedge-rows, rendered it very easy to lose sight of any object of pursuit. For some time he wandered about in the hope of discovering which way she had taken; and then giving up the chase, bent his steps towards the castle, the

grey towers of which he could perceive rising high over the trees.

"I will think no more of this fair young creature," he said to himself; "I have thought of her too much already;" and with a habit which he had acquired in perilous times, and many painful circumstances, he strove to force his mind away from the thoughts that would engross it, and fix them upon those calm external objects of nature's handy-work, from which it is difficult even for the perverse heart of man to extract anything that is evil or dangerous. "How beautiful the scene is!" he continued, in thought; "if I can find my way to the top of yon little hill, I shall get the best view of the castle, I fancy;" and following a path which seemed to lead thither, he was brought round under the old towers, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile. The way was steep, and walking quickly, as all men do who strive to fly from thought, he paused after a while to take breath, and looked up to the ivy-covered walls. As he did so, he suddenly beheld a form appear upon the battlements of the highest tower. It was the same he had seen the evening before at the well; the same that he had seen in the vaults. The white garments, the flowing hair, the light and airy form, which to the eye of fancy seemed almost transparent, were there, with the full light of the sun, not yet declined four hours, shining full upon them; and with a rapid, fearless step, she passed along upon the very edge of the crumbling walls, and amidst the tottering pinnacles, till she reached the top of a small watch-turret, overhanging the path which he was ascending, and there pausing, as if suspended in the air, with a grave and warning gesture she waved him back.

The young man paused and hesitated; and three times she repeated the sign, then suddenly disappeared from his sight, as if she had sunk at once through the tower. Denzil Norman gazed down upon the ground for a moment or two, then turned upon his steps, and found his way back to the cottage.

He found the old man with his son beside him; and John Brownlow, who seemed to have been informed of all that had taken place during his absence in the morning, eyed the stranger not uncivilly; and while finishing the meal to which he had come in late, inquired what way the stranger had directed his steps in his walk.

"By a small road to the eastward, which leads under the castle-walls," replied Denzil Norman.

"Then you must have met the soldiers, I suppose," replied John Brownlow. "I passed them on that road about an hour ago."

Denzil gazed at him steadily for an instant, and then replied in a calm tone, "No, I met no soldiers. What troops are they, pray?"

"They are Lambert's men," answered the other; "marching towards the north, they told me."

"Then they do not remain here," said Denzil Norman, with the same unconcerned manner.

"No," replied John Brownlow, "they must go five miles farther before night; but we are to have a company quartered upon us in a few days, I am told." As he spoke, he fixed his eyes upon his father's lodger; and when he had drank off his horn of beer, he rose, saying, "Have you seen our garden, sir? It is very pretty;" and he took a step or two towards the door of the kitchen, through which was the only exit to the back of the house. Denzil Norman followed, saying he should like to walk through the garden with him; but as soon as they had issued forth, and walked some little way amidst the quaint flower-beds which surrounded the apple trees, John Brownlow stopped, and said, in a low voice, "I think, sir, you had better keep yourself to the house till these men are gone on."

"What makes you think I have any cause to fear them?" asked Denzil Norman.

"Your hair, your French boots, and your gilt hilted sword," answered John Brownlow. "I know not what may be done in London, but here we do not see such things often; and, depend upon it, some of the officers would inquire who you are, and what brought you here. You, of course, know best your own business, but I have given you my advice honestly."

"And I will take it," answered Denzil Norman. "But how shall I know when they are gone?"

"I will let you know," replied the other. "You had better say nothing to

my father, but just sit in your own room, and pretend to be busy writing."

The evening sun was just setting upon Landleigh Castle and village, when Denzil Norman once more walked up the hill with Alice Brownlow by his side. Their way lay through the shady lanes, athwart which the level sunbeams glanced, tinged with a rosy hue; as the sun sunk down to rest, and as they caught upon her beautiful figure and sweet face, they seemed to the eyes of her companion to draw forth strange graces and new charms, and his contemplation ended with a sigh. It might be fancy, but he could not help thinking that there was something strange about her altogether—a power, a captivating influence, which no one seemed able to resist. He had seen her that evening with her uncle and her cousin, and they seemed to feel the spell as much as he did. The old man was tame in her presence, strove to conceal before her even the ill qualities he was vain of, and yielded to her lightest word like a child. The young man, though frank and straightforward, still sprang to do her slightest bidding as if her commands were his law; but yet, there was a something in his whole manner to her, and in hers to him, which swept away at once the suspicion which had crossed the mind of Denzil Norman that her cousin might be her lover.

She had been very gay and cheerful throughout the day, but now, when they were alone together in those green lanes, the graver spirit had fallen over her again; and he found deep and strong thoughts, powerful often from their very simplicity, mingling in every answer which she made him, though from time to time a touch of sparkling lightness would cross the whole, like the sunbeams darting through the shade as they passed along. He strove to keep pace with the variations of her mood, and as she had heard of the arrival and halt for an hour of the soldiers in the village, Denzil told her, in gay and jesting strain, of his pursuit of her fair self some hours before, and the cause which had induced him to turn back. "I must be strangely favoured by this fairy," he said; "and as we seem passing near the castle, I should like to turn in at the gate for a moment, and see whether she will favour me again with her presence when I have got a companion with me fairer than herself."

Alice turned and gazed at him for a moment with a grave look. "Do not speak lightly," she replied, "of fairy favours, nor ever pretend to doubt wherever you do not; I will go with you to the castle, if you please, with all my heart, but it will be of little use, for we here know right well that the fairy never appears but once in the day to any one."

"Indeed!" replied Denzil, "she is very regular in her habits, then; I thought fairies were more capricious. Nevertheless, I should like to look through the castle with you, for fair scenes are ever fairer when we see them with one who can appreciate their beauty."

Alice looked in his face with a faint smile. "It is the return of thought for thought," she said, "which brings forth the treasures of the mind and the heart. What would the light be without the shade? and even an inferior mind may often, by the contrasts it affords, give greater brightness to the rays of a higher one. We have little of such interchange of thought here," she added with a sigh; "but here we are at the castle walls, and we can go in by this small gate as well as by the greater one."

They went in, and passing through what seemed to have been a narrow outer court, soon found themselves in the larger open space with the old castle well before them. The sun was shining straight through the arch upon the crystal water and the green trees above it, but no fairy form was there, and Alice stood by the side of the well, and gazed up thoughtfully at the old towers. "Here reigned the bright and noble in the days long gone," she said; "and all have passed away. Their very memories are like a faint echo amongst the hills of words spoken once aloud, and repeated farther and farther distant till they became indistinct. Thus perishes man and his memories! I wonder how many kings and warriors, now forgotten, once thought that they should live for ever in the minds of men."

"All things pass away, and all things are renewed, fair Alice," answered Denzil Norman. "We have—at least I have—seen all our institutions swept to the wind, kings proscribed and slain, princes

banished, lords done away, parliaments reduced to a mere name, laws used to destroy laws, and injustice of every kind perpetrated in the name of justice. Yet from all this, as when the earth is ploughed with the deep share, and harrowed with the rough harrow, will, I doubt not, spring up the same institutions as those which went before."

"No, not the same," she answered; "things very much resembling past things, but not the same. I'll tell you how the course of the world seems to me to go," she continued, laying her hand familiarly on his arm. "A simple figure is always the best and the clearest. Did you ever tend a garden? If you did, you will know that each flower and each tree, if you take the seed thereof and sow it, will produce things of the same kind, but not exactly the same. Gather the seed of a tulip or a poppy, and put it in the ground; you will have tulips and poppies spring up the next year, but varied from those which went before. Thus, methinks, with worldly institutions; even when they perish they leave seed, but that seed never reproduces the same. Come, let us not stand speculating here. We are amongst dead things—I have living ones to show you;" and turning to the great gate she passed out; then took her way to the outskirts of the village, and followed by Denzil Norman entered a cottage, the door of which stood open. Within they found a woman in extreme old age, yet hale and healthy for her time of life, and by her side, busily spinning, as fast as her fingers could go, as beautiful a country girl as ever mortal eyes fell upon.

"Ah, Dame Unwin!" said Alice, "I am glad to see you back; I hope poor Bridget is better."

"She is better than any of us, my dear," replied the old woman, "for she is in heaven. The good doctor did all that man could to save her, for her poor husband's sake, and I did what little I could do, but it was of no avail, poor thing. God had called her to himself, and she went. The minister has taken two of the babes home to his house, and the doctor put the other one out to nurse, so the poor man's cares are lightened."

"I fear he could not repay you, granny," said Alice.

"She would not have taken a penny for the world, Alice," replied the girl, looking up from her work, and plying her fingers still. "Should the poor be hard upon the poor?"

"Heaven forbid," said Alice Brownlow; "but you seem very busy here, Jane. Who is it for?"

"Partly for us, partly for them," answered the girl; "but you see, Alice, we have got the clock again. We found the money in the window on Tuesday morning last. Granny would scarcely use it, for she said it was fairy gold, and it might turn to leaves or straws when old Roger Brownlow had got it."

"He would not take anything that was not full weight and tale," answered Alice; "be you sure of that, Jane. It is a good fairy, not a bad one; and if she ever brings me anything, I shall have no fears about it."

Some further conversation passed, and then Alice and her companion took their way homeward. "You have seen," she said, looking up in Denzil's face with a smile of some meaning, "those for whose sake I wish I was a fairy."

"They seem kind, good people," said Denzil Norman, a little confused with the memory of his own doubts.

"The old woman tends the sick poor," said Alice, in a slow and feeling tone, "when they have no one to tend them; and the girl works cheerfully from dawn till night to support her grandmother and herself. She will one day become John Brownlow's wife; but that day is afar, and I could wish to be a fairy, to abridge the long hours of expectation for them. Now, do you understand me?"

"I do, at length, entirely," answered Denzil Norman, warmly; "but such a heart as yours may not be easy to understand at once."

It was still dark, although there was a faint grey streak upon the edge of the eastern sky, and Denzil Norman's head was on the pillow, dreaming of Alice Brownlow. He had been at Landleigh six days, and more than once he had dreamed of her, both sleeping and waking, and each time the vision had become brighter. Suddenly, however, the dream was dispelled, and the sleep broken. There was some one knocking at the door, and starting up, he exclaimed, "Come in!"

The next moment John Brownlow entered, with a light in his hand. "Up and away, sir, as fast as possible," he said. "A company of Lambert's troops are in the place, and they were reading last night, where the officers are quartered, a proclamation, ordering the apprehension of several persons, amongst whom was named one stated to be passing under the name of Denzil Norman."

"Passing under my own name, then," said the young gentleman, with a smile.

"But not all your names, sir," replied the young man, "or else they are mistaken; for some one mentioned your being in the village, and they are to be here at day-break to take you out of your bed."

"Well, leave me then, good John," replied Denzil, "and I will rise and go. I have been in worse perils than this before now, and shall be in worse still before they make me lose heart. It is hard to be hunted thus like a hare before the hounds: but still we must abide our fate. Run up to Doctor Aldover's, if you would serve me, and have my horse ready."

"That is cared for," answered John Brownlow; "the horse is at the end of our garden. I will go out in the front and watch till you are ready. Alice is below."

Denzil Norman rose in haste and dressed himself; placed all his small portion of worldly goods in his saddle-bags, and was about to descend, when, by the growing light, he saw a paper lying on the window seat. He could not remember having left any there; and, on taking it up and looking at it closely, he perceived that it was in the same hand-writing as that which had been given him in the vaults. He had no time to examine it further, but hastily concealing it in a pocket between his vest and his shirt, he threw the saddle-bags over his arm, and went down to the room below.

The cottage windows were still closed; but Alice Brownlow was standing beside a table, on which was a light, with a grave and thoughtful face. She did not move when he entered; but Denzil advanced towards her at once, and took her hand, saying, "Alice, I must away, and that with all speed; but I shall never forget the hours I have passed here."

"Stay not to speak of such things," answered Alice; "every moment is precious for flight."

"I must stay to give you three commissions," replied the young gentleman: "first, give that gold Carolus to your uncle. I promised him something for attendance. Is it enough?"

"Too much," answered Alice.

"Next, there are five for good Dame Unwin," he continued, rapidly; "I am poor, or I would send her more. Will you give them to her for me?"

"I will," answered the beautiful girl, with an anxious look; "what is the third? speak quickly."

Denzil Norman still held her hand in his, and his fingers clasped more warmly round it, while he gazed in her beautiful face with a look of strong affection. "The last is," he said, "love me, as I will you, till we meet again."

Alice made no reply, but a warm glow, like that of the rising sun, sprung over her cheek and brow.

"Will you do that, too?" asked Denzil, in a low and agitated voice.

"It were soon promised," replied Alice; "for in a week you will forget the cottage girl."

"Never," he replied eagerly; "never while I have life. Perhaps there has been a struggle, Alice, between prejudice and love; but the struggle is over for ever, and if I escape—if I live, I will return to ask this dear hand. Oh! give me hope to cheer me by the way."

"Go, go," said Alice, turning away her face; "every moment brings you into danger."

Before he could answer, John Brownlow hurried into the cottage and locked the door behind him. "This way! this way!" he cried; "they are coming down the hill. Quick, quick!" and he caught Denzil's arm and drew him towards the door, which led through the kitchen to the garden behind. Alice, as if by an impulse she could not resist, started forward and laid her hand on that of the young fugitive. Denzil cast his arms round her, and pressed his lips upon her cheek. "Be true!" she whispered; "and you shall find me true."

The next instant he was in the garden, and he could distinctly hear the measured tramp of marching men. The

ground sloped down on that side of the house towards the river and the valley, and the thick apple-trees afforded a complete screen from the road to almost all the little paths which had been formed in the garden. Through these John Brownlow led his companion with a quick step, till they reached a hedge with a little gate in it, within fifty yards of the stream.

To the gate was fastened Denzil Norman's horse; the saddle-bags were soon fastened to the saddle: and putting his foot in the stirrup, the young gentleman held out his hand to his companion, saying, "Farewell, John, with many, many thanks. We shall meet again, I trust, in happier days, when I can thank you better."

"God bless you, my lord," replied John Brownlow. "Hark! there is some one running down the hill—Away, away! Over the turf, that they may not hear you."

Denzil was in the saddle in a moment; his horse was fresh and full of fire; and bounding forward over the turf by the river side, he soon bore his rider beyond pursuit.

For two hours Denzil Norman rode on without drawing a rein; but often directing his course to the top of any high hill he came near, in order to examine the country he had passed, and ascertain if any one followed. He could see no signs of pursuit, however, and at length he halted in a meadow by a little stream, to let his horse drink and crop a mouthful of the green grass. His first thoughts were of Alice; but there were others that came soon and pressed for attention. "I will to the north," he said to himself, "but now for this other paper;" and drawing it forth he examined it more minutely than he had been able to do before. It was all legible enough, and he read the following directions, evidently intended for himself, although the paper bore neither address nor superscription.

"Go with all speed towards Newcastle," so ran the writing; "but avoid Lambert's posts. In the village of Corbridge, stable your horse at the inn called the Hart. You will meet there a short, stout, dark man, whom you shall ask if his name be Gideon. If he reply, 'Yea,' then tell him that Portsmouth holds out against the army, that the soldiers sent against it have declared for the Parliament, that the troops in London have done the same, that Lawson and the fleet will abandon the fanatics, and that Desborough's force is safe; but above all, let him know that Fairfax holds York, and that he may trust in him. Stir not from Corbridge till you see him."

"These are strange directions," thought Denzil Norman; "but yet I will follow them, although I doubt the accuracy of the tidings. Who can this short dark man be?"

His reverie was interrupted by the distant blast of a trumpet, and springing on his horse again, he was soon once more upon his way northward, nor stopped till he had put the distance of forty miles between himself and Landleigh. Still the journey before him was long; difficulties and obstacles interposed: now he found himself in the neighbourhood of some of Lambert's forces, and was obliged to take a circuit of several miles; now his horse cast a shoe, and no blacksmith was found to replace it; now he was impeded by finding no boat at a ferry; and thus eight days elapsed before he reached the fair banks of the Tyne.

It was late in the evening when, after descending the river for some fifteen or sixteen miles, he inquired for the village of Corbridge, and was told that it lay about a mile before him. Slackening his pace, then, that he might enter the place with the appearance of a mere traveller journeying leisurely on his way, he reached the inn door just as the sun was setting, and carefully attended to his horse before he entered the room of general reception. He found it entirely vacant, and a host without much custom anxious to show all attention to an unexpected guest. The best of everything was soon placed before him, and his meal was just finished, when he heard the sound of horses before the door. Some time elapsed without any one appearing, and expectation began to fade away, when he heard a voice without giving some orders, apparently to a servant. The next instant the door opened, and a stranger entered, who eyed him for a moment and then sat down at a distance. Denzil Norman examined him well. He was somewhat above the middle age, a stout man, and

a dark one, but he could hardly be called short, although he was not so tall as the young cavalier himself. The expression of his countenance was somewhat grave and stern; but after the first look, he took no notice of his companion in the room until the landlord had served him a frugal supper, and a black jug full of some drink. As the latter was put upon the table, the stranger asked a question in a low voice; and when the room was again cleared, he turned his head towards Denzil Norman, and said, with a less surly expression of face, "The landlord tells me, sir, you come from the side of Carlisle. Is there anything stirring in those parts?"

"He is mistaken, sir," answered Denzil Norman, "I have not been near Carlisle; my journey has been from the southward."

"Ay, indeed," said the stranger, and he proceeded with his supper.

"Perhaps, if you belong to this part of the country," said Denzil, after a short pause, "you can inform me, sir, where I can find a person who calls himself Gideon."

"There might be more difficult things than that," said the stranger.

"Is your own name Gideon?" demanded the young gentleman.

"Yea," replied the other. "You have news for me it seems."

"I have," replied Denzil; and he proceeded to repeat to him precisely the information which had been contained in the paper. As he did so, he watched his companion's countenance; and, although he could see that the intelligence he conveyed was not without effect, yet the indications were too slight for him to judge whether that effect was pleasurable or otherwise.

"When did you set out?" demanded the stranger, after the detail was concluded; and, on being informed, he replied, "Methinks the fairies must have given you this information even before the events happened."

"They did," replied Denzil Norman. "At least I know no other source whence the intelligence came."

"Indeed!" said the other. "You are a good messenger to bring tidings without knowing whence they come. But methinks you should have some paper for me, young gentleman; have you it about you?"

"I have," replied Denzil Norman, somewhat drily, for he was not altogether pleased at the tone of authority which the other assumed. "Here it is;" and he laid it down upon the table before him without taking the trouble of rising to deliver it. The other man smiled, rose from his seat, crossed the room, and took the paper, examined the cypher by the light, and seemed to read it over attentively; his brow grew instantly dark, however, and he demanded sternly, "Do you know the contents of this paper, young man?"

"The part which is written in English I do know," answered Denzil Norman. "Of the rest I comprehend not one word."

"Happy for you, you do not," said the other; "happy for you that your want of reverence makes me believe that it is so, for, were it otherwise, I would have hanged you on the tree before the door. Nevertheless, you shall be taken care of; and as you would value your life, take care how you use your tongue with those people in whose hands I place you. Ho! without there! bring up a guard."

"Yes, my Lord General," answered a voice; and the next moment several soldiers appeared at the door.

As may easily be conceived, the feelings of Denzil Norman were of no very pleasant kind; but there was about the cavaliers of that period an assumption of indifference to the evils of life which was not of the best school of philosophy, but which affected even those of higher toned mind and character. "I should remonstrate, sir," he said, "upon being subjected to inconvenience for having very civilly borne you a message, the import of which I did not understand, if remonstrance were likely to be of any avail; but having lived long in a country where neither law nor reason are very available, I think it best to hold my tongue."

"You do wisely," replied the other, drily; and then added, addressing the officer of the guard, "Remove him."

"Shall we search his person or examine his papers, my Lord General?" demanded the officer.

"You will do at your peril any thing more than the strict letter of my commands," answered the other, "which are, to remove him, and keep him under

arrest, with all due civility, till I make further inquiries. Send Mr. Clarges hither."

"One question before I go, sir," said Denzil Norman. "May I ask at whose command I am to be subjected to imprisonment, for amongst all the Lord Generals whom we have lately heard of, I am unacquainted with the name of General Gideon?"

"He was a famous man, too, in his day," replied the other, with a faint smile, "and a great general; but my name is Monk."

"Oh! very well," replied Denzil, with a mind a good deal relieved, and without farther comment or resistance he followed the officer of the guard out of the room.

The life of Denzil Norman for some time was a very unpleasant one, for it was a life of uncertainty and of confinement. The general prevalent belief that Monk was favourable to the royal cause of course had its effect in relieving his mind from any serious apprehensions for his personal safety; but yet to be in the midst of scenes where the great game of policy was playing without knowing any of the moves, and without the power to take any part, uncertain of his own fate, or the fate of his country and friends, was at once painful and exciting. Rumours he could not but hear, movements he could not but see; but the truth of the one, and the causes of the other, he could not in any degree divine. He was treated with general civility, and gradually had more liberty allowed him than at first; but still he was obliged to consider himself as a prisoner, and seemed more the sport of caprice than the object of just precaution. At one time he was permitted to go out for an hour or two on parole; at another was strictly confined in whatever place the army might be. Sometimes he fared well in his prison, sometimes had little more allowed him than mere bread and water.

From the small town where he had been captured, he was removed to Berwick, then to Edinburgh, then to Coldstream, and then advanced with the army into England in the midst of a severe winter. But that which struck him as most unaccountable was, that not the slightest inquiry was made with regard to his name, station, or quality; no examination took place of his small baggage, which was always carefully placed in the same room with himself: and had it not been for the guard at his door, and the occasional changes which occurred in his treatment, he should have thought that Monk had entirely forgotten him. At length, on a wintry and inclement evening, the army approached York, and the well-remembered cathedral appearing in the grey light, showed Denzil Norman that he was coming near a city where he was known to many, and threw him into meditation in regard to the chances of effecting his escape by their aid and assistance.

A little reflection, however, induced him to refrain from attempting it. There was something he could not help thinking very peculiar in Monk's conduct towards him. Perhaps, indeed, he was influenced in this view of the case by the treatment he had lately received; for, since the army reached Durham, his fare and his quarters had been very superior to those which he had met with before. However that might be, he was inclined to imagine that the general was not so harshly disposed towards him as his demeanour at first might have induced him to believe; and in the end he asked himself, "I wonder what effect perfect frankness will have upon this man?"

The opportunity of trying was soon afforded to him, for as he was riding with a trooper by his side, Monk himself passed by on horseback, gave him what seemed to be a casual glance, and rode on to the head of the army. In about ten minutes, however, a young officer appeared, and informed the prisoner that he would be permitted to choose his own lodging in the town, upon the condition that he presented himself every morning at the general's quarters.

"Give my humble duty to the Lord General," replied Denzil, "and tell him that, for particular reasons, I cannot avail myself of his permission till I have spoken with him for a moment."

"Ride on with me, then," said the young officer; "but you must be quick, for he is going forward into the town."

Monk was soon overtaken, however, for he had stopped to converse with

some of his principal officers, and the message of his prisoner was delivered to him as soon as a pause took place. He looked at Denzil for a moment, from under his bent and somewhat shaggy eyebrows, and then beckoning him up, as he rode on, he asked him abruptly, "What is the meaning of this? Is your money expended?"

"Not so, sir," answered Denzil; "but you cautioned me to be careful of what I said and did, making me imagine that you would rather I should have no communication, public or private, with any of my friends. I have now to tell you that I have more than one acquaintance in York and its neighbourhood, with whom I shall most likely be brought into communication if I am at liberty in the city."

Monk mused, "It were well to avoid it," he said at last. "Who do you know at York?"

"I know the Lord Fairfax," replied Denzil, "and several others in the town."

"I will consider," answered Monk. "Retire for the present:" and without another word he rode on, leaving his prisoner in custody of the trooper. That night he was lodged at the quarters of the general, and remained two days a close prisoner. He was sitting at an early hour on the third morning, feeling some mortification at the result of his frankness—for though, according to the old copy-line, "virtue is its own reward," yet we are seldom inclined to be satisfied with that sort of recompense—when the door opened, and, with his slow step and sedate carriage, Monk himself entered the room and sat down.

"You are discreet, young gentleman," he said, "and honest—rare qualities in the world. I can trust you, which is what I can say to few men."

He paused for a moment or two, and Denzil asked himself what this preamble was to lead to. The stop was so long, however, that he had almost come to the conclusion that Monk had delivered himself of all he had to say, when that officer resumed, "Under these circumstances, and upon the assurance of Lord Fairfax, I have resolved to give you all personal freedom, notwithstanding your boldness in bringing me letters containing matter little short of high treason."

"I was perfectly ignorant of the contents," replied Denzil, "not being learned in Arabic, or whatever tongue they were written in."

"You knew who sent them at all events," replied General Monk; "and that was sufficient."

"Not so," answered Denzil Norman; "I was as ignorant of one as the other."

"Strange enough!" replied Monk. "But to the point: I will give you, as I have said, all reasonable freedom upon conditions, which are, first, that you accompany me soberly and quietly to London, presenting yourself at my quarters every morning; secondly, that you mention to no one who or what you are; and thirdly, that you make no attempt whatsoever in favour of persons who may be your friends without communicating with me."

Denzil marked with very strong emotions the last phrase in Monk's address. In difficult times, and circumstances most perilous to himself, he had learned from very small indications to guess at, if not divine, men's feelings and intentions, and with a heart greatly relieved, he replied, "I accept all the terms, my Lord General, and you shall find that I adhere to them punctually. Perhaps, when you find that I do so, you may grant me permission to absent myself for a short time, as I am anxious, on many personal accounts, to visit once more the place from which I brought those letters you have mentioned."

"All in good time, all in good time," answered Monk; "but now, remember, should you have occasion to speak with me, or any information to give, affecting the good of the state, say it not rashly, even should I seem alone; for there be men full of doubts and jealousies, who have not even scrupled, in this very town of York, to bore a hole through my chamber-door in order to gain a hearing of my private conversation. I warn one who will take a warning, I think; and I will beg you to remember, young man, that there is a certain name, which it is an offence to mention in the ears of many people in this land with whom I am at present compelled to deal, and therefore it must never be uttered between you and me."

"May I know, Lord General," said Denzil, "how I am to contrive to obtain

private audience of you, should it be needful?"

"Merely say, when you come to me," replied Monk, "that it is your wish to speak with me in private, and I will find the means. Be ready at my call, however, whenever I may want you;" and thus saying, he left the room.

The thoughts of Denzil Norman, when Monk was gone, were of Alice Brownlow, and they were sweet.

It was a bright morning in the month of May, 1660, and the light and shade were skipping over the fair village of Landleigh, bringing out a thousand different beauties in their passage, when the sound of drum and trumpet was heard upon the castle green, and a small body of horse rode in and formed in line nearly opposite to the great gates. The smallest event has its rumour, and it is therefore no wonder that a full hour at least before the entrance of the soldiers, the tidings of their approach had reached Landleigh. Thus, although those were times of doubt and suspicion, and the sober citizens and peasantry, even when fanatically inclined themselves, looked upon the military hypocrites of the day with much awe and trepidation, a number of the inhabitants of Landleigh, amongst whom was many a stout young peasant and buxom country girl, were assembled on the castle green to see the arrival of the soldiers. The man at their head was no very favourable specimen of the class to which he belonged, either internally or externally. Though not absolutely ugly, his countenance was anything but prepossessing; and, though tall, and in reality strong, there was a shambling, ungainly look about his limbs which gave one no great idea of his corporeal vigour. His character was one not unfrequently met with in every age, but which was peculiarly developed by the times of which I speak. Excitable, sensual, and worldly, he had cunning enough to discover that his passions could be best served, and his interests advanced by an assumption of zeal for the predominant tenets of the day. He had pursued this course cunningly for many years, and there are few minds so incapable of enthusiasm, as not to obtain by long habit a tincture of the views they affect. As a man is sometimes deceived by his own lies, so are men frequently cheated by their own rogueries, and Colonel Okey doubtless believed himself a fanatic in religion, and a republican in policy.

But a truce to description. We have to do with a few of the man's actions, the springs of which will be easily understood by those who have at all studied the times. After marshalling his men and glancing his eyes round the villagers with a look which, when it rested upon the female part of the assembly, betokened no very unearthly feelings, he harangued his men with the common-place cant of the wilder and more enthusiastic sectaries, who then struggled to retain that power and predominance which they had for many years enjoyed and misused in the land, wresting texts of Scripture from their original meaning, and applying them in the most forced and extraordinary manner to the events of the times. With all the rest he mingled a confusion of commands and directions, which none but those accustomed to such strange oratory could at all comprehend, and from which the villagers, habituated to the homely, but intelligible preaching of Mr. Gideon Samson, could only make out that General Lambert was in arms for the repose and domination of the saints, and that the soldiers were exhorted to denounce every one wherever they met with him, who could even be suspected of favouring the malignant proceedings of Papists, Prelatists, and Presbyterians. He ended by a call upon the inhabitants of the place, under the most fearful denunciations of wrath, to give up without delay all persons who might harbour or conceal themselves in the village from the wrath of God and man; and then, dismissing his troopers to their quarters, rode slowly into the village himself, followed by one or two of his officers, after having commanded a muster of the troop at the same place, at the hour of five in the evening. He took his way straight down the high road, going at a slow pace, and examining the different houses as he went with the eye of one seeking a comfortable lodging, but it would seem that he had previously received some information concerning the characters and opinions of the inhabitants, for he at length fixed upon by no means the best house in the place, but one inhabited by a man after his own heart—the grocer, or, as we

should call him, the chandler of the village, whose notions of predestination, saintly freedom, sufficiency of grace, and other dogmas were held in high detestation by Mr. Gideon Samson, whose own doctrines were uniformly pronounced cold, comfortless, and carnal by the more enthusiastic Mr. Culpeper. After feeding liberally, and drinking somewhat deep, considering the early hour in the morning, Colonel Okey held a long private conference with his worthy host, at the end of which he walked out into the village, and visited several of the houses and cottages, amongst which was that of Roger Brownlow, where he remained for some time in private conference with the *ci-devant* sexton. It might seem, indeed, that the subject matter of their conversation was of no great moment, for when they issued forth from the room formerly tenanted by Denzil Norman, John Brownlow, who was below, heard with consternation his worthy father assuring Colonel Okey that he had been bewitched by the old hag, under which denomination the young man naturally concluded was meant poor old Martha Unwin.

"Well, Master Brownlow," said the Colonel, "I will visit and interrogate her this very day, and on my return will proceed in her case and all others to put down the kingdom of Satan, and establish the reign of the Saints upon earth."

Thus saying, the worthy Colonel quitted the cottage, and a somewhat sharp dispute took place between father and son, in regard to the reputation of Dame Unwin. But the Colonel's last words implied a hint not lost to the ears of John Brownlow, who, as soon as the angry discussion was over with his father, hurried away into the cottage of the poor old woman, to warn her of the officer's friendly intentions towards her. As he approached the house, he thought he heard the voice of his fair Jane raised in higher and less gentle tones than usual; and, lifting the latch, he pushed the door sharply open. It struck with a violent clatter upon the steel back-piece of Colonel Okey, who was holding both Jane's hands tight in his own, and addressing words to her pure ear, which made the blood boil in the veins of her lover. The hypocrite let go his hold and started back, and, placing himself by Jane Unwin's side, John Brownlow stood gazing in the officer's face, strongly tempted to knock him down on the spot, yet dreading the consequences to all whom he loved.

With a swaggering and supercilious air, often assumed to cover confusion, Colonel Okey turned to the door and quitted the cottage without saying a word; and in an hour or so after, he was once more pouring forth the rapid strain of hypocrisy and cant, with which he was wont to delight the ears of his fanatical soldiers.

The following morning the troops marched out of the village, and the inhabitants rejoiced in the thoughts of having got rid of their unwelcome guests; but John Brownlow remembered the hint that Colonel Okey had given of his intentions to return, and with a degree of vigour, determination, and good sense which his fellow villagers had not expected of him, he took the first steps towards preparing the people of Landleigh for resisting, in case of need, the aggressions of the insolent soldiery. Presbyterians and Churchmen for once united together to make common cause against those who were enemies of both, and, with the exception of Mr. Culpeper and a few of his particular associates, all the inhabitants of the place prepared themselves, determined to resist to the last. But, alas! profession of resistance in peaceable men are not much to be depended on, and when, two nights after, a corporal's guard entered the village bringing intelligence that the Colonel and his men would be there early on the following morning, the scene of consternation that ensued amongst those who had been so bold but a few hours before was both ludicrous and lamentable. Rumours crept among them, whether spread by the soldiery or not I cannot tell, that the Lord General Lambert was in the immediate neighbourhood with a large force; that he had defeated the troops of the new Parliament, and proclaimed a pure and perfect Republic, the whole affairs of which were to be carried on by a committee of twelve saints. The people of Landleigh, it would appear, were in a very ungodly state, for they seemed to dread nothing so much as this saintly domination. Some were actually preparing to run away, but a mere hint from a single soldier was quite sufficient to make the most forward of them skulk

back to their houses; and early the next morning, the report was spread through the village that both good Doctor Aldover and Mr. Gideon Samson had been apprehended in their beds without warrant.

By the grey daylight, John Brownlow was at the door of good Dame Unwin's cottage, and he was not kept long waiting, as it was opened for him. A hurried consultation ensued as to what was best to be done, and at length it was determined that Jane and the good dame should take refuge in a part of the ruins of the castle, where John Brownlow assured them that they might lie concealed till the soldiers departed. "I will come to you at sun-set, dear Jane," he said, "and bring you provisions, and all that I can think of to make you comfortable."

Jane seemed to entertain no apprehensions; but the old lady, all witch as she was, entertained a great dread of the fairy, and it was not without much persuasion that she was induced to go forth with her grand-daughter to make abode near the spirit's well. Their little journey was not without trepidation, for Jane fancied she saw a soldier in every bush they passed in the lane leading to the castle green; and by the time they reached the end of it all three became convinced that they heard steps following. Quickening their pace to a run, however, they passed the open space in safety, darted through the old portal, and were led by John Brownlow up a narrow and tottering stair to a small chamber in one of the gate towers.

"No one would ever think of seeking for you here," he said; "and as I go down, I will take away one of the stone steps that are loose, so as to make it seem more difficult than it is to get up. Don't be frightened, good Dame Martha, for the fairy is a kind fairy, and one soldier is worse than any that ever danced upon the green."

The good lady, however, made him repeat over and over again his promise to rejoin them at sun-set, and to sit up with them till the cock crowed in the dawn.

There had been a parade of the troops on the castle-green, and an examination of Mr. Gideon Samson and Doctor Aldover before Colonel Okey; and there had been a search for old Dame Unwin and Jane, and a proclamation with sound of trumpet against sundry malignant enemies of the state and commonwealth of England, amongst whom the principal person was Charles Brook, Lord Eustace, reported to be harbouring in or near the village of Landleigh. But the parade of the troops passed over, and the soldiers returned to their quarters. Nothing was extracted from Mr. Gideon Samson but fiery abuse of Anabaptists, and fanatics, and Fifth-monarchy men, or from Doctor Aldover but meekness and submission. Dame Unwin and her grand-daughter were not found; and at the name of Lord Eustace, the villagers shook their heads, and murmured that it would be long ere his enemies found that good, kind lord, for he had died at Worcester fight. The day, in short, went by with less results of any kind than had been expected; and all seemed quiet in the village when the sun touched the edge of the horizon.

At that moment John Brownlow was standing under the arch of the castle gateway, loaded with many things to make the two poor fugitives as comfortable as might be; and after taking a cautious look round, he entered the tower on the left, and began ascending the dilapidated stairs.

Hardly had he disappeared, when silently and quietly four men came forth from a part of the ruin on the right of the gate, showing the faces of Colonel Okey himself and three of his soldiers; and the commander whispered, "After him, quick and noiselessly. You will find them all together if you go quietly."

The soldiers hurried on, and were lost to sight under the low arched door of the stairs, while Colonel Okey himself remained under the gateway. In less than a minute he caught the sound of loud voices speaking above, and an unpleasant smile came upon his face. Then descending steps were heard through the loop-holes, and in a few moments more poor John Brownlow, with old Dame Unwin and Jane, appeared under the guard of the soldiers.

"Here, bring them here!" exclaimed the officer, taking a few steps into the great court. "Let me look at their faces. Here's a pretty one at least;" and he put his hand under Jane Unwin's chin.

It was more than John Brownlow could bear, and he was starting forward

with his fist clenched, when a voice exclaimed, "Forbear!" in a tone sweet and musical, but loud and penetrating; and all eyes turned towards the spot whence the sound seemed to proceed. There, standing as before, on the other side of the well, appeared the same beautiful figure, clothed in white, with the sort of lustrous light upon her face and garments which Denzil Norman had seen when first he visited Landleigh.

"Forbear!" repeated the figure; "bad man, forbear!"

Every one was silent for an instant; but then, with an exclamation strangely mingling blasphemy with fanaticism, Colonel Okey darted forward towards the well.

"It is the fairy! it is the fairy!" cried Jane Unwin.

"Were it Beelzebub, I would bring him into captivity," said Colonel Okey; but the fairy receded before him, and, ere he could run round the well, had reached the same gloomy archway through which she had disappeared when followed by Denzil Norman.

"Keep them fast till I return," shouted the officer, turning his head to speak to the soldiers, and the next instant disappearing in the gloom.

"Verily, he is rash to trust himself with spiritual enemies," said one of the soldiers, gazing at the walls and towers opposite. "Mayhap she will lure him to some perilous place, and there seek to destroy him."

His words seemed to be verified the moment they were spoken; for hardly were they uttered when, in the clear evening twilight, the beautiful figure, in its floating white garments, was seen walking with a step of light along the very edge of the crumbling battlements, when the loose stones seemed hardly fitted to support the very softest tread; and the next instant the head of Colonel Okey protruded from a small door-way in a tower, looking upon that part of the curtain along which her course lay. The figure paused a moment, as if poised in air; and a clear short laugh was heard, followed by the words, "Come on, come on;" and instantly Colonel Okey sprang forward, several of the stones giving way under his feet, and rolling into the court below. At the same time the figure he was pursuing resumed its rapid course towards a round tower, in the western wall of which were still to be seen the fragments of a stone stair-case, which formerly led up to the higher apartments of the keep. She reached the foot of the tower, and then began to ascend by the broken steps, only supported on one side by the old wall into which they were built.

"Forbear, Colonel, forbear!" shouted one of the soldiers. "Do not sacrifice the life of one of the saints in pursuit of a shadow."

But the officer hurried recklessly on, and began to mount with a slower step, when suddenly a black arm was thrust through one of the loop-holes, and at a single blow hurled the fanatic down into the court below; while at the same moment the female figure disappeared, vanishing apparently into the body of the tower.

"I knew it, I knew it," cried one of the soldiers. "It was written in the Book that he should be so slain, even by the powers of darkness;" and at the same moment he sprang forward toward the spot where the unhappy man had fallen. The two others were following, when they were reminded of their charge of the prisoners by a somewhat untimely movement of Dame Unwin towards the gate; and, unceremoniously drawing their swords, they commanded the unwilling captives to march on before them to the spot where their unsanctified commander lay. To the surprise of all, however, on approaching, they found Colonel Okey endeavouring to raise himself upon his arm. His escape might indeed have been considered miraculous in a fall from such a height, had it not been that some thick and tangled bramble-bushes had gathered round the foot of the tower, and had received him on his descent from above as on a soft, though somewhat thorny, bed. Sorely bruised, indeed, he was, and stunned, and confused with the fall; but the evil spirit was by no means driven out of him, and his first exclamation was an order to look well to the prisoners. He remained some time upon the ground unable to rise; but when, with the assistance of one of his troopers, he succeeded in getting on his feet, he poured forth long and bitter complaints in regard to the misfortune which had befallen him, savouring very little of saintly resignation. Indeed, the expressions that he used were neither more

nor less than imprecations in another form, and probably comforted him as much as a volley of oaths would have solaced a habitual swearer. With these complaints over his bruised body, he mingled orders for removing the three prisoners to the house where he had taken up his abode, and guarding them strictly till he should be well enough to deal with them as he thought fit. This done, he limped away, grumbling every step he took; and was fain to call for the assistance of Doctor Aldover to soothe his hurts as best he might.

Surely there is no faith to be found on earth. We trust not, we hope not, as we should trust and hope were we really and thoroughly convinced that there is an over-ruling Providence, a just Judge, a future state. We look to this world alone. If we trust, it is in our own strength; if we calculate, it is upon worldly chances; if we despair, it is because this life is our all.

The heart of John Brownlow burned within him as he sat during the livelong night in a small garret-room, with a soldier at the door, separated from his companions, and every moment fancying her he loved exposed to insult, and perhaps to injury, from a brutal and licentious hypocrite. It was in vain that he tried to console himself; it was in vain that he looked around for help or hope. He trusted not, he thought not of trusting where trust only is sure; and he passed the whole hours of darkness in the fever fits of cold despair and fiery indignation. He saw the day break at length without having closed an eye; and the soft light of the early morning was perhaps more painful to him than the shadows of the night. He heard people moving about, he heard voices speaking, he thought he could distinguish the tones of his dear Jane; and he would have given all that he possessed on earth for some intelligence of her fate. For many hours, however, he was kept in the bitterness of suspense. No one came near him, no one spoke to him, except when once he tried to open the door, and the voice of the sentinal without bade him keep quiet under the threat of the strapado. At length, however, the door was thrown back, and he was hurried with a good deal of rude brutality into a large room—a sort of hall, indeed, it might be called, which had been built by worthy Mr. Culpeper as a place of meeting for himself and his fellows. A table was stretched across the upper end of the room, beyond which was placed an arm-chair. A soldier, with an ink-horn and some paper, sat at one end of the table; and Colonel Okey himself, with his head bound up and his arm in a sling, was seated in the chair of state. At a little distance from the table stood old Martha Unwin and her daughter, both as pale as death. Several of the villagers, more especially of the Culpeper faction, were between them and the door; and behind all were a number of troopers, mostly with grave faces and arms crossed on the breast.

The room, indeed, had somewhat the aspect of a court of justice; and old Roger Brownlow, who stood before the table speaking, seemed acting the part of a witness. The sight of his father in such a capacity was no great consolation to the young prisoner; nor were the first words he heard at all calculated to relieve his anxiety.

"That is quite sufficient," said Colonel Okey, as he entered, apparently addressing his father. "She shall have a full trial by water. Take her away, Hezekiah Strong-i'-the arm, and worthy Good-fight-the-faith Perkins. Conduct her quietly to the river side at the deepest part, and cast her in, taking care that she reach not the land on the same side, but that if the fiend help her, she pass clearly over. If she succeed in doing so, we will give her over to the fire; for no witch must be suffered to dwell in our Israel."

The old woman uttered not a word; for, to say the truth, her senses were quite benumbed by terror at the prospect of a fate—to the disgrace of the land be it spoken—not at all uncommon in England at that period. Jane, however, cast herself upon her knees before the brutal tyrant who threatened her aged relation with the dreadful alternative of perishing by water or by fire, and poured forth wild entreaties for mercy, mingled with appeals to the villagers present to give some testimony of the acts of kindness and Christian charity which had so often been performed by her now brutally condemned.

Okey gazed at her with a fiend-like smile, and then beckoned to her to come round to the same side on which he was sitting; but at that moment John Brown-

low's indignation mastered all prudence, and starting forward through the crowd, he caught Jane's arm, exclaiming, "Go not near him, Jane. He is a base, lewd hypocrite, and you know it. Go not near him, my love. He dare not do what he has threatened."

"Ha, ha! young viper's spawn!" exclaimed Okey. "Dare not! Do you think that we have girded up our loins and ridden forth with our swords upon our thigh for nothing? You shall soon learn what the saints of the Lord dare when the spirit moves them. Have you not aided to harbour and conceal that malignant traitor Charles Brooke, called of men Lord Eustace? Have you not comforted him and abetted him after proclamation made, and contrary to the laws of this land of England? Have you not received rents for him, and offerings from dark-minded and perverse men, who were once his tenants, but who now owe nothing to any one but the Commonwealth of England, and those to whom it shall give a portion in the marrow and fatness of the land? Dare not to deny it, for thine own father is a witness against thee, and against himself also, if we choose to be extreme with him; but, considering that he has given us a knowledge of these things, and how we may bring the most guilty to justice, we will spare the old adder, seeing that the poison is squeezed out of its fangs; but we will tread upon the head of the young adder, lest it bite the heel of the saints. In less than one hour shall the malignant Charles Brooke become the captive of our bow and spear; for we have surrounded his hiding-place with godly men, who will take care not to let him forth. In the mean time, however, we will smite his comforters and adherents hip and thigh; and thou and the prelatic malignant Aldover, who consorted with thee in thy evil deeds, shall die within ten minutes from this time, even upon the green before the castle gates. Here, Obadiah Jason, take the young man away, and bring the old man out of the prison where thou hast imprisoned him; and see that they be both shot upon the green within ten minutes, for which thou shalt have our warrant, according to the powers granted us by our commission under the seal of the Committee of Safety. What is it, Joshua Scroggs, thou man of valour? What causes that tumult at the door, and who is it thou halest along so sturdily?"

"Verily he is a captain whom we have taken, worthy colonel," replied the corporal, to whom he addressed himself, speaking in a harsh, rude voice. "I was hastening up with my men to relieve the guard at the gates of the castle, and I hurried my steps when I was upon the green, for methought I heard the voices of many men speaking loud and tumultuously; but, lo! the sentinel was walking calmly at his post, and he heard not the sounds that were revealed to my ears, when suddenly I beheld this youth walking slowly towards the castle, and I saw in him all the signs of the man of Belial. Behold his love-locks and his boots of French calf-skin, and his sword-knot of blue and white, and his G—d—mme hat, with a band of ostrich feather; and, meditating with myself, I said, 'Woe be to the land when such things walk abroad in open day,' and therewith I apprehended him, and brought him hither. Stand forth, thou man of Belial, and give an account of thyself." And he pulled roughly the arm of a man, the principal part of whose face and figure was concealed by the crowd which filled the lower part of the room.

"I will stand forth, if you will make way," replied a voice; "for, to tell you the truth, my good friend, you have only brought me where I was coming." And at the same time, putting the soldier somewhat roughly aside, Denzil Norman advanced into the little open space before the table, and took his place by the side of young John Brownlow.

"Who art thou, bold boy?" demanded Colonel Okey, gazing upon the young gentleman with some surprise, and not altogether without apprehension, as he marked the calm and almost contemptuous smile with which the young cavalier looked at him. "Take off thy hat. Knowest thou in whose presence thou standest?"

"Oh sir! I am sorry to see you here," said John Brownlow, with his fingers clasping tighter upon those of Jane, whose hand he held, and, unlike the generality of men, really feeling distressed to see a new companion destined to share in his misfortunes; but Denzil Norman, without noticing, replied to

Colonel Okey, "I know well in whose presence I stand, but, nevertheless, I shall keep my hat upon my head, as I have no reverence for any one I see before me. You asked my name, sir. It is Denzil Norman."

"Ha! ha! hast thou found me, mine enemy?" said Okey; "but now shalt thou know what it is to be in the hands of those who will not spare. Art thou, I ask thee, that Denzil Norman, Lord [illegible]unt, who slew my nephew, my sister's son, when thou wert but a boy at Worcester?"

"I am," replied the young cavalier, without the slightest sign of emotion; "but what of that, Master Okey? It was hand to hand in fair fight, a man of thirty against a lad of eighteen. He died fighting against his king; I lived to fight for my king another day."

"That thou shalt never do," answered Okey; "for thou hast seen the last sun thou ever shalt see. Take him away, Obadiah Jason, and do him to death with the rest."

"Nay, nay," answered Denzil Norman; "not quite so fast, Master Okey. A word or two more before we part."

"Take him away!" shouted Okey, by no means well pleased at the young nobleman's bold bearing and tranquil smile. "I know what he counts upon—the nest of traitors and scorpions in London, and the false and deceitful Monk; but he shall find himself deceived, for were it the last day I had to live, this hour shall he die. Take him away, I say!"

"Nay, then," answered Denzil Norman, putting his hand into his breast, "if you be so imperative, Master Okey, I must take another course," and drawing forth a pistol, he levelled it across the table at Okey's head, adding rapidly, "the man that lays a hand upon me signs your death-warrant. Bid them hold back!"

"Hold back, hold back!" cried Okey, his face turning pale; "hear what the young man has to say."

"It will be soon said, Master Okey," answered Denzil. "Listen, all men. In virtue of a commission under the hand and seal of General Monk, commander-in-chief of all the land forces of England, I hereby apprehend you, John Okey, for high treason, and I command you instantly to surrender. You, troopers of the seventh troop of Lilburn's regiment, by the same power and authority I command you to lay down your arms, and every man to betake himself peacefully to the house where he is quartered, to await the decision of the commissioners in your case, giving you, at the same time, to know that the commissions of Generals Fleetwood and Lambert have been revoked by the council of state, and that, six days ago, the latter, who resisted the authority of Parliament and the Council, was encountered near Daventry by Colonels Streater, Ingoldsby, and myself, his men routed, and himself taken prisoner, to be dealt with according to law. See that you obey! To you, villagers—if you move a hand or utter a word, Colonel Okey, I blow your brains out on the spot—I have more joyful tidings to announce. Your King is restored, bringing with him pardon and oblivion for all offences, toleration for all religions, and peace and happiness to his subjects. Neither have any fear of these misguided men who have quartered themselves amongst you; for know that the castle and the church are by this time in the hands of my regiment, and that the report of this pistol will fill this room in one minute with faithful subjects of his majesty. Long live King Charles!"

"Hark!" cried a voice from behind, "there is a drum."

As is usual in such cases, a momentary hesitation had come over those persons who an instant before had felt the greatest confidence in their own power and strength, when they perceived that the chances were turning against them. It was not, indeed, that they were utterly dismayed, but their minds hung in the balance, as it were, as to what course they should pursue, and the least weight thrown into either of the scales was certain to decide between the most opposite courses. The sound of that drum had wellnigh given the preponderance to the more timid policy, but there was more than one stout heart amongst Okey's troopers, and the stoutest of them all, because the most fanatical, was that of the corporal, Joshua Scroggs. "What!" he exclaimed, starting forward, while the rest stood round with looks of moody hesitation, "do our hearts wax faint because the battle rages strong against us? Shall we be deprived of the

captives of our bow and spear because the Amorites triumph in the hill country? Did not Barak, the son of Abinoam, coming out of Kadesh-Naphthali, go up against the hosts of Jabin, King of Canaan, with few people, and did he not prevail against him even by the side of the river Kishon; and shall we be afraid because the castle and the steeple-house are in the hands of the Philistines? No, verily, this young man shalt die as thou hast said, and the other young man, and the old man with him, because they have brought the abominable things into our Israel, even a king and a king's crown, which the land had spued forth."

"Beware, Colonel Okey, beware!" cried Denzil Norman.

"Hark! they are in the streets before the house," cried a young man from the window, looking out.

"Call them up," shouted the young cavalier; and, instantly letting go Jane Unwin's hand, John Brownlow started towards the window.

One of the troopers, however, threw himself in the way, and knocked him down with the hilt of his sword, when at once the confusion became general. Some voices shouted, "Long live King Charles," some "Down with the men of Belial;" the crowd in the room swayed hither and thither as several strove to push forward, and not a few to escape; and, in the midst of the confusion, Joshua Scroggs threw himself upon the young Lord Blount, and endeavoured to pinion his arms; but Denzil was as strong and more active, and turning the pistol from Okey towards the head of his assailant, he fired, and the man fell back, knocking down with his ponderous weight one of the soldiers who was hurrying up to his assistance. A loud rushing tramp was heard from the door as of a multitude of feet hurrying up the stairs, and the next moment a number of steel caps and grim faces appeared pouring in, and the voice of Denzil Norman shouted aloud, "Arrest every man found in arms, and let the rest go. Quietly, quietly; we have had too much strife already."

"Take that, at least, for thy part," cried one of Okey's troopers, levelling a carbine towards him. A villager, however, who stood near, struck the man a blow on the arm at the very moment he was pulling the trigger, and the shot, passing by Denzil Norman's head, with one of those retributive accidents which we so often see occur, hit old Roger Brownlow on the temple, and laid him convulsed and prostrate on the ground.

No further resistance was offered; the troops, who might now be called Royalists, poured into the room, and although the scene of confusion, of which I will not attempt to give the details, continued for about a quarter of an hour longer, all was at length quieted, and Colonel Okey and his companions removed from the room, leaving Denzil Norman with some of his officers and one or two of the villagers. Amongst the latter was John Brownlow, who, notwithstanding his own deliverance from peril and immediate death, felt too keenly for all joy, not alone the sad fate which had befallen his father, but the treacherous course which that father had pursued.

"Be comforted, my good friend," said the young nobleman, after he had given orders to remove the body to the old man's cottage. "This was an accident which but shortened his days by a very brief space, and, perhaps, it is better to terminate life with one brief pang suddenly over, than to endure prolonged suffering, or the wearisome exhaustion of gradual decay."

John Brownlow was a simple and not very well educated peasant. He affected to be nothing more; but there is something in plain good sense superior to all education and to all talent, and he replied, "I think, my lord, that everything must depend upon preparation; and it is with grief I ask myself, 'Was he prepared?'"

Lord Blount felt rebuked, but it was done without the slightest assumption, and he replied at once, "That is too true. Nevertheless, my good friend, let us not, even in our thoughts, limit God's mercy; but go home now, and tell your fair cousin that I shall be at your house soon. I have many things to deal with, but I will not be long ere I visit you."

John Brownlow smiled faintly. "You will not find Alice there," he said; "but I will tell you more, my lord, when I see you. She, too, has had duties to perform, and has performed them well; but, if I might advise you, your lordship would look to the safety of Lord Eustace, he was your old friend, I understand, and if these men have dared such

things here, what may they not have attempted there?"

"My old friend!" replied the young cavalier. "He was more than a father to me; but I fear not for him. They had no power to injure him. Now leave me, John. We will soon meet again."

An hour had passed, and while minute after minute of that time crept by, not less than a third part of the time had been spent by Denzil Norman Lord Blount in deep meditation, with his hands covering his eyes, as he sat in the chair so lately occupied by Colonel Okey. His orders had been given, his arrangements made, soldier after soldier had quitted the room, and no one remained on that floor of the house but the guard at the door. He was left all alone in the hall, where one of those little tragedies had taken place which, though enacted in a smaller space than the greater dramas performed on the wide stage of the world, often afford a deeper and more concentrated interest. The hall was large, as I have said, and looked larger in its vacancy. Benches and settles had been removed, and naught remained upon the floor but the dark-red stains of blood where the soldier and Roger Brownlow had fallen.

Twenty minutes may seem a long period for meditation, but who can tell how many were the different images which presented themselves to his mind during that time, how wide was the range of thought, how discursive and how erratic was the course that it pursued. In those twenty minutes the present and the past were revolved, and the future came in for its share of consideration; but memory, perhaps, was the most busy, and the eight or nine years last past presented a thousand objects to arrest the mind. It was only wonderful that so much was crowded into so small a space. Where did his thoughts wander? To Worcester field, the flight, the pursuit, the first battle he had ever seen, with its fiery strife, and its thrilling interest, the disastrous defeat, the breathless gallop for life and liberty, the long concealment, the passage to another land, the life of privation, adventure, and care, and all that had succeeded, seemed like a dream: painful, confused, irregular, yet full of dark and powerful emotions, and things which could never be blotted from memory. But if from the fountain rose up drops of bitterness, yet there was one sweet and balmy stream mingled with the less refreshing waters, and seemed to enrich and beautify the garden of the future. It sprang from the memories of the place in which he then was. In a humble cottage, with nothing to decorate, to enrich, or to beautify, there appeared to remembrance a form and a face never to be forgotten. His ear still seemed to hear the musical tones heard many months before, his heart to thrill, his imagination to take fire, with the high thoughts presented to him by a simple peasant girl. There was no hesitation, there was no doubt, as to his own conduct. He had learned a deep, a stern, a wholesome lesson in adversity, and he had not learned it in vain. *Worth is better than wealth, goodness greater than nobility, excellence brighter than distinction.* And, after that long pause of thought, he rose, and putting on his hat again, for he had removed it, as if to cool his heated brow while the furnace of thought worked within, he went to the door, and demanded, "Has the King been proclaimed in the village?"

"No, my lord," replied the man; "you gave no orders."

"Quick, order up my horse," replied the young nobleman, "and order the trumpeters to mount. Shame on me that I neglected it for a minute!"

Then descending to the door, where a number of the soldiers were waiting for his pleasure, he gave various orders for marching off the prisoners who had been taken in the town, and for communicating intelligence of all that had occurred both to Colonel Ingoldsby and to the Commander-in-Chief. He then mounted his horse, and with a small party of troops following, and three trumpeters preceding him, he rode through the village, proclaiming the King at every open space. His last halt was before the castle, where the whole of the regiment which had accompanied him, drawn up in battle array, occupied the right-hand side of the green, while the villagers, in a considerable number, stood with every sign of rejoicing beneath the castle walls. A loud shout greeted his approach, and, in answer to the proclamation, a hundred voices shouted, "God save the King!"—a sound which had not been heard in

Landleigh for many a year before. The young lord looked around over the faces of the country people, but he saw few that he recognised; for neither Alice Brownlow, nor her cousin, nor Jane, nor good Dame Unwin were present. In the front, indeed, was the thin, spare person of Mr. Gideon Samson, and spurring his fiery horse up to him, the young nobleman shook him kindly by the hand, expressing regret that he had suffered imprisonment by the fanatics; adding, however, "As it was for conscience sake, my dear sir, you will not, I am sure, regret it."

Mr. Samson was about to reply, in perhaps a sourer strain than usual, when good Doctor Aldover stood forward, and with tears in his eyes greeted his former guest. "Ah! my dear young lord," he said, "I remember you now right well. How could I be so stupid as to forget you; though, lack a day, you are much changed—but so, indeed, am I. I trust, however, that you will be my guest again, and take up your quarters with me while you stay."

Denzil Norman was answering kindly, and bending from his horse, with Doctor Aldover's hand in his, to speak a few words more privately to his old friend, when an officer rode up, saying, "We have examined every nook and cranny, my lord, but we can find nothing."

"That is strange," answered the young nobleman. "My information is positive, but I shall probably receive further intelligence soon. Let the matter pass for the present, and be with me at eight to-night. In the meanwhile, dismiss the troops to their quarters, but see that good order be strictly preserved, and that the prisoners be well treated."

As he spoke, Denzil Norman dismounted from his horse, and passing along the line, addressed a few words to the soldiers, brief but kind and energetic, and when he had done, and seeing them begin to file off, he turned again towards the villagers, looking apparently for Doctor Aldover. The worthy physician, however, had disappeared, and telling the peasantry that if they would meet him there on the following day at twelve, he would treat them to as much beef and ale as they could lay into their skins in honour of the King's restoration, Denzil walked slowly into the castle court, and gazed around him for a moment or two with an air in some degree melancholy.

Some of the villagers, before they departed, peeped in through the archway, to see what the young commander was about; but one by one they dropped away, some of them saying to each other as they went, "He is waiting to see the fairy, I will warrant."

In the meantime, Denzil Norman took out his watch, and communed with himself in a low murmur. "I should like to see," he said, with a slight smile, perhaps at his own credulity, "I should like to see whether this sight will appear again. It wants but half an hour to sunset. I will wait and watch, and go down to the cottage after night-fall. It is growing very sultry, methinks," and passing through the arch again, he looked forth over the sky. To the southward and eastward heavy clouds were rising up, and advancing with great rapidity, although, as he stood there beneath the ruined walls, not a breath of air fanned his cheek; and walking round to the further side of the building, he gazed out over the scene below, seeing the dark shadow of the clouds sweeping up over the sunshiny lands, while a long black fringe, stretching from the edge of the cloud to the very ground, told that the rain was descending in torrents not far off. A dull flash passed before his eyes as he gazed, and turning back towards the gates of the castle, he placed himself under the heavy arch, and gazed towards the well. The sunshine which, streaming through the portal, stretched out across the green grass of the court, growing longer and longer as the sun declined, had just reached the margin of the well, and the deep clouds, stretching far over the sky, seemed to gather the whole light under their gloomy canopy; the rays, from the warm yellow, first assumed a violet colour, and then a rosied red, so that some fragments of glass in the old window frames seemed actually to send forth flames. More than one flash had succeeded the first which Denzil Norman had seen, and one loud roll of the thunder had been heard, when suddenly a broad blue glow spread over the sky, and a thin line of zigzag light darted rapidly down before his eyes, and struck a pinnacle of the old keep which towered up on the right-hand side. In

an instant a large mass of the stone-work was cast down, joining the crashing noise of its fall with the deafening roar of the thunder. Denzil Norman pressed his hands over his eyes, for the brightness of the flash seemed almost to have deprived him of sight. When he opened them again, and looked towards the well, the same figure he had seen before was standing there, but now a portion of the white garments was cast over the head, and the face was entirely veiled. The young gentleman sprang forward, but while he was yet some fifteen or twenty paces from the well, the figure, which had been perfectly motionless before, raised one arm with a warning motion, and a voice said, "Hold! no farther!"

"Tell me, then, extraordinary being, what you are!" exclaimed Denzil Norman, pausing in his advance.

"That matters not to you," she said. "Inquire not of things that concern you not, but listen to words that may benefit you. You have followed counsel, and you have prospered. Follow it now, and you shall have better than prosperity—peace! All things shall undergo a change in this land. The old have passed away; the new are coming. You stand upon the limits of two great epochs, with an impassable gulf between them. Men shall try to bring back that which has gone by, and they shall fail. Strife and bloodshed will follow, and corruption and wickedness shall reign; but do you mix in none of these things. Flee the court and the cities, and live amongst your own people on your own lands. Be a brother to some, a father to others, a friend to all, and suffer not yourself to be tempted into places where kings resort; for in this day of all days it is dangerous, if not wicked. Hold yourself aloof from every faction and every party, and let the gay and the light scoff if they will, the sober and the steadfast will love and approve. This I am commanded to tell you: will you obey as you before obeyed? If you do, you shall be rewarded."

"Most assuredly I will," replied Denzil Norman; "for, in truth, such was my determination ere you spoke. Now one word more—"

"Enough!" said the figure, waving its hand; "enough! You shall find him you seek before this night be over."

She took a step back as she spoke, and, as she did so, another vivid flash of lightning blazed through the castle court. He could see the livid fire play around the form before him, and, at the same moment, a loud crash was heard mingling with the thunder, and one of the large elms, shivered by the lightning, fell in a slanting direction across the well, brushing the garments of the young cavalier even as he started away.

"It must have fallen upon her," he exclaimed, and, advancing rapidly, he looked round in every direction, but the figure was no longer to be seen, and the next instant the sun went down, the dark clouds stretched over the sky, and all was darkness.

Through the thick shower of rain, with drenched garments and a somewhat disappointed heart, Denzil Norman took his way back from the cottage of John Brownlow toward the house of good Doctor Aldover. He had found no one at the cottage but the servant girl, and an old woman appointed to watch the body of the dead man. Neither could he obtain any information regarding Alice at all satisfactory to himself. The girl said she had not been at home for three days, and that she did not know where she was, but that was all the young nobleman could extract from her; and let those who are younger than I am imagine the disappointment which such tidings gave to one who, for months, had been dwelling in the thought of seeing her whom he loved, and calling her his own. The warm reception of good Doctor Aldover cheered him, it is true, and he was still more cheered by the worthy man's assurance that Alice Brownlow would soon be back again, and that she had only left the place in fear of the Roundhead soldiery—a term which the Doctor did not scruple to apply in the present instance, although he would rather have eaten his hand than have used it to the soldiers of the Commonwealth a month before. As soon as he had given this intelligence, however, Doctor Aldover thought fit to put on a grave look, and add, "I am not sure, my good lord, that I ought not to send word to Alice that she had better remain away, for I do not half like a noble lord taking such particular interest in a cottage girl."

"If you do, I shall not easily forgive you," answered Denzil Norman; "but

be under no fear, my good doctor. I can act as a man of honour to a woman as well as to a man. I will now send for my luggage, and change my dress, for I am somewhat travel-stained and very wet."

"You will find all your luggage in your room, my lord," replied Doctor Aldover. "I took the liberty of telling your people that you should quarter nowhere else while you were here. I will light you up, and when you have done we will have another bowl of punch together, and drink the King's health with a worthy friend of mine who is anxious to be well acquainted with you."

"What! Mr. Gideon Samson?" said the young nobleman.

"No, no," replied the doctor; "one of a very different kidney; but this is the way;" and he led him up the low open stair-case to the room he had tenanted before. Some time elapsed before Denzil came down again, for, to say the truth, he passed several minutes in meditation. At length, however, he descended, and found his way easily enough to the door of the good doctor's library, guided partly by memory, partly by the sound of voices speaking. On opening the door, he beheld two persons seated by the small, square table in the window. Doctor Aldover was one, the other was a noble-looking man in black, with a pointed beard, which, as well as his hair, was nearly white; and yet, to judge both from form and face, he was by no means far advanced in life. He had a long rapier by his side, and his black cloak had not been cast off. The moment the young nobleman entered, he rose and gazed upon him steadfastly, while Denzil's eyes were busy with his features also. The next instant, however, Lord Blount started forward with extended hand, exclaiming, "Oh, my dear lord! this is indeed a joyful meeting. Where have you concealed yourself so long?"

"Welcome, welcome, Denzil," said Lord Eustace; "welcome, my dear boy. Well have you done your *devoir* as a loyal subject, a good soldier, and an honest man. What more need I for all the care that I bestowed upon your youth?" and at the same moment he took Denzil's hand with his own left.

The young man looked somewhat surprised. "Nay, my good lord," he said; "give me your right hand surely, if you love me as of old."

"You will know the touch of it right well," said Lord Eustace, stretching his right arm from beneath the cloak, and grasping Denzil's hand.

The young nobleman started back, exclaiming, "Good heaven! What is this? It is cold as iron!"

"Because it is iron," answered Lord Eustace. "On the bitterest day of all my life, Denzil, wounded in this right arm, and a prisoner on the field of battle, my escape was purchased at the dearest price that ever was paid for human safety—at a price which I call honour to witness I would not willingly have paid for a thousand years of the brightest existence that ever was given to mortal man. Untended for many days, the gangrene seized upon my wounded hand, and I lost it under the surgeon's knife. Thanks to this good old man, whom you must remember well as my chaplain when you were a boy, this contrivance was procured for me, on a model brought from far, serving me well-nigh as well as the hand I had lost; for by the movement of my arm, I can clasp and extend the fingers as you see, aye, wield a sword or strike a stout blow, should it be needful. I have struck one, too, and not long since."

"Yes, I have heard of it," replied Denzil. "Had it not been for that, I might have come somewhat too late."

"And for a dose of Thebiac tincture," added Doctor Aldover. "I had better intelligence than Master Okey thought for; and when he sent for me, after I had been kept many hours in prison in sore trepidation of mind and discomfort of body, I made bold to give him that which I knew would render the snake innocuous for eight or ten hours at least; but now, by the leave of both your lordships, I will retire and prepare a better potion than that which I gave the routed colonel—good punch, I mean. Perhaps, too, you may have matters well to be talked over in private."

Thus saying, he withdrew; and a long, a sad, and interesting conversation took place between the elder and younger nobleman, in which Denzil for the first time learned the events which had taken place on Worcester field an hour or two after night-fall; how a wife and a daughter had devoted themselves to save a husband and father; and how the shot which had been intended for the escap-

ed captive, had struck her whose life was far dearer to him than his own, as has been shadowed out in the first chapter of this history.

"For nine years," continued Lord Eustace, "I have mourned as few men ever mourned. In secrecy and by night I caused the body of my departed saint to be brought hither to my old castle of Landleigh, where the reverend friend who has just left us performed the last office for the dead in the vaults beneath the castle. Every morning have I prayed beside her tomb, every evening have I wept over her, and strewed the cold stone with flowers. I have lived the life of a hermit within those old walls, concealed and aided by a few kind friends and faithful dependents, who befriended me in my adversity as I had befriended them in my prosperity. The most skilful and the most kind, because by nature the most timid, was good Doctor Aldover; and an idle story which the villagers got up of the castle being haunted by a fairy, contributed much to my long concealment."

"Nay, my good lord," replied Denzil; "it was no idle story got up by villagers. The fairy I have seen with my own eyes, and a right beautiful fairy she is. On the very same night when I saw your lordship in the vaults beneath the castle, I beheld that fairy, and you must have beheld her too."

He spoke with a smile, but Lord Eustace answered gravely, "I saw no fairy, Denzil. You must have been dreaming."

"Not so, upon my life," replied Denzil Norman. "I was called thither to that interview by the fairy's voice; I saw her with my own eyes that night; I have seen her twice since, ay, this very night, not much more than an hour ago. But, perhaps, my dear lord, the fairy was of flesh and blood. Had I not known that your dear daughter was in London, kept under the tutelage of Cromwell, I should have thought it was her whom I beheld."

Lord Eustace smiled with an incredulous shake of the head. "Well, Denzil," he said, "young men and young women are hard to disabuse of their errors; but as you have mentioned my daughter's name, let me speak at once before Aldover's return, on a subject near to my heart. You are well aware, I doubt not, that it was the dearest wish of my beloved Lilla that our Kate should be united to you, whom we had educated with so much care. The dear girl will soon be in my arms again. I find that her education has been in no degree neglected; and as Cromwell, with a generosity but little to be expected, saved my lands from confiscation for her sake, saying that he would not spoil the orphan, inasmuch as he believed me to be dead, the wealth, which was abundant in other days, has only increased. Beautiful she is, Denzil, beautiful she must be; and with a right good will, a father's blessing, and a dowry which might suit a princess, I will give her to you as soon as we reach London. But you look grave, good youth. What is the matter? Does not the match suit you?"

Denzil Norman paused for a moment ere he replied, and he felt his situation painful. For the man before him he felt, as well he might, a son's affection. Lord Eustace had been to him a father when his own father was no more. Lady Eustace had been more than a mother to him. For the sweet child, who, with such fortitude and presence of mind, had saved her father from imprisonment and death, he had felt in early years a brother's affection. But yet there was something stronger still than all this: there was love, the pure, high, first love of a warm and enthusiastic heart. That would have been enough; but there was something more. There was honour—that feeling, that principle, that prejudice, call it what you will, which had been early implanted in his heart by the man who now spoke to him, which had been cherished through life, and worshipped almost with idolatry. He had spoken words to Alice Brownlow that could never be unsaid, that he could not, that he would not, wish unsaid. What was to him the prejudices of the world, what the considerations of wealth, of rank, of station, in comparison with honour and love! He knew that the light and gay might laugh; he knew that the proud and the selfish might scorn and blame: but he was not the creature of other men's opinions, and he hesitated not a moment. He paused, indeed, but it was with no hesitation. It was merely to consider how he might tell his tale so as not to pain or offend the hearer.

"What is the matter, Denzil?" demanded Lord Eustace, after waiting some moments for an answer; and his

brow was grave and almost stern as he put the question.

"I will tell you in few words, my dear lord," replied the young nobleman; "and you shall judge, and will judge, as you always do, nobly and rightly. It was my fate some time ago to meet in this very village, in a humble station of life, without fortune, without family, without anything to recommend her but the loveliness of her person, and the high qualities of her mind, the only woman for whom I ever felt love. In a moment of danger and difficulty, when I little thought to see the bright days that we now see, when I little thought to meet you or any of my old friends again, I told her of my love and won a promise from her. Yet I will own, had I known all that I now know—had I been a prophet to foresee the events which have taken place, I would have done the same."

"Have you considered well, young man," said Lord Eustace, with a very grave brow, "that which you are about? Have you bethought you of all that must follow? Remember that the beauty must fade, and all those charms and graces which captivate the eye will pass away; that passion itself may die in its own flame, and the more solid realities of the world may acquire weight even with a romantic spirit, as the hurry of the young blood is calmed by years, and thought takes place of passion. Have you thought what it will be to see the cold civility shown by your peers to the young Lord Blount's peasant wife? to hear it told how you had been caught by a pretty face? to bear all those petty slights and half-concealed contempts which follow surely in society upon an ill-assorted union?"

"My lord, I have thought of all this and more," replied Denzil. "I have put more questions to my own heart than you can or will put; and I have answered, that beautiful as she is, were it mere beauty, I should never have spoken to her the words I have spoken; but even had I done so for beauty alone, yet I would keep my word. I owe that to her and to myself. In doing so, however, I have no fears, no hesitation either for myself or her; for the mind is as lovely as the person, and the heart as beautiful as either. You smile, my dear lord."

"Because you speak as a lover, and will act as a lover," answered Lord Eustace. "May your love long continue; for in it only can you find happiness under such circumstances. But, good faith, I should like to see your paragon of perfection. You say that she lives in this village; I must surely know her. What is her name?"

The colour somewhat mounted in the young lord's cheek as he replied, "Alice Brownlow;" but Lord Eustace shook his head. "I know no such person," he said; "I never heard the name. There was old Roger Brownlow, a tenant of mine, who has since proved traitor to his lord, I find; and John Brownlow, his son, as good a youth as ever lived, who has served me well; but the old man had no daughter."

"He had a niece, though," answered Denzil.

"I never heard of her," replied Lord Eustace. "I must ask good Doctor Aldover about her; for I must see her, in good faith, Denzil; and if she proves as you have reported her, you shall have my blessing on your marriage as a father's. Ah! here comes the good doctor himself. Tell me, my old and valued friend, who is this Alice Brownlow that my young friend Denzil raves about?"

"She is all that is beautiful, bright, and excellent," replied Doctor Aldover; "and is in my house at this very moment."

"What, you too enthusiastic!" cried Lord Eustace. "Pray, let me have the fair lady's company, my dear friend. Nay, I will go and fetch her myself. Where shall I find her?"

"Nay, nay, I will bring her," answered Doctor Aldover; and going forth again, he returned a moment after, leading Alice by the hand. She was dressed as she had been when she went with Denzil to the church, with wimple and hood, almost like a nun; and, with a heart beating warmly, he sprang up to meet her so soon as that beautiful form appeared; but, without even looking towards him, Alice drew her hand from that of Doctor Aldover, and advanced with a quick and eager step towards Lord Eustace.

The old nobleman threw wide his arms, and, casting hers around his neck, she leaned her head upon his bosom, and sobbed aloud.

"Nay, Kate, nay," cried Lord Eustace; "nay, my sweet Kate, be not so moved. What though this ungrateful boy here refuses your hand, all for the love of one Alice Brownlow, we shall find you a better husband than him, no fear. Come, look up, my Kate. Well I know joy will have tears as well as sorrow, and we have shed many of the former together, so the latter must have way. Keep back, Lord Blount; you have refused her, you know. Lo! you repent, do you? Well, take her, then, and forget Alice Brownlow in the arms of Catharine Brooke."

"Never," answered Denzil, throwing his arms around her; "never, my good lord. My first love, and my last. Call her what name you will—add titles, rank, distinction, fortune, every thing that men hold dear—you cannot make me love her better than I loved my cottage girl."

"Thanks, Denzil, thanks for that," cried Alice, for so we must still call her, as he ever did. "But will you love me as well, Denzil, as Catharine Brooke, for look, I am very much changed," and she threw back the hood from her head. Somewhat to his surprise, he then beheld that the dark, black braided hair was gone, and in its place the bright glossy tresses of a warm, light brown, which he remembered hanging over the fair brow of the child. He only drew her closer to his breast. "Ay," he said, "as Alice Brownlow, as Catharine Brooke, and moreover, as—"

But she put her fair hand upon his lips, saying, "Hush, hush! not a word of that;" and she turned a timid glance to good Doctor Aldover, whose eyes were too full of joyful tears to notice one half of what passed.

L'ENVOYE.

Dearly-beloved reader, you have heard an old story as it was told by an old man upon an old Christmas night. For some reason of his own—you know old men are very whimsical—he did not choose to go any farther, and it was quite in vain questioning him. Perhaps the truth was he knew nothing more, for he was a man of scrupulous veracity, as I am. I would have been glad to hear the details, but nevertheless I contented myself with what I had got—an exceedingly good plan in all circumstances, dear reader, but for which on this occasion I had my particular reasons. In the first place, I could not at all doubt that, under the circumstances in which they married, Denzil Norman and the Lady Catharine Brooke, otherwise Alice Brownlow, were as happy as any two people can be in this place of pilgrimage. I was satisfied, therefore, in regard to them, and wished them joy as heartily as good Doctor Aldover did, I do not doubt, after giving them the nuptial benediction when he was restored to his old cure at Landleigh, which I find by the parish register was in July of the year 1660. As to John Brownlow, who, by the way, was Alice's foster-brother, I have not the slightest doubt in the world that he married Jane Unwin, and made her a very excellent husband. It is not a thing to be doubted at all; and I find in the records of the house of Fauconberg the following curious passage:

"Alice Brownlow, long educated by my Lady Mary as the Lady Catharine Brooke, she having been found in a house at Worcester after the battle at that place, and passed by her mother Janet for the daughter of Lord Eustace, was this day dismissed from her home with many presents, she having grown greatly in my lady's favour by reason of her gentleness and docility. Item, a silver salt-cellar was given to her by my lord as a gift."

In regard to Mr. Gideon Samson, I might have made my mind uneasy, having no precise information concerning him, but that I find many of the Presbyterian clergy fled from England into Scotland, to avoid the plague and Episcopacy; and as Sir Walter Scott, in one of his true histories, records the life and actions of a worthy gentleman of the same name as our respected friend, I have no doubt that he left posterity to carry on his virtues to other generations. The only persons of importance to be provided for, therefore, were the old castle and the fairy. As to the old castle, its ruins were shown with pride within my remembrance, by the antiquaries of Landleigh, who pointed out to the curious a subterranean communication between the building and the church, together with some stone doors in the re-

maining towers of the old fortalice, fitting so nicely into the masonry as not to be distinguishable to any but a prepared eye. The building has lately been very much dilapidated by a greediness for stones which has come upon the population since numerous factories have been established by the banks of the stream; and some of the wags of the place have remarked that the castle is the best quarry in the neighbourhood.

Either from this desecration of her dwelling-place, or some other cause of disgust, the fairy has not appeared for many, many years by the side of Landleigh well, though its waters remain clear and limpid, and the setting sun shines upon it every evening as before. Her memory is still cherished, however, by the older and the younger inhabitants of the place. The boys and girls look through the old archway with timid expectation as they pass on the summer evenings; and I once gave great offence to an old lady by hinting a suspicion that the famous fairy of Landleigh well was no other than the beautiful daughter of Brooke, Lord Eustace.

On this important point I must leave all readers to judge for themselves; but, at all events, this was the last of the fairies, and the only one that ever appeared after William Churne of Staffordshire was dead, and "Wittie Bishop Corbet" took his "Farewell" of the Good People.

THE END

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Of some Bells that Rang an Old Year out and a New Year in.

BY CHARLES DICKENS, ESQ.

THE FIRST QUARTER.

THERE are not many people—and as it is desirable that a story-teller and a story-reader should establish a mutual understanding as soon as possible, I beg it to be noticed that I confine this observation neither to young people nor to little people, but extend it to all conditions of people: little and big, young and old: yet growing up, or already growing down again—there are not, I say, many people who would care to sleep in a church. I don't mean at sermon time in warm weather (when the thing has actually been done, once or twice,) but in the night and alone. A great multitude of persons will be violently astonished, I know, by this position, in the broad bold Day. But it applies to Night. It must be argued by night. And I will undertake to maintain it successfully on any gusty winter's night appointed for the purpose, with any one opponent chosen from the rest, who will meet me singly in an old churchyard, before an old church door; and will previously empower me to lock him in, if needful to his satisfaction, until morning.

For the night-wind has a dismal trick of wandering round and round a building of that sort, and moaning as it goes; and of trying, with its unseen hand, the windows and the doors; and seeking out some crevices by which to enter. And when it has got in; as one not finding what it seeks, whatever that may be; it wails and howls to issue forth again: and not content with stalking through the aisles and gliding round and round the pillars, and tempting the deep organ, soars up to the roof, and strives to rend the rafters; then flings itself despairingly upon the stones below, and passes, muttering, into the vaults. Anon, it comes up stealthily, and creeps along the walls: seeming to read, in whispers, the Inscriptions sacred to the Dead. At some of these, it breaks out shrilly, as with laughter; and at others, moans and cries as if it were lamenting. It has a ghostly sound too, lingering within the altar; where it seems to chaunt, in its wild way, of Wrong and Murder done, and false Gods worshipped; in defiance of the Tables of the Law, which looks so fair and smooth, but are so flawed and broken. Ugh! Heaven preserve us, sitting snugly round the fire! It has an awful voice, that wind at Midnight, singing in a church!

But high up in the steeple! There the foul blast roars and whistles! High up in the steeple where it is free to come and to go thro' many an airy arch and loophole, and to twist and twine itself about the giddy stair, and twirl the groaning weathercock, and make

the very tower shake and quiver! High up in the steeple, where the belfry is; and iron rails are ragged with rust; and sheets of lead and copper, shrivelled by the changing weather, crackle and heave beneath the unaccustomed tread; and birds stuff shabby nests into corners of old oaken joists and beams; and dust grows old and grey; and speckled spiders, indolent and fat with long security, swing idly to and fro in the vibration of the bells, and never loose their hold upon their thread-spun castles in the air, or climb up sailor-like in quick alarm, or drop upon the ground and ply a score of nimble legs to save a life! High up in the steeple of an old church, far above the light and murmur of the town, and far below the flying clouds that shadow it, is the wild and dreary place at night: and high up in the steeple of an old church, dwelt the Chimes I tell of.

They were old Chimes, trust me. Centuries ago, these Bells had been baptized by bishops: so many centuries ago, that the register of their baptism was lost long, long before the memory of man: and no one knew their names. They had their Godfathers and Godmothers, these Bells (for my own part, by the way, I would rather incur the responsibility of being Godfather to a Bell than a Boy:) and had had their silver mugs no doubt besides. But Time had mowed down their sponsors, and Henry the Eighth had melted down their mugs: and they now hung, nameless and mugless, in the church tower.

Not speechless, though. Far from it.—They had clear, loud, lusty, sounding voices, had these Bells; and far and wide they might be heard upon the wind. Much too sturdy Chimes were they, to be dependent on the pleasure of the wind, moreover; for, fighting gallantly against it when it took an adverse whim, they would pour their cheerful notes into a listening ear right royally; and bent on being heard, on stormy nights, by some poor mother watching a sick child, or some lone wife whose husband was at sea, they had been sometimes known to beat a blustering Nor'-Wester—aye, "all to fits," as Toby Veck said; for though they chose to call him Trotty Veck, his name was Toby, and nobody could make it anything else either (except Tobias) without a special act of parliament; he having been as lawfully christened in his day as the Bells had been in theirs, though without quite so much of solemnity or public rejoicing.

For my part, I confess myself of Toby Veck's belief, for I am sure he had opportunities enough of forming a correct one. And whatever Toby Veck said, I say. And I take my stand by Toby Veck, although he *did* stand all day long (and weary work it was) just outside the church-door. In fact he was a ticket-porter, Toby Veck, and waited there for jobs.

And a breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed, red-eyed, stony-toed, tooth-chattering place it was, to wait in, in the winter-time, as Toby Veck well knew. The wind came tearing round the corner—especially the east wind—as if it had sallied forth, express, from the confines of earth, to have a blow at Toby. And oftentimes it seemed to come upon him sooner than it had expected, for bouncing round the corner, and passing Toby, it would suddenly wheel round again, as if it cried, "Why, here he is!" Incontinently his little white apron would be caught over his head like a naughty boy's garments, and his feeble little cane would be seen to wrestle and struggle unavailingly in his hand, and his legs would undergo tremendous agitation, and Toby himself all aslant, and facing now in this direction, now in that, would be so banged and buffeted, and touzled, and worried, and hustled, and lifted off his feet, as to render it a state of things but one degree removed from a positive miracle, that he wasn't carried up bodily into the air as a colony of frogs or snails or other portable creatures sometimes are, and rained down again, to the great astonishment of the natives, on some strange corner of the world where ticket-porters are unknown.

But windy weather, in spite of its using him so roughly, was, after all, a sort of holiday for Toby. That's the fact. He didn't seem to wait so long for a sixpence in the wind, as at other times; for the having to fight with that boisterous element took off his attention, and quite freshened him up, when he was getting hungry and low-spirited. A hard frost too, or a fall of snow, was an Event; and it seemed to do him good, somehow or other—it would have been hard to say in what respect though, Toby! So wind and frost and snow, and perhaps a good stiff storm of hail, were Toby Veck's red-letter days.

Wet weather was the worst: the cold damp clammy wet, that wrapped him up like a moist great-coat; the only kind of great-coat Toby owned, or could have added to his comfort by dispensing with. Wet days, when the rain came slowly, thickly, obstinately down; when the street's throat, like his own was choked with mist; when smoking umbrellas passed and repassed, spinning round and round like so many teetotums, as they knocked against each other on the crowded footway, throwing off a little whirlpool of uncomfortable sprinklings; when gutters brawled and water-spouts were full and noisy; when the wet from the projecting stones and ledges of the church fell drip, drip, drip, on Toby, making the wisps of straw on which he stood mere mud in no time; those were the days that tried him. Then indeed, you might see Toby looking anxiously out from his shelter in an angle of the church wall—such a meagre shelter that in summer time it never cast a shadow thicker than a good-sized walking stick upon the sunny pavement—with a disconsolate and lengthened face. But com-

ing out, a minute afterward to warm himself by exercise; and trotting up and down some dozen times, he would brighten even then, and go back more brightly to his niche.

They called him Trotty from his pace, which meant speed if he didn't make it. He could have walked faster perhaps; most likely; but rob him of his trot, and Toby would have taken to his bed and died. It bespattered him with mud in dirty weather; it cost him a world of trouble; he could have walked with infinitely greater ease; but that was one reason for his clinging to it so tenaciously. A weak, small, spare old man, he was a very Hercules, this Toby, in his good intentions. He loved to earn his money. He delighted to believe—Toby was very poor, and couldn't well afford to part with a delight—that he was worth his salt. With a shilling or an eighteenpenny message or small parcel in his hand, his courage, always high, rose higher. As he trotted on, he would call out to fast Postmen ahead of him, to get out of the way; devoutly believing that in the natural course of things he must inevitably overtake and run them down; and he had perfect faith—not often tested—in his being able to carry any thing that man could lift.

Thus, even when he came out of his nook to warm himself on a wet day, Toby trotted. Making, with his leaky shoes, a crooked line of slushy footprints in the mire; and blowing on his chilly hands and rubbing them against each other, poorly defended from the searching cold by threadbare mufflers of grey worsted, with a private apartment only for the thumb and a common room or tap for the rest of the fingers; Toby, with his knees bent and his cane beneath his arm, still trotted. Falling out into the road to look up at the belfrey when the Chimes resounded, Toby trotted still.

He had made this last excursion several times a day, for they were company to him; and when he heard their voices, he had an interest in glancing at their lodging-place, and thinking how they were moved, and what hammers beat upon them. Perhaps he was the more curious about these Bells, because there were points of resemblance between themselves and him. They hung there, in all weathers: with the wind and rain driving upon them: facing only the outsides of all those houses; never getting any nearer to the blazing fires that gleamed and shone upon the windows, or came puffing out of the chimney tops; and incapable of participation in any of the good things that were constantly being handed, through the street door and the area railings, to prodigious cooks. Faces came and went at the windows: sometimes pretty faces, youthful faces, pleasant faces: sometimes the reverse: but Toby knew no more (though he often speculated on these trifles, standing idle in the streets) whence they came, or where they went, or whether, when the lips moved, one kind word was said of him in all the year, than did the Chimes themselves.

Toby was not a casuist—that he knew of, at least—and I don't mean to say that when he began to take to the Bells, and to knit up his first rough acquaintance with them into something of a closer and more delicate woof he passed through these considerations one by one, or held any formal review or great field-day in his thoughts. But what I mean to say and do is, that as the functions of Toby's body, his digestive organs for example, did of their own cunning, and by a great many operations of which he was altogether ignorant, and the knowledge of which would have astonished him very much, arrived at a certain end; so his mental faculties, without his privity or concurrence, set all those wheels and springs in motion, with a thousand others, when they worked to bring about his liking for the Bells.

And though I said his love, I would not have recalled the word, though it would scarcely have expressed his complicated feeling. For, being but a simple man, he invested them with a strange and solemn character. They were so mysterious, often heard and never seen; so high up, so far off, so full of such a deep strong melody, that he regarded them with a species of awe; and sometimes when he looked up at the dark arched windows in the tower, he half expected to be beckoned to by something which was not a Bell, and yet was what he heard so often sounding in the Chimes. For all this, Toby scouted with indignation a certain flying rumor that the Chimes were haunted, as implying the possibility of their being connected with any Evil thing. In short they were often in his ears, and very often in his thoughts, but always in his good opinion; and he very often got such a crick in his neck by staring with his mouth wide open, at the steeple where they hung, that he was fain to make an extra trot or two, afterwards, to cure it.

The very thing he was in the act of doing one cold day, when the last drowsy sound of Twelve o'clock, just struck, was humming like a melodious monster of a Bee, and not by any means a busy Bee, all through the steeple.

"Dinner-time eh!" said Toby trotting up and down before the church. "Ah!"

Toby's nose was very red, and his eyelids were very red, and he winked very much, and his shoulders were very near his ears, and his legs were very stiff; and altogether he was evidently a long way upon the frosty side of cool.

"Dinner-time eh!" repeated Toby using his right hand muffler like an infantine boxing-glove, and pushing his chest for being cold. "Ah-h-h-h!"

He took a silent trot, after that, for a minute or two.

"There's nothing," said Toby, breaking forth afresh—but here he stopped short in his

trot, and with a face of great interest and alarm, felt his nose carefully all the way up. It was but a little way: not being much of a nose: and he had soon finished.

"I thought it was gone," said Toby, trotting off again. "It's all right, however. I am sure I couldn't blame it if it was to go.—It has a precious hard service of it in the bitter weather, and precious little to look forward to: for I don't take snuff myself. It's a good deal tried, poor creetur, at the best of times; for when it *does* get hold of a pleasant whiff or so, (which an't too often,) it's generally from somebody else's dinner, a coming home from the baker's."

The reflection reminded him of that other reflection, which he had left unfinished.

"There's nothing," said Toby, "more regular in its coming round than dinner-time, and nothing less regular in its coming round than dinner. That's the great difference between 'em. It's took me a long time to find it out. I wonder whether it would be worth any gentleman's while, now, to buy that observation for the papers; or the parliament?"

Toby was only joking, for he gravely shook his head in self-depreciation.

"Why! Lord!" said Toby, "the papers is full of observations as it is; and so's the parliament. Here's last week's paper, now;" taking a very dirty one from his pocket, and holding it from him at arm's length; "full of observations! I like to know the news as well as any man," said Toby slowly; folding it a little smaller, and putting it in his pocket again; "but it almost goes against the grain with me to read a paper now. It frightens me, almost. I don't know what we poor people are coming to. Lord send we may be coming to something better in the New Year nigh upon us!"

"Why, father, father!" said a pleasant voice, hard by.

But Toby not hearing it, continued to trot backward and forward; musing as he went, and talking to himself.

"It seems as if we can't go right, or do right, or be righted," said Toby. "I hadn't much schooling, myself, when I was young; and I can't make out whether we have any business on the face of the earth, or not. Sometimes I think we must have little: and sometimes I think we must be intruding. I get so puzzled sometimes that I am not even able to make up my mind whether there is any good at all in us, or whether we are born bad. We seem to do dreadful things; we seem to give a deal of trouble; we are always being complained of and guarded against.—One way or another, we fill the papers. Talk of a New Year!" said Toby, mournfully. "I can bear up as well as another man at most times; better than a good many, for I am as strong as a lion, and all men an't; but supposing it should really be that we have no right to a New Year—supposing we really *are* intruding——"

"Why, father, father!" said the pleasant voice again.

Toby heard it this time; started; stopped; and shortening his sight, which had been directed a long way off as seeking for enlightenment in the very heart of the approaching year, found himself face to face with his own child, and looking close into her eyes.

Bright eyes they were. Eyes that would bear a world of looking in, before their depth was fathomed. Dark eyes: that reflected back the eyes which searched them; not flashingly, or at the owner's will, but with a clear, calm, honest, patient radiance, claiming kindred with that light which Heaven called into being. Eyes that were beautiful and true, and beaming with Hope. With Hope so young and fresh; with Hope so buoyant, vigorous, and bright, despite the twenty years of work and poverty on which they had looked; that they became a voice to Trotty Veck, and said:

"I think we have some business here—a little!"

Trotty kissed the lips belonging to the eyes, and squeezed the blooming face between his hands.

"Why Pet," said Trotty. "What's to do? I didn't expect you to-day, Meg."

"Neither did I expect to come, father," cried the girl, nodding her head, and smiling as she spoke. "But here I am! And not alone; not alone!"

"Why you don't mean to say," observed Trotty, looking curiously at a covered basket which she carried in her hand, "that you——"

"Smell it, father dear," said Meg. "Only smell it!"

Trotty was a going to lift up the cover at once, in a great hurry, when she gaily interposed her hand.

"No, no, no," said Meg, with the glee of a child. "Lengthen it out a little. Let me just lift up the corner; just the lit-tle ti-ny cor-ner you know," said Meg, suiting the action to the work with the utmost gentleness, and speaking very softly, as if she were afraid of being overheard by something inside the basket; "there. Now. What's that?"

Toby took the shortest possible sniff at the edge of the basket, and cried out in a rapture:

"Why, it's hot!"

"It's burning hot!" cried Meg. "Ha, ha, ha! It's scalding hot!"

"Ha, ha, ha,!" roared Toby, with a sort of kick. "It's scalding hot."

"But what is it, father?" said Meg. "Come! You haven't guessed what it is.—And you must guess what it is. I can't think of taking it out, till you guess what it is. Don't be in such a hurry! Wait a minute! A little bit more of the cover. Now guess!"

Meg was in a perfect fright lest he should guess right too soon; shrinking away, as she held the basket toward him; curling up her pretty shoulders; stopping her ear with her hand, as if by so doing she could keep the

right word out of Toby's lips; and laughing softly the whole time.

Meanwhile Toby, putting a hand on each knee, bent down his nose to the basket, and took a long inspiration to the lid; the grin upon his withered face expanding in the process, as if he were inhaling laughing gas.

"Ah! It's very nice," said Toby. "It an't—I suppose it an't Polonies?"

"No, no, no!" cried Meg, delighted. "Nothing like Polonies!"

"No," said Toby, after another sniff, "It's—it's mellower than Polonies. It's very nice. It improves every moment. It's too decided for Trotters. An't it?"

Meg was in an ecstacy. He could *not* have gone wider of the mark than Trotters—except Polonies.

"Liver?" said Toby, communing with himself. "No. There's a mildness about it that don't answer to liver. Pettitoes? No. It an't faint enough for pettitoes. It wants the stringiness of Cock's heads. And I know it an't sausages. I'll tell you what it is. It's chitterlings!"

"No, it an't!" cried Meg, in a burst of delight. "No, it an't!"

"Why, what am I a thinking of!" said Toby, suddenly recovering a position as near the perpendicular as it was possible for him to assume. "I shall forget my own name next. It's tripe!"

Tripe it was; and Meg, in high joy, protested he should say, in half a minute more, it was the best tripe ever stewed.

"And so," said Meg, busying herself exultingly with the basket, "I'll lay the cloth at once, father; for I have brought the tripe in a basin, and tied the basin up in a pocket handkerchief; and if I like to be proud for once, and spread that for a cloth, and call it a cloth, there's no law to prevent me; is there, father?"

"Not that I know of, my dear," said Toby. "But they're always a bringing up some new law or other."

"And according to what I was reading you in the paper the other day, father; what the Judge said, you know: we poor people are supposed to know them all. Ha ha!—What a mistake! My goodness me, how clever they think us!"

"Yes, my dear," cried Trotty; "and they'd be very fond of any one of us that *did* know'em all. He'd grow fat upon the work he'd get, that man, and be popular with the gentlefolks in his neighborhood. Very much so!"

"He'd eat his dinner with an appetite, whoever he was, if it smelt like this," said Meg cheerfully. "Make haste, for there's a hot potatoe beside, and half a pint of freshdrawn beer in a bottle. Where will you dine, father? On the Post, or on the Steps? Dear, dear, how grand we are. Two places to choose from!"

"The steps to-day, my Pet," said Trotty. "Steps in dry weather. Post in wet. There's a great conveniency in the steps at all times, because of the sitting down; but they're rheumatic in the damp."

"Then here," said Meg, clapping her hands, after a moment's bustle; "here it is, all ready! And beautiful it looks! Come, father. Come!"

Since his discovery of the contents of the basket, Trotty had been standing looking at her—and had been speaking too—in an abstracted manner, which showed that though she was the object of his thoughts and eyes, to the exclusion of even tripe, he neither saw nor thought about her as she was at that moment, but had before him some imaginary rough sketch or drama of her future life.—Roused, now, by her cheerful summons, he shook off a melancholy shake of the head which was just coming upon him, and trotted to her side. As he was stooping to sit down, the Chimes rang.

"Amen!" said Trotty, pulling off his hat and looking up towards them.

"Amen to the Bells, father?" cried Meg.

"They broke in like a grace, my dear," said Trotty, taking his seat. "They'd say a good one, I am sure, if they could. Many's the kind thing they say to me."

"The Bells do, father!" laughed Meg, as she set the basin, and a knife and fork before him. "Well!"

"Seem to, my pet," said Trotty, falling to with great vigor. "And where's the difference? If I hear 'em, what does it matter whether they speak it or not? Why bless you, my dear," said Toby, pointing at the tower with his fork, and becoming more animated under the influence of dinner, "how often have I heard them bells say, 'Toby Veck, Toby Veck, keep a good heart, Toby!' A million times? More!"

"Well, I never!" cried Meg.

She had, though—over and over again. For it was Toby's constant topic.

"When things is very bad," said Trotty; "very bad indeed, I mean; almost at the worst; then it's 'Toby Veck, Toby Veck, job coming soon, Toby! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, job coming soon, Toby!' that way."

"And it comes—at last, father," said Meg, with a touch of sadness in her pleasant voice.

"Always," answered the unconscious Toby. "Never fails."

While this discourse was holding, Trotty made no pause in his attack upon the savory meat before him, but cut and ate, and cut and drank, and cut and chewed, and dodged about, from tripe to hot potatoe, and from hot potatoe back again to tripe, with an unctuous and unflagging relish. But happening now to look all round the street—in case anybody should be beckoning from any door or window, for a porter—his eyes, in coming back again, encountered Meg: sitting opposite to him, with her arms folded: and only busy in

watching his progress with a smile of happiness.

"Why, Lord forgive me," said Trotty, dropping his knife and fork. "My dove! Meg! why didn't you tell me what a beast I was!"

"Father?"

"Sitting here," said Trotty, in penitent explanation, "cramming, and stuffing, and gorging myself; and you before me there, never so much as breaking your precious fast, nor wanting to, when"———

"But I have broken it, father," interposed his daughter, laughing, "all to bits. I have had my dinner."

"Nonsense," said Trotty. "Two dinners in one day! It an't possible! You might as well tell me that two New Year's Days will come together, or that I have had a gold head all my life, and never changed it."

"I have had my dinner, father, for all that," said Meg, coming nearer to him. "And if you'll go on with yours, I'll tell you how and where; and how your dinner came to be brought; and—and something else besides."

Toby still appeared incredulous: but she looked into his face with her clear eyes, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, motioned him to go on while the meat was hot. So Trotty took up his knife and fork again, and went to work. But much more slowly than before, and shaking his head, as if he were not at all pleased with himself.

"I had my dinner, father," said Meg, after a little hesitation, "with—with Richard. His dinner-time was early; and as he brought his dinner with him when he came to see me, we—we had it together, father."

Trotty took a little beer, and smacked his lips. Then he said, "Oh!"—because she waited.

"Then Richard says, father—" Meg resumed. Then stopped.

"What does Richard say, Meg?" asked Toby.

"Richard says, father—" Another stoppage.

"Richard's a long time saying it," said Toby.

"He says then, father," Meg continued, lifting up her eye at last, and speaking in a tremble, but quite plainly; "another year is nearly gone, and where is the use of waiting on from year to year, when it is so unlikely we shall ever be better off than we are now? He says we are poor now, father, and we shall be poor then; but we are young now, and years will make us old before we know it. He says that if we wait: people in our condition: until we see our way quite clearly, the way will be a narrow one indeed—the common way—the Grave, father."

A bolder man than Trotty Veck must needs have drawn upon his boldness largely, to deny it. Trotty held his peace.

"And how hard, father, to grow old, and die, and think we might have cheered and helped each other! How hard in all our lives to love each other; and to grieve, apart, to see each other working, changing, growing old and grey. Even if I got the better of it, and forgot him (which I never could,) oh father dear, how hard to have a heart so full as mine is now, and live to have it slowly drained out every drop, without the recollection of one happy moment of a woman's life, to stay behind and comfort me, and make me better!"

Trotty sat quite still. Meg dried her eyes, and said more gaily: that is to say, with here a laugh, and there a sob, and here a laugh and sob together:

"So Richard says, father; as his work was yesterday made certain for some time to come, and as I love him and have loved him full three years—ah! longer than that, if he knew it! will I marry him on New Year's Day; the best and happiest day, he says, in the whole year, and one that is almost sure to bring good fortune with it. It's a short notice, father—isn't it? but I havn't my fortune to be settled, or my wedding dresses to be made, like the great ladies, father—have I? And he said so much, and said it in his way; so strong and earnest, and all the time so kind and gentle; that I said I'd come and talk to you, father. And as they paid the money for that work of mine this morning (unexpectedly, I am sure!) and as you have fared very poorly for a whole week, and as I couldn't help wishing there should be something to make this day a sort of holiday to you as well as a dear and happy day to me, father, I made a little treat and brought it to surprise you."

"And see how he leaves it cooling on the step!" said another voice.

It was the voice of this same Richard, who had come upon them unobserved, and stood before the father and daughter: looking down upon them with a face as glowing as the iron on which his stout sledge-hammer daily rung. A handsome, well-made, powerful youngster he was, with eyes that sparkled like the red-hot drippings from a furnace fire; black hair that curled about his swarthy temples rarely; and a smile—a smile that bore out Meg's eulogium on his style of conversation.

"See how he leaves it cooling on the step!" said Richard. "Meg don't know what he likes. Not she!"

Trotty, all action and enthusiasm, immediately reached up his hand at Richard, and was going to address him in a great hurry, when the house-door opened without any warning, and a footman very nearly put his foot in the tripe.

"Out of the ways here, will you? You must always go and be a settin on the steps, must you! You can't go and give a turn to none of the neighbors never, can't you! *Will* you clear the road or won't you?"

Strictly speaking, the last question was irrelevant, as they had already done it.

"What's the matter, what's the matter!" said the gentleman for whom the door was opened: coming out of the house at that kind of light-heavy pace—that peculiar compromise between a walk and jog-trot—with which a gentleman upon the smooth downhill of life, wearing creaking boots, a watch-chain, and clean linen, *may* come out of his house: not only without any abatement of his dignity, but with an expression of having important and wealthy engagements elsewhere. "What's the matter. What's the matter!"

'You're always being begged, and prayed, upon your bended knees you are," said the footman with great emphasis to Trotty Veck, "to let our door-steps be. Why don't you let 'em be? CAN'T you let 'em be?"

"There! That'll do, that'll do!" said the gentleman. "Halloa there! Porter!" beckoning with his head to Trotty Veck. "Come here. What's that! Your dinner?"

"Yes sir," said Trotty, leaving it behind him in a corner.

"Don't leave it there," exclaimed the gentleman.

"Bring it here, bring it here. So! This is your dinner, is it?"

"Yes Sir," repeated Trotty, looking, with a fixed eye and a watery mouth, at the piece of tripe he had reserved for a last delicious tit-bit; which the gentleman was now turning over and over on the end of the fork.

Two other gentlemen had come out with him. One was a low-spirited gentleman of middle age, of a meagre habit, and a disconsolate face; who kept his hands continually in the pockets of his scanty pepper-and-salt trousers, very large and dog's eared from that custom; and was not particularly well brushed or washed. The other, a full-sized, sleek, well conditioned gentleman, in a blue coat with bright buttons, and a white cravat.—This gentleman had a very red face, as if an undue proportion of the blood in his body were squeezed up into his head; which perhaps accounted for his having also the appearance of being rather cold about the heart.

He who had Toby's meat upon the fork, called to the first one by the name of Filer; and they both drew near together. Mr. Filer being exceedingly short sighted, was obliged to go so close to the remnant of Toby's dinner before he could make out what it was, that Toby's heart leaped up into his mouth. But Mr. Filer didn't eat it.

"This is a description of animal food, Alderman," said Filer, making little punches in it, with a pencil case, "commonly known to the laboring population of this country, by the name of tripe."

The Alderman laughed, and winked; for he was a merry fellow, Alderman Cute. Oh, and a sly fellow too! A knowing fellow. Up to everything. Not to be imposed upon. Deep in the people's hearts! He knew them, Cute did. I believe you!

"But who eats tripe?" said Mr. Filer, looking round. "Tripe is without an exception the least economical, and the most wasteful article of consumption that the markets of this country can, by possibility, produce. The loss upon a pound of tripe has been found to be, in the boiling, seven eights of a fifth more than the loss upon a pound of any other animal substance whatever. Tripe is more expensive, properly understood, than the hot-house pine-apple. Taking into account the number of animals slaughtered yearly within the bills of mortality alone; and forming a low estimate of the quantity of tripe which the carcases of those animals, reasonably well butchered, would yield; I find that the waste on that amount of tripe, if boiled, would victual a garrison of five hundred men for five months of thirty-one days each, and a February over. The Waste, the Waste!"

Trotty stood aghast, and his legs shook under him. He seemed to have starved a garrison of five hundred men with his own hand.

"Who eats tripe?" said Mr. Filer, warmly. "Who eats tripe?"

Trotty made a miserable bow.

"You do, do you?" said Mr. Filer, "Then I'll tell you something. You snatch your tripe, my friend, out of the mouths of widows and orphans."

"I hope not, Sir," said Trotty faintly. "I'd sooner die of want!"

"Divide the amount of tripe before-mentioned, Alderman," said Mr. Filer, "by the estimated number of existing widows and orphans, and the result will be one pennyweight of tripe to each. Not a grain is left for that man. Consequently, he's a robber."

Trotty was so shocked, that it gave him no concern to see the Alderman finish the tripe himself. It was a relief to get rid of it anyhow.

"And what do you say!" asked the Alderman, jocosely, of the red-faced gentleman in the blue coat. "You have heard friend Filer. What do *you* say?"

"What's it possible to say?" returned the gentleman. "What *is* to be said? Who can take any interest in a fellow like this," meaning Trotty; "in such degenerate times as these. Look at him! What an object! The good old times, the grand old times, the great old times! *Those* were the tiffies for a bold peasantry, and all that sort of thing. Those were the times for every sort of thing, in fact. There's nothing now-a-days. Ah!" sighed the red faced-gentleman. "The good old times, the good old times!"

The gentleman didn't specify what particular times he alluded to; nor did he say whether he objected to the present times, from a disinterested consciousness that they had done nothing very remarkable in producing himself.

"The good old times, the good old times," repeated the gentleman. "What times they were! They were the only times. It's of no use talking about any other times, or dis-

cussing what the people are in these times. You don't call these, times, do you? I don't. Look into Strutt's Costumes, and see what a Porter used to be, in any of the good old English reigns."

"He hadn't, in his very best circumstances, a shirt to his back, or a stocking to his foot; and there was scarcely a vegetable in all England for him to put into his mouth," said Mr. Filer. "I can prove it, by tables."

But still the red-faced gentleman extolled the good old times, the grand old times, the great old times. No matter what any body else said, he still went turning round and round in one set form of words concerning them; as a poor squirrel turns and turns in its revolving cage; touching the mechanism, and trick of which, it has probably quite as distinct perceptions, as ever this red-faced gentleman had of his deceased Millennium.

It is possible that poor old Trotty's faith in these very vague Old Times was not entirely destroyed, for he felt vague enough, at that moment. One thing, however, was plain to him, in the midst of his distress; to wit, that however these gentlemen might differ in details, his misgivings of that morning, and of many other mornings, were well founded. "No, no. We can't go right, or do right," thought Trotty in despair. "There is no good in us. We are born bad!"

But Trotty had a father's heart within him; which had somehow got into his breast in spite of this decree; and he could not bear that Meg, in the blush of her brief joy, should have her fortune read by these wise gentlemen. "God help her," thought poor Trotty. "She will know it soon enough."

He anxiously signed, therefore, to the young smith, to take her away. But he was so busy, talking to her softly at a little distance, that he only became conscious of this desire, simultaneously with Alderman Cute. Now, the Alderman had not yet had his say, but he was a philosopher, too—practical, though! Oh, very practical!—and, as he had no idea of losing any portion of his audience, he cried "Stop!"

"Now, you know," said the Alderman, addressing his two friends, with a self-complacent smile upon his face, which was habitual to him, "I am a plain man, and a practical man; and I go to work in a plain practical way. That's my way. There is not the least mystery or difficulty in dealing with this sort of people if you only understand 'em, and can talk to 'em in their own manner.—Now, you Porter! Don't you ever tell me, or anybody else, my friend, that you haven't always enough to eat, and of the best; because I know better. I have tasted your tripe, you know, and you can't 'chaff' me. You understand what 'chaff' means, eh? That's the right word, isn't it? Ha, ha, ha! Lord bless you," said the Alderman, turning to his friends again, "it's the easiest thing on earth to deal with this sort of people, if you only understand 'em."

Famous man for the common people, Alderman Cute! Never out of temper with them! Easy, affable, joking, knowing gentleman!

"You see, my friend," pursued the Alderman, "there's a great deal of nonsense talked about Want—'hard up,' you know: that's the phrase, isn't it! ha! ha! ha!—and I intend to Put it Down. There's a certain amount of cant in vogue about Starvation, and I mean to Put it Down. That's all!—Lord bless you," said the Alderman, turning to his friends again, "you may Put Down anything among this sort of people, if you only know the way to set about it!"

Trotty took Meg's hand and drew it through his arm. He didn't seem to know what he was doing, though.

"Your daughter, eh?" said the Alderman, chucking her familiarly under the chin.

Always affable with the working classes, Alderman Cute! Knew what pleased them! Not a bit of pride!

"Where's her mother?" asked that worthy gentleman.

"Dead," said Toby. "Her mother got up linen; and was called to Heaven when she was born."

"Not to get up linen *there*, I suppose," remarked the Alderman pleasantly.

Toby might or might not have been able to separate his wife in Heaven from her old pursuits. But query: If Mrs. Alderman Cute had gone to Heaven, would Mr. Alderman Cute have pictured her as holding any state or station there?

"And you're making love to her, are you?" said Cute to the young smith.

"Yes," returned Richard quickly, for he was nettled by the question. "And we are going to be married on New Year's Day."

"What do you mean!" cried Filer sharply. "Married!"

"Why, yes, we're thinking of it. Master," said Richard. "We're rather in a hurry you see, in case it should be Put Down first."

"Ah!" cried Filer, with a groan. "Put *that* down indeed, Alderman, and you'll do something. Married! Married!! The ignorance of the first principles of political economy on the part of these people; their improvidence; their weakness; is, by Heavens! enough to—Now look at that couple, will you!"

Well! They were worth looking at. And marriage seemed as reasonable and fair a deed as they need have in contemplation.

"A man may live to be as old as Methuselah," said Mr. Filer, "and may labor all his life for the benefit of such people as those; and may heap up facts on figures, facts on figures, facts on figures, mountains high and dry; and he can no more hope to persuade 'em that they have no right or business to be married, than he can hope to persuade 'em

that they have no earthly right or business to be born. And *that* we know they haven't. We reduced it to a mathematical certainty long ago."

Alderman Cute was mightily diverted, and laid his right forefinger on the side of his nose, as much as to say to both his friends, "Observe me, will you? Keep your eye on the practical man!"—and called Meg to him.

"Come here, my girl!" said Alderman Cute.

The young blood of her lover had been mounting, wrathfully, within the last few minutes; and he was indisposed to let her come. But setting a constraint upon himself, he came forward with a stride as Meg approached, and stood beside her. Trotty kept her hand within his arm still, but looked from face to face as wildly as a sleeper in a dream.

"Now I'm going to give you a word or two of good advice, my girl," said the Alderman, in his nice easy way. "It's my place to give advice, you know, because I'm a Justice. You know I'm a Justice, don't you?"

Meg timidly said, "Yes." But every body knew Alderman Cute was a Justice! Oh dear, so active a Justice always! Who such a mote of brightness in the public eye, as Cute!

"You are going to be married, you say," pursued the Alderman. "Very unbecoming and indelicate in one of your sex! But never mind that. After you are married, you'll quarrel with your husband, and come to be a distressed wife. You may think not: but you will, because I tell you so. Now I give you fair warning, that I have made up my mind to Put distressed wives Down. So don't be brought before me. You'll have children—boys. Those boys will grow up bad of course, and run wild in the streets, without shoes and stockings. Mind, my young friend! I'll convict 'em summarily, every one, for I am determined to Put boys without shoes and stockings, Down. Perhaps your husband will die young, (most likely) and leave you with a baby. Then you'll be turned out of doors, and wander up and down the streets. Now don't wander near me, my dear, for I am resolved to Put all wandering mothers Down. All young mothers, of all sorts and kinds, it's my determination to Put down. Don't think to plead illness as an excuse with me; or babies as an excuse with me; for all sick persons and young children (I hope you know the church-service, but I'm afraid not) I am determined to Put Down. And if you attempt, desperately, and ungratefully, and impiously, and fraudulently attempt, to drown yourself, or hang yourself, I'll have no pity on you, for I have made up my mind to Put all suicide Down. If there is one thing," said the Alderman, with his self-satisfied smile, "on which I can be said to have made up my mind more than on another, it is to Put suicide Down. So don't try it on. That's the phrase, is n't it! Ha, ha! now we understand each other."

Toby knew not whether to be agonized or glad to see that Meg had turned a deadly white, and dropped her lover's hand.

"As for you, you dull dog," said the Alderman, turning with even increased cheerfulness and urbanity to the young smith, "what are you thinking of being married for? What do you want to be married for, you silly fellow! If I was a fine, young, strapping chap like you, I should be ashamed of being milksop enough to pin myself to a woman's apron-strings! Why, she'll be an old woman before your're a middle-aged man! And a pretty figure you'll cut then, with a draggle-tailed wife and a crowd of squalling children crying after you wherever you go!"

Oh, he knew how to banter the common people. Alderman Cute!

"There! go along with you," said the Alderman, "and repent. Don't make such a fool of yourself as to get married on New Year's Day. You'll think very differently of it long before next New Year's Day; a trim young fellow like you, with all the girls looking after you. There! go along with you!"

They went along. Not arm in arm, or hand in hand, or interchanging bright glances; but she in tears, he gloomy and down-looking. Were these the hearts that had so lately made old Toby's leap up from its faintness! No, no. The Alderman (a blessing on his head!) had Put *them* Down.

"As you happen to be here," said the Alderman to Toby, "you shall carry a letter for me. Can you be quick? Your are an old man."

Toby, who had been looking after Meg, quite stupidly, made shift to murmur out that he was very quick, and very strong.

"How old are you?" enquired the Alderman.

"I'm over sixty, Sir," said Toby.

"Oh! This man's a great deal past the average age, you know," cried Mr. Filer, breaking in as if his patience would bear some trying, but this really was carrying matters a little too far.

"I feel I'm intruding, Sir," said Toby. "I—I misdoubted it this morning, Oh dear me!"

The Alderman cut him short by giving him the letter from his pocket. Toby would have got a shilling too; but Mr. Filer clearly showing that in that case he would rob a certain given number of persons of ninepence-halfpenny a piece, he only got sixpence; and thought himself very well off to get that.

Then the Alderman gave an arm to each of his friends, and walked off in high feather; but immediately came hurrying back alone, as if he had forgotten something.

"Porter?" said the Alderman.

"Sir!" said Toby.

"Take care of that daughter of yours. She's much too handsome."

"Even her good looks are stolen from somebody or other I suppose," thought Toby, looking at the sixpence in his hand, and thinking of the tripe. "She's been and robbed five hundred ladies of a bloom a piece, I shouldn't wonder. It's very dreadful!"

"She's much too handsome, my man," repeated the Alderman. "The chances are, that she"ll come to no good, I clearly see. Observe what I say. Take care of her!" With which he hurried off again.

"Wrong every way. Wrong every way!" said Trotty, clasping his hands. "Born bad. No business here!"

The Chimes came clashing in upon him as he said the words. Full, loud, and sounding —but with no encouragement. No, not a drop.

"The tune's changed," cried the old man, as he listened. "There's not a word of all that fancy in it. Why should there be? I have no business with the New Year nor with the old one neither. Let me die!"

Still the Bells, pealing forth their changes, made the very air spin. Put 'em down, Put 'em down! Good old Times, Good old Times! Facts and figures, Facts and figures! Put 'em down, Put 'em down! If they said any thing they said this, till the brain of Toby reeled.

He pressed his bewildered head between his hands, as if to keep it from splitting asunder. A well timed action, as it happened, for finding the letter in one of them, and being by that means reminded of his charge, he fell, mechanically, into his usual trot, and trotted off.

THE SECOND QUARTER.

The letter Toby had received from Alderman Cute, was addressed to a great man in the great district of the town. The greatest district of the town. It must have been the greatest district of the town, because it was commonly called The World by its inhabitants.

The letter positively seemed heavier in Toby's hand, than another letter. Not because the Alderman had sealed it with a very large coat of arms and no end of wax, but because of the weighty name on the superscription, and the ponderous amount of gold and silver with which it was associated.

"How different from us! thought Toby, in all simplicity and earnestness, as he looked at the direction. "Divide the lively turtles in the bills of mortality, by the number of gentlefolks able to buy 'em; and whose share does he take but his own! As to snatching tripe from any body's mouth—he'd scorn it!"

With the involuntary homage due to such an exalted character, Toby interposed a corner of his apron between the letter and his fingers.

"His children," said Trotty, and a mist rose before his eyes; "his daughters—Gentlemen may win their hearts and marry them; they may be happy wives and mothers: they may be handsome like my darling M—e—"

He couldn't finish her name. The final letter swelled in his throat, to the size of the whole alphabet.

"Never mind," thought Trotty, "I know what I mean. That's more than enough for me." And with this consolatory rumination, trotted on.

It was a hard frost, that day. The air was bracing, crisp and clear. The wintry sun, tho, powerless for warmth, looked brightly down upon the ice it was too weak to melt, and set a radiant glory there. At other times, Trotty might have learned a poor man's lesson from the wintry sun; but he was past that now.

The Year was Old that day. The patient Year had lived through the reproaches and misuses of its slanders, and faithfully performed its work. Spring, summer, autumn, winter. It had labored through the destined round, and now laid down its weary head to die. Shut out from hope, high impulse, active happiness, itself, but messenger of many joys to others, it made appeal in its decline to have its toiling days and patient hours remembered and to die in peace. Trotty might have read a poor man's allegory in the fading year; but he was past that now.

And only he? Or has the like appeal been ever made, by seventy years at once upon an English laborer's head, and made in vain!

The streets were full of motion, and the shops were decked out gaily. The New Year, like an Infant Heir to the world, was waited for, with welcomes, presents and rejoicings. There were books and toys for the New Year, glittering trinkets for the New Year, dresses for the New year, schemes of fortune for the New Year; new inventions to beguile it. Its life was parcelled out in almanacs and pocket books; the coming of its moons, and stars, and tides, was known beforehand to the moment; all the workings of its seasons in their days and nights, were calculated with as much precision as Mr. Filer could work sums in men and women.

The New Year, the New Year. Everywhere the New Year! The Old Year was already looked upon as dead; and its effects were selling cheap like some drowned mariner's aboardship. Its patterns were Last Year's and going at a sacrifice, before its breath was gone. Its treasures were mere dirt, beside the riches of its unborn successor!

Trotty had no portion, to his thinking, in the New Year or the Old.

"Put 'em down, Facts and Figures, facts and figures, Good old Times, good old times. Put 'em down, put 'em down"—his trot went to that measure, and would fit itself to nothing else.

But even that one, melancholy as it was, brought him, in due time, to the end of his journey. To the mansion of Sir Joseph Bowley, Member of Parliament.

The door was opened by a Porter. Such a Porter! not of Toby's order. Quite another thing. His place was the ticket though; not Toby's.

This Porter underwent some hard panting before he could speak; having breathed himself by coming incautiously out of his chair, without first taking his time to think about it and compose his mind. When he had found his voice—which it took him some time to do, for it was a long way off, and hidden under a load of meat—he said in a fat whisper.

"Who's it from?"

Toby told him.

"You're to take it in, yourself," said the Porter, pointing to a room at the end of a long passage, opening from the hall. "Everything goes straight in, on this day of the year. You're not a bit too soon, for the carriage is at the door now, and they have only come to town for a couple hours a 'purpose."

Toby wiped his feet (which were quite dry already) with great care, and took the way pointed out to him; observing, as he went, that it was an awfully grand house, but hushed and covered up, as if in the country. Knocking at the room door, he was told to enter from within; and doing so found himself in a spacious library, where at a table strewn with files and papers, were a stately lady in a bonnet; and a not very stately gentleman in black who wrote from her dictation; while another, and an older, and a much statelier gentleman, whose hat and cane were on the table, walked up and down, with one hand in his breast, and looked complacently from time to time at his own picture—a full length; a very full length—hanging over the fire-place.

"What is this?" said the last named gentleman. "Mr. Fish, will you have the goodness to attend?"

Mr. Fish begged pardon, and taking the letter from Toby, handed it with great respect.

"From Alderman Cute, Sir Joseph."

"Is this all? Have you nothing else, Porter?" inquired Joseph.

Toby replied in the negative.

"You have no bill or demand upon me: my name is Bowley, Sir Joseph Bowley; of any kind from anybody, have you?" said Sir Joseph. "If you have, present it. There is a cheque-book by the side of Mr. Fish. I allow nothing to be carried into the New Year. Every description of account is settled in this house at the close of the old one. So that if death was to—to—"

"To cut," suggested Mr. Fish.

"To sever, Sir," returned Sir Joseph, with great asperity, "the cord of existence—my affairs would be found, I hope, in a state of preparation."

"My dear Sir Joseph!" said the lady, who was greatly younger than the gentleman. "How shocking!"

"My lady Bowley," replied Sir Joseph floundering now and then, as in the great depth of his observations, "at this season of the year we should think of—of—ourselves. We should look into our—our accounts. We should feel that every return of so eventful a period in human transactions, involves matters of deep moment between a man and his—and his banker."

Sir Joseph delivered these words as if he felt the full morality of what he was saying; and desired that even Trotty should have an opportunity of being improved by such discourse. Possibly he had this end before him in still forbearing to break the seal of the letter, and in telling Trotty to wait where he was, a minute.

"You are desiring Mr. Fish to say, my lady—" observed Sir Joseph.

"Mr. Fish has said that, I believe," returned his lady, glancing at the letter. "But, upon my word, Sir Joseph, I don't think I can let it go after all. It is very dear."

"What is dear?" inquired Sir Joseph.

"That Charity, my love. They only allow two votes for a subscription of five pounds. Really monstrous!"

"My lady Bowley," returned Sir Joseph, "you surprise me. Is the luxury of feeling in proportion to the number of votes; or is it, to a rightly, constituted mind, in proportion to the number of applicants, and the wholesome state of mind to which their canvassing reduces them? Is there no excitement of the purest kind in having two votes to dispose of among fifty people?"

"Not to me, I acknowledge," returned the lady. "It bores one. Besides one can't oblige one's acquaintance. But you are the Poor Man's Friend, you know, Sir Joseph. You think otherwise."

"I *am* the Poor Man's Friend," observed Sir Joseph, glancing at the poor man present. "As such I may be taunted. As such I have been taunted. But I ask no other title."

"Bless him for a noble gentleman!" thought Trotty.

"I don't agree with Cute here, for instance," said Sir Joseph, holding out the letter. "I don't agree with the Filer party. I don't agree with any party. My friend the Poor Man, has no business with anything of that sort, and nothing of that sort has any business with him. My friend the Poor Man, in my district, is my business. No man or body of men has any business to interfere between my friend and me. That is the ground I take. I assume a—a paternal character to-

wards my friend. I say, 'My good fellow, I will treat you paternally.''

Toby listened with great gravity, and began to feel more comfortable.

"Your only business, my good fellow," pursued Sir Joseph, looking abstractedly at Toby; "Your only business in life is with me. You needn't trouble yourself to think about any thing. I will think for you; I know what is good for you; I am your perpetual parent. Such is the dispensation of an all-wise Providence! Now, the design of your creation is: not that you should swill, and guzzle, and associate your enjoyments, brutally, with food"—Toby thought remorsefully of the tripe—"but that you should feel the Dignity of Labor; go forth erect into the cheerful morning air, and—and stop there. Live hard and temperately, be respectful, exercise your self denial, bring up your family on next to nothing, pay your rent as regularly as the clock strikes, be punctual in your dealings (I set you a good example; you will find Mr. Fish, my confidential secretary, with a cash-box before him at all times); and you may trust me to be your Friend and Father."

"Nice children, indeed, Sir Joseph!" said the lady, with a shudder. "Rheumatisms, and fevers, and crooked legs, and asthmas, and all kinds of horrors!"

"My lady," returned Sir Joseph, with solemnity, "not the less am I the Poor Man's Friend and Father. Not the less shall he receive encouragement at my hands. Every quarter-day he will be put in communication with Mr. Fish. Every New-Year's Day, myself and friends will drink his health. Once every year, myself and friends will address him with the deepest feeling. Once in his life, he may even perhaps receive: in public, in the presence of the gentry; a Trifle from a Friend. And when, upheld no more by these stimulants, and the Dignity of Labor, he sinks into his comfortable grave, then my lady"—here Sir Joseph blew his nose—"I will be a Friend and Father—on the same terms—to his children."

Toby was greatly moved.

"Oh! You have a thankful family, Sir Joseph!" cried his wife.

"My lady," said Sir Joseph, quite majestically, "Ingratitude is known to be the sin of that class. I expect no return."

"Ah! Born bad!" thought Toby. "Nothing melts us!"

"What man can do, *I* do," pursued Sir Joseph. "I do my duty as the Poor Man's Friend and Father; and I endeavor to educate his mind, by inculcating on all occasions the one great moral lesson which that class requires. That is, entire Dependence on myself. They have no business whatever with—with themselves. If wicked and designing persons tell them otherwise, and they become impatient and discontented, and are guilty of insubordinate conduct and black-hearted ingratitude; which is undoubtedly the case; I am their Friend and Father still. It is so Ordained. It is in the nature of things."

With that great sentiment, he opened the Alderman's letter; and read it.

"Very polite and attentive, I am sure!" exclaimed Sir Joseph. "My lady, the Alderman is so obliging as to remind me that he has had 'the distinguished honor'—he is very good—of meeting me at the house of our mutual friend Deedles, the banker; and he does me the favor to inquire whether it will be agreeable to me to have Will Fern put down."

"*Most* agreeable!" replied my Lady Bowley. "The worst man among them! He has been committing a robbery, I hope?"

"Why, no," said Sir Joseph, referring to the letter. "Not quite. Very near. Not quite. He came up to London it seems, to look for employment (trying to better himself—that's his story,) and being found at night asleep in a shed, was taken into custody and carried the next morning before the Alderman. The Alderman observes (very properly) that he is determined to put this sort of thing down; and that if it will be agreeable to me to have Will Fern put down, he will be happy to begin with him."

"Let him be made an example of, by all means," returned the lady. "Last winter, when I introduced pinking and eyelet-holeing among the men and boys in the village, as a nice evening employment, and had the lines,

> Oh let us love our occupations,
> Bless the squire and his relations,
> Live upon our daily rations,
> And always know our proper stations,

set to music on the new system, for them to sing the while; this very Fern—I see him now—touched that hat of his, and said, 'I humbly ask your pardon my lady, but *an't* I something different from a great girl?' I expected it, of course; who can expect anything but insolence and ingratitude from that class of people? That is not to the purpose however. Sir Joseph! Make an example of him!"

"Hem!" coughed Sir Joseph. "Mr. Fish if you'll have the goodness to attend"—

Mr. Fish immediately seized his pen, and wrote from Sir Joseph's dictation.

"Private. My dear Sir. I am very much indebted to you for your courtesy in the matter of the man William Fern, of whom I regret to add, I can say nothing favorable. I have uniformly considered myself in the light of his Friend and Father, but have been repaid (a common case I grieve to say) with ingratitude, and constant opposition to my plans. He is a turbulent and rebellious spirit. His character will not bear investigation. Nothing will persuade him to be happy when he might. Under these circumstances, it appears to me, I own, that when he comes before you again (as you informed me he promised to do to-morrow, pending your inquiries, and I think he may be so far relied upon,)

his committal for some short term as a Vagabond, would be a service to society, and would be a salutary example in a country where—for the sake of those who are, through good and evil report, the Friends and Fathers of the Poor, as well as with a view to that, generally speaking, misguided class themselves—examples are greatly needed. And I am," and so forth.

"It appears," remarked Sir Joseph when he had signed this letter, and Mr. Fish was sealing it, "as if this were ordained: really.—At the close of the year, I wind up my account and strike my balance, even with William Fern!"

Trotty, who had long ago relapsed, and was very low-spirited, stepped forward with a rueful face to take the letter.

"With my compliments and thanks," said Sir Joseph. "Stop!"

"Stop!" echoed Mr. Fish.

"You have heard, perhaps," said Sir Joseph, oracularly, "certain remarks into which I have been led respecting the solemn period of time at which we have arrived, and the duty imposed upon us of settling our affairs, and being prepared. You have observed that I don't shelter myself behind my superior standing in society, but that Mr. Fish—that gentleman—has a cheque-book at his elbow, and is in fact here, to enable me to turn over a perfectly new leaf, and enter on the epoch before us with clean account. Now, my friend, can you lay your hand upon your heart, and say, that you also have made preparation for a New Year?"

"I am afraid Sir," stammered Trotty, looking meekly at him, "that I am a—a—little behind-hand with the world."

"Behind-hand with the world!" repeated Sir Joseph Bowley, in a tone of terrible distinctness.

"I am afraid, Sir," faltered Trotty, "that there's a matter of ten or twelve shillings owing to Mrs. Chickenstalker."

"To Mrs. Chickenstalker!" repeated Sir Joseph, in the same tone as before.

"A shop Sir," exclaimed Toby, "in the general line. Also a--a littly money on account of rent. A very little Sir. It oughtn't to be owing, I know, but we have been hard put to it indeed!"

Sir Joseph looked at his lady, and at Mr. Fish, and at Trotty, one after another, twice all round. He then made a despondent gesture with both hands at once, as if he gave the thing up altogether.

"How a man, even among this improvident and impracticable race; an old man; a man grown gray; can look a New Year in the face, with his affairs in this condition; how he can lie down on his bed at night, and get up again in the morning, and—There!" he said, turning his back on Trotty. "Take the letter. Take the letter!"

"I heartily wished it was otherwise, sir," said Trotty, anxious to excuse himself. "We have been tried very hard."

Sir Joseph still repeating "Take the letter, take the letter!" and Mr. Fish not only saying the same thing, but giving additional force to the request by motioning the bearer to the door, he had nothing for it but to make his bow and leave the house. And in the street, poor Trotty pulled his worn old hat down on his head, to hide the grief he felt at getting no hold on the New Year, anywhere.

He didn't even lift his hat to look up at the Bell tower when he came to the old church on his return. He halted there a moment, from habit: and knew that it was growing dark, and that the steeple rose above him, indistinct and faint, in the murky air. He knew, too, that the Chimes would ring immediately; and that they sounded to his fancy, at such a time, like voices in the clouds. But he only made the more haste to deliver the Alderman's letter, and get out of the way before they began; for he dreaded to hear them tagging "Friends and Fathers, Friends and Fathers," to the burden they had rung out last.

Toby discharged himself of his commission, therefore, with all possible speed, and set off trotting homeward. But what with his pace, which was at best an awkward one in the street; and what with his hat, which did n't improve it; he trotted against somebody in less than no time, and was sent staggering out into the road.

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure!" said Trotty, pulling up his hat in great confusion, and between the hat and the torn lining, fixing his head into a kind of bee-hive. "I hope I have n't hurt you."

As to hurting anybody, Toby was not such an absolute Samson, but that he was much more likely to be hurt himself: and indeed, he had flown out into the road, like a shuttlecock. He had such an opinion of his own strength, however, that he was in real concern for the other party; and said again,

"I hope I have n't hurt you?"

The man against whom he had run; a sunbrowned, sinew, country-looking man, with grizzled hair, and a rough chin; stared at him for a moment, as if he suspected him to be in jest. But satisfied of his good faith, he answered:

"No friend. You have not hurt me."

"Nor the child, I hope?" said Trotty.

"Nor the child," returned the man. "I thank you kindly."

As he said so, he glanced at a little girl he carried in his arms, asleep; and shading her face with the long end of the poor handkerchief he wore about his throat, went slowly on.

The tone in which he said "I thank you kindly," penetrated Trotty's heart. He was so jaded and foot-sore, and so soiled with travel, and looked about him so forlorn and strange, that it was a comfort to him to be able to thank any one: no matter for how

little. Toby stood gazing after him as he plodded wearily away; with the child's arm clinging round his neck.

At the figure in the worn shoes—now the very shade and ghost of shoes—rough leather leggings, common frock, and broad slouched hat, Trotty stood gazing: blind to the whole street. And at the child's arm, clinging round its neck.

Before he merged into the darkness, the traveller stopped: and looking round, and seeing Trotty standing there yet, seemed undecided whether to return or go on. After doing first the one and then the other, he came back; and Trotty went half way to meet him.

"You can tell me, perhaps," said the man with a faint smile, "and if you can I am sure you will, and I'd rather ask you than another—where Alderman Cute lives."

"Close at hand," replied Toby. "I'll show you his house with pleasure."

"I was to have gone to him elsewhere to-morrow," said the man, accompanying Toby, "but I'm uneasy under suspicion, and want to clear myself, and to be free to go and seek my bread—I don't know where. So may be he'll forgive my going to his house to night."

"It's impossible," cried Toby with a start, "that your name's Fern!"

"Eh!" cried the other turning on him in astonishment.

"Fern! Will Fern!" said Trotty.

"That's my name," replied the other.

"Why then," cried Trotty, seizing him by the arm, and looking cautiously round, "for Heaven's sake don't go to him! Don't go to him! He'll put you down as sure as ever you were born. Here! come up this alley, and I'll tell you what I mean. Don't go to *him*."

His new acquaintance looked as if he thought him mad; but he bore him company nevertheless. When they were shrouded from observation, Trotty told him that he knew and what character he had received, and all about it.

The subject of his history listened to it with a calmness that surprised him. He did not contradict or interrupt it once. He nodded his head now and then—more in corroboration of an old and worn out story, it appeared, than in refutation of it; and once or twice threw back his hat and passed his freckled hand over a brow, where every furrow he had plowed seemed to have set its image in little. But he did no more.

"It's true enough in the main," he said, "master. I could sift grain from the husk here and there, but let it be as 'tis. What odds? I have gone against his plans; to my misfortune.' I can't help it; I should do the like to-morrow. As to character, them gentlefolks will search and search, and pry and pry, and have it as free from spot or speck in us, afore they'll help us to a dry good word! Well! I hope they don't lose good opinion as easy as we do, or their lives is strict indeed, and hardly worth the keeping. For myself, master, I never took with that hand"—holding it before him—"what was n't my own; and never held it back from work, however hard, or poorly paid. Whoever can deny it, let him chop it off! But when work won't maintain me like a human creetur; when my living is so bad, that I am Hungry, out of doors and in; when I see a whole working life begin that way, go on that way, and end that way, without a chance or change; then say to the gentlefolks 'Keep away from me! Let my cottage be. My doors is dark enough without your darkening of 'em more. Don't look for me to come up into the Park to help the show when there's a Birthday, or a fine Speechmaking, or what not. Act your Plays and Games with out me, and be welcome to 'em. We've nought to do with one another. I'm best let alone!"

Seeing that the child in his arms had opened her eyes, and was looking about her in wonder, he checked himself to say a word or two of foolish prattle in her ear, and stand her on the ground beside him. Then slowly winding one of her long tresses round and round his rough forefinger like a ring, while she hung about his dusty leg, he said to Trotty:

"I'm not a cross-grained man by natur', I believe; and easy satisfied, I'm sure. I bear no ill will against none of 'em: I only want to live like one of the Almighty's creeturs. I can't, I don't; and so there's a pit dug between me and them that can and do. There's others like me. You might tell 'em off by hundreds and by thousands, sooner than by ones."

Trotty knew he spoke the Truth in this and shook his head, to signify as much.

"I've got a bad name this way," said Fern; "and I'm not likely, I'm afeared, to get a better. Ta'nt lawful to be out of sorts, and I AM out of sorts, though God knows I'd sooner bear a cheerful spirit if I could. Well! I don't know as this Alderman could hurt *me* much by sending me to jail; but without a friend to speak a word for me, he might do it; and you see—!" pointing downward with his finger at the child.

"She has a beautiful face," said Trotty.

"Why yes!" replied the other, in a low voice, as he gently turned it up with both his hands toward his own, and looked upon it, steadfastly. "I've thought so many times, I've thought so, when my hearth was very cold, and cupboard very bare. I thought so t'other night, when we were taken like two thieves. But they—they shouldn't try the little face too often; should they, Lilian?—That's hardly fair upon a man!"

He sunk his voice so low, and gazed upon her with an air so stern and strange, that Toby, to divert the current of his thoughts, inquired if his wife were living.

"I never had one," he returned, shaking

his head. "She's my brother's child: an orphan. Nine year old, though you'd hardly think it; but she's tired and worn out now. They'd have taken care on her, the Union: eight and twenty mile away from where we live; between four walls (as they took care of my old father when he couldn't work no more, though he didn't trouble 'em long;) but I took her instead, and she's lived with me ever since. Her mother had a friend once, in London here. We are trying to find her, and to find work too; but it's a large place. Never mind. More room for us to walk about in, Lilly!"

Meeting the child's eyes with a smile, which melted Toby more than tears, he shook him by the hand.

"I don't so much as know your name," he said; "but I've opened my heart free to you, for I'm thankful to you; with good reason.—I'll take your advice, and keep clear of this ——"

"Justice," suggested Toby.

"Ah!" he said. "If that's the name they give him. This Justice. And to-morrow will try whether there's better fortun' to be met with, somewheres near London. Good night. A Happy New Year!"

"Stay!" cried Trotty, catching at his hand, as he relaxed his grip. "Stay! The New Year never can be happy to me, if we part like this. The New Year never can be happy to me, if I see the child and you go wandering away you don't know where, without a shelter for your heads. Come home with me! I'm a poor man, living in a poor place; but I can give you lodging for one night, and never miss it. Come home with me! I'll take her!" cried Trotty, lifting up the child. "A pretty one! I'd carry twenty times her weight, and never know I'd got it. Tell me if I go too quick for you. I'm very fast. I always was!" Trotty said this, taking about six of his trotting paces to one stride of his fatigued companion; and with his thin legs quivering again, beneath the load he bore.

"Why, she's as light," said Trotty, trotting in his speech as well as in his gait; for he couldn't bear to be thanked, and dreaded a moment's pause; "as light as a feather.—Lighter than a Peacock's feather—a great deal lighter. Here we are, and here we go! Round this first turning to the right, Uncle Will, and past the pump, and sharp off up the passage to the left, right opposite the public-house. Here we are, and here we go. Cross over, Uncle Will, and mind the kidney pieman at the corner! Here we are, and here we go! Down the Mews here, Uncle Will, and stop at the back door, with 'T. Veck, Ticket Porter' wrote upon the board; and here we are and here we go, and here we are indeed, my precious Meg, surprising you!"

With which words Trotty, in a breathless state, set the child down before his daughter in the middle of the floor. The little visitor looked once at Meg; and doubting nothing in that face, but trusting everything she saw there; ran into her arms.

"Here we are, and here we go!" cried Trotty, running round the room and choking audibly. "Here! Uncle Will! Here's a fire you know! Why don't you come to the fire? Oh, here we are, and here we go! Meg, my precious darling, where's the kettle? Here it is and here it goes, and it'll bile in no time!"

Trotty really had picked up the kettle somewhere or other in the course of his wild career, and now put it on the fire; while Meg, seating the child in a warm corner, knelt down on the ground before her, and pulled off her shoes, and dried her wet feet on a cloth. Aye, and she laughed at Trotty too—so pleasantly, so cheerfully, that Trotty could have blessed her where she kneeled; for he had seen that, when they entered, she was sitting by the fire in tears.

"Why, father!" said Meg. "You are crazy to-night, I think. I don't know what the Bells would say to that. Poor little feet.—How cold they are!"

"Oh, they're warmer now!" exclaimed the child. "They're quite warm now!"

"No, no, no," said Meg. "We havn't rubbed 'em half enough. We're so busy. So busy! And when they're done, we'll brush out the damp hair; and when that's done, we'll bring some color to the poor pale face with fresh water; and when that's done we'll be so gay, and brisk, and happy—!"

The child, in a burst of sobbing, clasped her round the neck; caressed her fair cheek with its hand; and said, "Oh Meg! oh dear Meg!"

Toby's blessing could have done no more. Who could do more!

"Why father!" cried Meg, after a pause.

"Here I am, and here I go, my dear," said Trotty.

"Good Gracious me!" cried Meg. "He's crazy! He's put the dear child's bonnet on the kettle, and hung the lid behind the door!"

"I didn't go to do it, my love," said Trotty, hastily repairing this mistake. "Meg, my dear?"

Meg looked towards him and saw that he had elaborately stationed himself behind the chair of their mute visitor, where with many mysterious gestures he was holding up the sixpence he had earned.

"I see, my dear," said Trotty, "as I was coming in, half an ounce of tea lying somewhere on the stairs; and I'm pretty sure there was a bit of bacon too. As I don't remember where it was, exactly; I'll go myself and try to find 'em."

With this inscrutable artifice, Toby withdrew to purchase the viands he had spoken of, for ready money, at Mrs. Chickenstalker's; and presently came back, pretending that he had not been able to find them, at first, in the dark.

"But here they are, at last," said Trotty, setting out the tea-things, "all correct! I was pretty sure it was tea, and a rasher. So it is. Meg, my Pet, if you'll just make the tea, while your unworthy father toasts the bacon, we shall be ready, immediate. It's a curious circumstance," said Trotty, proceeding in his cookery, with the assistance of the toasting-fork, "curious, but well known to my friends that I never care, myself, for rashers, nor for tea. I like to see other people enjoy 'em," said Trotty, speaking very loud, to impress the fact upon his guest, "but to me, as food, they're disagreeable."

Yet Trotty sniffed the savor of the hissing bacon—ah!—as if he liked it; and when he poured the boiling water in the tea-pot, looked lovingly down into the depths of that snug cauldron, and suffered the fragrant steam to curl about his nose, and wreathe his head and face in a thick cloud. However, for all this, he neither ate nor drank except, at the very beginning, a mere morsel for form's sake, which he appeared to eat with infinite relish, but declared was perfectly uninteresting to him.

No. Trotty's occupation was, to see Will Fern and Lilian eat and drink; and so was Meg's. And never did spectators at a city dinner or court banquet find such high delight in seeing others feast; although it were a monarch or a pope; as those two did, in looking on that night. Meg smiled at Trotty, Trotty laughed at Meg. Meg shook her head and made belief to clap her hands, applauding Trotty; Trotty conveyed, in dumb-show, unintelligible narratives of how and when and where he had found their visitors, to Meg; and they were happy. Very happy.

"Although," thought, Trotty sorrowfully, as he watched Meg's face; "that match is broken off, I see!"

"Now, I'll tell you what," said Trotty after tea. "The little one, she sleeps with Meg, I know."

"With good Meg!" cried the child, caressing her. "With Meg."

"That's right," said Trotty. "And I shouldn't wonder if she kiss Meg's father, won't she? *I*'m Meg's father."

Mightily delighted Trotty was, when the child went timidly towards him; and having kissed him, fell back upon Meg again.

"She's as sensible as Solomon," said Trotty. "Here we come, and here we—no, we don't—I don't mean that—I—what was I saying, Meg, my precious?"

Meg looked towards their guest, who leaned upon her chair, and with his face turned from her, fondled the child's head, half hidden in her lap.

"To be sure," said Toby. "To be sure! I don't know what I'm rambling on about to-night. My wits are wool-gathering, I think. Will Fern, you come along with me. You're tired to death, and broken down for want of rest. You come along with me."

The man still played with the child's curls, still leaned upon Meg's chair, still turned away his face. He didn't speak, but in his rough coarse fingers, clenching and expanding in the fair hair of the child, there was an eloquence that said enough.

"Yes, yes," said Trotty, answering unconsciously what he saw expressed in his daughter's face. "Take her with you, Meg. Get her to bed. There! Now Will, I'll show you where to lie. It's not much of a place: only a loft: but having a loft, I always say, is one of the great conveniences of living in a mews; and till this coach-house and stable gets a better let, we live here cheap. There's plenty of sweet hay up there, belonging to a neighbor; and it's as clean, as hands and Meg can make it. Cheer up! Don't give way.—A new heart for New Year, always!"

The hand released from the child's hair, had fallen, trembling, into Trotty's hand. So Trotty, talking without intermission, led him out as tenderly and easily as if he had been a child himself.

Returning before Meg, he listened for an instant at the door of her little chamber; an adjoining room. The child was murmuring a simple Prayer before lying down to sleep; and when she had remembered Meg's name, "Dearly, Dearly,"—so her words ran—Trotty heard her stop and ask for his.

It was some short time before the foolish little old fellow could compose himself to mend the fire, and draw his chair to the warm hearth. But when he had done so, and had trimmed the light, he took his newspaper from his pocket, and began to read. Carelessly at first, and skimming up and down the columns; but with an earnest and a sad attention, very soon.

For this same dreaded paper re-directed Trotty's thoughts into the channel they had taken all that day, and which the day's events had so marked out and shaped. His interest in the two wanderers had set him on another course of thinking, and a happier one, for a time; but being alone again, and reading of the crimes and violences of the people, he relapsed into his former train.

In this mood, he came to an account (and it was not the first he had ever read) of a woman who had laid her desperate hands not only on her own life but on that of her young child. A crime so terrible, and so revolting to his soul, dilated with the love of Meg, that he let the journal drop, and fell back in his chair, appalled.

"Unnatural and cruel!" Toby cried. "Unnatural and cruel! None but people who were bad at heart: born bad: who had no business on the earth: could do such deeds. It's too true, all I've heard to-day; too just, too full of proof. We're Bad!"

The Chimes took up the words so suddenly—burst out so loud, and clear, and sonorous—that the Bells seemed to strike him in his chair.

And what was that, they said?

"Toby Veck, Toby Veck, waiting for you Toby! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, waiting for you Toby! Come and see us, come and see us, Drag him to us, drag him to us, Haunt and haunt him, haunt and haunt him, Break his slumbers, break his slumbers! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, door open wide Toby, Toby Veck, Toby Veck, door open wide Toby—" then fiercely back to their impetuous strain again, and ringing in the very bricks and plaster on the walls.

Toby listened. Fancy, fancy! His remorse for having run away from them that afternoon! No, no. Nothing of the kind. Again, again, and yet a dozen times again. "Haunt and haunt him, haunt and haunt him, Drag him to us, drag him to us!" Deafening the whole town!

"Meg," said Trotty, softly: tapping at her door. "Do you hear anything?"

"I hear the Bells, father. Surely they're very loud to-night."

"Is she asleep?" said Toby, making an excuse for peeping in.

"So peacefully and happily! I can't leave her yet though, father. Look how she holds my hand!"

"Meg!" whispered Trotty. "Listen to the Bells!"

She listened with her face towards him all the time. But it underwent no change. She didn't understand them.

Trotty withdrew, resumed his seat by the fire, and once more listened by himself. He remained here a little time.

It was impossible to bear it; their energy was dreadful.

"If the tower-door is really open," said Toby, hastily laying aside his apron, but never thinking of his hat, "what's to hinder me from going up into the steeple and satisfying myself? If it's shut, I don't want any other satisfaction. That's enough."

He was pretty certain as he slipped out quietly into the street that he should find it shut and locked, for he knew the door well, and had so rarely seen it open, that he couldn't reckon above three times in all. It was a low arched portal, outside the church, in a dark nook behind a column; and had such great iron hinges and such a monstrous lock, that there was more hinge and lock than door.

But what was his astonishment when coming bare-headed to the church; and putting his hand into this dark nook, with a certain misgiving that it might be unexpectedly seized, and a shivering propensity to draw it back again; he found that the door, which opened outwards, actually stood ajar!

He thought, on the first surprise, of going back; or of getting a light, or a companion; but his courage aided him immediately; and he determined to ascend alone.

"What have I to fear?" said Trotty, "It's a church! Besides, the ringers may be there, and have forgotten to shut the door."

So he went in; feeling his way as he went, like a blind man; for it was very dark. And very quiet, for the Chimes were silent.

The dust from the streets had blown into the recess; and lying there, heaped up, made it so soft and velvet-like to the feet, that there was something startling even in that. The narrow stair was so close to the door, too, that he stumbled at the very first; and shutting the door upon himself, by striking it with his foot, and causing it to rebound back heavily, he couldn't open it again.

This was another reason, however, for going on. Trotty groped his way, and went on. Up, up, up, and round and round; and up, up, up: higher, higher, higher up!

It was a disagreeable staircase for that groping work; so long and narrow, that his groping hand was always touching something; and it often felt so like a man or ghostly figure standing up erect and making room for him to pass without discovery, that he would rub the smooth wall upward searching for its face, and downward searching for its feet, while a chill tingling crept all over him.—Twice or thrice a door or niche broke the monotonous surface; and then it seemed a gap as wide as the whole church; and he felt on the brink of an abyss, and going to tumble headlong down; until he found the wall again.

Still up, up, up; and round and round; and up, up, up; higher, higher, higher up!

At length, the dull and stifling atmosphere began to freshen; presently it blew so strong, that he could hardly keep his legs. But he got to an arched window in the tower, breast-high, and holding tight, looked down upon the housetops, on the smoking chimneys, on the blurr and blotch of lights (toward the place where Meg was wondering where he was and calling to him perhaps,) all kneaded up together in a leaven of mist and darkness.

This was the belfry, where the ringers came. He had caught hold of one of the frayed ropes which hung down through apertures in the oaken roof. At first he started; thinking it was hair; then trembled at the very thought of waking the deep Bell. The Bells themselves were higher. Higher, Trotty, in his fascinations, or in working out the spell upon him, groped his way. By ladders now, and toilsomely, for it was steep, and not too certain holding for the feet.

Up, up, up; and climb and clamber; up, up, up; higher, higher, higher up!

Until, ascending through the floor, and pausing with his head just raised above its beams, he came among the Bells. It was barely possible to make out their great shapes in the gloom; but there they were. Shadowy, and dark, and dumb.

A heavy sense of dread and loneliness fell instantly upon him,as he climbed into this airy nest of stone and metal. His head went round and round. He listened, and then raised a wild "Halloa."

Halloa! was mournfully protracted by the echoes.

Giddy, confused, and out of breath, and frightened, Toby looked about him vacantly, and sunk down in a swoon.

THE THIRD QUARTER.

Black are the brooding clouds and troubled the deep waters, when the Sea of Thought, first heaving from a calm, gives up its Dead. Monsters uncouth and wild, arise in premature, imperfect resurrection; the several parts and shapes of different things are joined and mixed by chance; and when, and how, and by what wonderful degrees, each separates from each, and every sense and object of the mind reassumes its usual form and lives again, no man—though every man is every day the casket of this type of the Great Mystery—can tell.

So; when and how the darkness of the night-black steeple changed to shining light; when and how the solitary tower was peopled with a myriad figures; when and how the whispered "Haunt and hunt him," breathing monotonously through his sleep or swoon, became a voice exclaiming in the waking ears of Trotty, "Break his slumbers;" when and how he ceased to have a sluggish and confused idea that such things were, companioning a host of others that were not; there are no dates or means to tell. But: awake, and standing on his feet upon the boards where he had lately lain: he saw this Goblin Sight.

He saw the tower, whither his charmed footsteps had brought him, swarming with dwarf phantoms, spirits, elfin creatures of the Bells. He saw them leaping, flying, dropping, pouring from the Bells without a pause. He saw them, round him on the ground; above him, in the air; clambering from him, by the ropes below; looking down upon him, from the massive iron-girded beams; peeping in upon him, through the chinks and loopholes in the walls; spreading away and away from him in enlarging circles, as the water-ripples give place to a huge stone that suddenly comes plashing in among them. He saw them, of all aspects and all shapes. He saw them ugly, handsome, crippled, exquisitely formed. He saw them young, he saw them old, he saw them kind, he saw them cruel, he saw them merry, he saw them grim; he saw them tear their hair, and heard them howl. He saw them come and go, incessantly. He saw them riding downward, soaring upward, sailing off afar, perching near at hand, all restless and all violently active. Stone, and brick, and slate, and tile, became transparent to him as to them. He saw them *in* the houses, busy at the sleepers' beds. He saw them soothing people in their dreams; he saw them beating them with knotted whips; he saw them yelling in their ears; he saw them playing softest music on their pillows; he saw them cheering some with the songs of birds and the perfume of flowers; he saw them flashing awful faces on the troubled rest of others, from enchanted mirrors which they carried in their hands.

He saw these creatures, not only among sleeping men but waking also, active in pursuits irreconcileable with one another, and possessing or assuming natures the most opposite. He saw one buckling on innumerable wings to increase his speed; another loading himself with chains and weights to retard his. He saw some putting the hands of clocks forward, some putting the hands of clocks backward, some endeavoring to stop the clock entirely. He saw them representing, here a marriage ceremony, there a funeral; in this chamber an election, and in that a ball; everywhere, restless and untiring motion.

Bewildered by the host of shifting and extraordinary figures, as well as by the uproar of the Bells, which all this while are ringing, Trotty clung to a wooden pillar for support, and turned his white face here and there, in mute astonishment.

As he gazed, the Chimes stopped. Instantaneous change! The whole swarm fainted; their forms collapsed, their speed deserted them; they sought to fly, but in the act of falling died and melted into air. No fresh supply succeeded them. One straggler leaped down pretty briskly from the surface of the Great Bell, and alighted on his feet, but was dead and gone before he could turn round. Some few of the late company who had gambolled in the tower, remained there, spinning over and over a little longer; but these became at every turn more faint, and few, and feeble, and soon went the way of the rest.—The last of all was one small hunchback, who had got into an echoing corner, where he twirled, and twirled, and floated by himself a long time; showing such perseverance, that at last he dwindled to a leg and even to a foot, before he finally retired; but he vanished in the end, and then the tower was silent.

Then and not before, did Trotty see in every Bell a bearded figure of the bulk and stature of the Bell—incomprehensibly, a figure and the Bell itself. Gigantic, grave, and darkly watchful of him, as he stood rooted to the ground.

Mysterious and awful figures! Resting on nothing; poised in the night air of the tower,

with their draped and hooded heads merged in the dim roof; motionless and shadowy.—Shadowy and dark, although he saw them by some light belonging to themselves—none else was there—each with its muffled hand upon its goblin mouth.

He could not plunge down wildly through the opening in the floor, for all power of motion had deserted him. Otherwise he would have done so—aye, would have thrown himself, head-foremost, from the steepletop, rather than have seen them watching him with eyes that would have waked and watched although the pupils had been taken out.

Again, again, the dread and terror of the lonely place, and of the wild and fearful night that reigned there, touched him like a spectral hand. His distance from all help; the long, dark, winding, ghost-beleaguered way that lay between him and the earth on which men lived; his being high, high, high, up there, where it had made him dizzy to see the birds fly in the day; cut off from all good people, who at such an hour were safe at home and sleeping in their beds; all this struck coldly through him, not as a reflection but a bodily sensation. Meantime his eyes and thoughts and fears, were fixed upon the watchful figures; which, rendered unlike any figures of this world by the deep gloom and shade enwrapping and enfolding them, as well by their looks and forms and supernatural hovering above the floor, were nevertheless as plainly to be seen as were the stalwart oaken frames, cross-pieces, bars and beams set up there to support the Bells. These hemmed them, in a very forest of hewn timber; from the entanglements, intricacies, and depths of which, as from among the boughs of a dead wood blighted for their Phantom use, they kept their darksome and unwinking watch.

A blast of air—how cold and shrill!—came moaning through the tower. As it died away, the Great Bell, or the Goblin of the Great Bell, spoke.

"What visitor is this!" it said. The voice was low and deep, and Trotty fancied that it sounded in the other figures as well.

"I thought my name was called by the Chimes!" said Trotty, raising his hands in an attitude of supplication. "I hardly know why I am here, or how I came. I have listened to the Chimes these many years. They have cheered me often."

"And you have thanked them?" said the Bell.

"A thousand times!" cried Trotty.

"How?"

"I am a poor man," faltered Trotty, "and could only thank them in words."

"And always so?" inquired the Goblin of the Bell. "Have you never done us no wrong in words."

"No!" cried Trotty eagerly.

"Never done us foul, and wicked wrong, in words?" pursued the Goblin of the Bell.

Trotty was about to answer, "Never!"—But he stopped, and was confused.

"The voice of Time," said the Phantom, "cries to man, Advance! Time is for his advancement and improvement; for his greater worth, his greater happiness, his better life; his progress onward to that goal within its knowledge and its view, and set there, in the period when Time and he began. Ages of darkness, wickedness, and violence, have come and gone; millions unaccountable, have suffered, lived, and died; to point the way Before him. Who seeks to turn him back, or stay him on his course, arrests a mighty engine which will strike the meddler dead; and he the fiercer and the wilder, for its momentary check!"

"I never did so, to my knowledge, Sir," said Trotty. "It was quite by accident if I did. I wouldn't go to do it, I'm sure."

"Who puts into the mouth of Time, or of its servants," said the Goblin of the Bell, "a cry of lamentation for days which have had their trial and their failure, and have left deep traces of it which the blind may see—a cry that only serves the Present Time, by showing men how much it needs their help when any ears can listen to regrets for such a past—who does this, does a wrong. And you have done that wrong to us, the Chimes."

Trotty's first excess of fear was gone. But he had felt tenderly and gratefully toward the Bells, as you have seen; and when he heard himself arraigned as one who had offended them so weightily, his heart was touched with penitence and grief.

"If you knew," said Trotty, clasping his hands earnestly—"or perhaps you do know—if you know how often you have kept me company; how often you have cheered me up when I've been low; how you were quite the plaything of my little daughter Meg (almost the only one she ever had) when first her mother died, and she and me were left alone—you won't bear malice for a hasty word!"

"Who hears in us, the Chimes, one note bespeaking disregard, or stern regard, of any hope, or joy, or pain, or sorrow, of the many-sorrowed throng; who hears us make response to any creed that gauges human passions and affections, as it gauges the amount of miserable food on which humanity may pine and wither; does us wrong. That wrong you have done us!" said the Bell.

"I have!" said Trotty. "Oh forgive me!"

"Who hears us echo the dull vermin of the earth: the Putters Down of crushed and broken natures, formed to be raised up higher than such maggots of the time can crawl or can conceive," pursued the Goblin of the Bell: "who does so does us wrong. And you have done us wrong!"

"Not meaning it," said Trotty. "In my ignorance. Not meaning it!"

"Lastly, and most of all," pursued the Bell. "Who turns his back upon the fallen and dis-

figured of his kind: abandons them as Vile; and does not trace and track with pitying eyes the unfenced precipice by which they fell from God—grasping in their fall some tufts and shreds of that lost soil, and clinging to them still when bruised and dying in the gulf below; does wrong to Heaven and Man, to time and to Eternity. And you have done that wrong?"

"Spare me," cried Trotty, falling on his knees: "for Mercy's sake!"

"Listen!" said the Shadow.

"Listen!" cried the other Shadows.

"Listen!" said a clear and child-like voice, which Trotty thought he recognised as having heard before.

The organ sounded faintly in the church below. Swelling by degrees, the melody ascended to the roof, and filled the choir and nave. Expanding more and more, it rose up, up; up, up; higher, higher, higher up; awakening agitated hearts within the burly piles of oak, the hollow bells, the iron-bound doors, the stairs of solid stone; until the tower walls were insufficient to contain it, and it soared into the sky.

No wonder that an old man's breath could not contain a sound so vast and mighty. It broke from that weak prison in a rush of tears; and Trotty put his hands before his face.

"Listen!" said the Shadow.

"Listen!" said the other Shadows.

"Listen!" said the child's voice.

A solemn train of blended voices rose into the tower.

It was a very low and mournful strain: a Dirge: and as he listened, Trotty heard his child among the singers.

"She is dead?" exclaimed the old man.—"Meg is dead! Her spirit calls to me. I hear it!"

"The Spirit of your child bewails the dead, and mingles with the dead—dead hopes, dead fancies, dead imaginings of youth," returned the Bell, "but she is living. Learn from her life, a living truth. Learn from the creature dearest to your heart, how bad the Bad are born. See every bud and leaf plucked one by one from off the fairest stem, and know how bare and wretched it may be. Follow her. To Desperation!"

Each of the shadowy figures stretched its right arm forth, and pointed downward.

"The Spirit of the Chimes is your companion," said the figure. "Go! It stands behind you!"

Trotty turned, and saw—the child! The child Will Fern had carried in the street; the child whom Meg had watched, but now, asleep!

"I carried her myself, to-night," said Trotty. "In these arms!"

"Show him what he calls himself," said the dark figures, one and all.

The tower opened at his feet. He looked down, and beheld his own form, lying at the bottom, on the outside: crushed and motionless.

"No more a living man!" cried Trotty. "Dead!"

"Dead!" said the figures all together.

"Gracious Heaven! And the New Year—"

"Past," said the figures.

"What!" he cried, shuddering. "I missed my way, and coming on the outside of this tower in the dark, fell down—a year ago?"

"Nine years ago!" replied the figures.

As they gave the answer, they recalled their outstretched hands; and where their figures had been, there the Bells were.

And they rung; their time being come again. And once again, vast multitudes of phantoms sprung into existence; once again, were incoherently engaged, as they had been before; once again, faded on the stopping of the Chimes; and dwindled into nothing.

"What are these?" he asked his guide. "If I am not mad, what are these?"

"Spirits of the Bells. Their sound upon the air," returned the child. "They take such shapes and occupations as the hopes and thoughts of mortals, and the recollections they have stored up, give them."

"And you," said Trotty wildly. "What are you?"

"Hush, hush!" returned the child. "Look here!"

In a poor, mean room; working at the same kind of embroidery which he had often, often, seen before her; Meg, his own dear daughter, was presented to his view. He made no effort to imprint his kisses on her face; he did not strive to clasp her to his loving heart: he knew that such endearments were for him no more. But he held his trembling breath; and brushed away the blinding tears, that he might look upon her; that he might only see her.

Ah! Changed. Changed. The light of the clear eye, how dimmed. The bloom, how faded from the cheek. Beautiful she was, as she had ever been, but Hope, Hope, Hope, oh where was the fresh Hope that had spoken to him like a voice!

She looked up from her work, at a companion. Following her eyes, the old man started back.

In the woman grown, he recognized her at a glance. In the long silken hair, he saw the self-same curls; around the lips, the child's expression lingering still. See! In the eyes, now turned inquiringly on Meg, there shone the very look that scanned those features when he brought her home!

Then what was this, beside him!

Looking with awe into its face, he saw a something reigning there: a lofty something, undefined and indistinct, which made it hardly more than a remembrance of that child—as yonder figure might be—yet it was the same: the same: and wore the dress.

Hark. They were speaking!

"Meg," said Lilian, hesitating. "How

often you raise your head from your work to look at me!"

"Are my looks so altered, that they frighten you?" asked Meg.

"Nay dear! But you smile at that, yourself! Why not smile, when you look at me, Meg?"

"I do so. Do I not?" she answered:—smiling on her.

"Now you do," said Lilian, "but not usually. When you think I'm busy, and don't see you, you look so anxious and so doubtful, that I hardly like to raise my eyes. There is little cause for smiling in this hard and toilsome life but you were once so cheerful."

"Am I not now!" cried Meg, speaking in a tone of strange alarm, and rising to embrace her: "Do *I* make our weary life more weary to you, Lilian!"

"You have been the only thing that made it life," said Lilian, fervently kissing her; "sometimes the only thing that made me care to live so, Meg. Such work, such work! So many hours, so many days, so many long, long nights of hopeless, cheerless, never-ending work—not to heap up riches, not to live grandly or gaily, not to live upon enough, however coarse; but to earn bare bread; to scrape together just enough to toil upon, and want upon, and keep alive in us the consciousness of our hard fate! Oh, Meg, Meg!' she raised her voice and twined her arms about her as she spoke, like one in pain. "How can the cruel world go round, and bear to look upon such lives!"

"Lilly!" said Meg, soothing her, and putting back her hair from her wet face. "Why Lilly! You! So pretty and so young!"

"Oh Meg!" she interrupted, holding her at arm's-length, and looking in her face imploringly. "The worst of all, the worst of all! Strike me old, Meg! Wither me and shrivel me, and free me from the dreadful thoughts that tempt me in my youth!"

Trotty turned to look upon his guide. But the Spirit of the child had taken flight. Was gone.

Nither did he himself remain in the same place; for Sir Joseph Bowley, Friend and Father of the Poor, held a great festivity at Bowley Hall, in honor of the natal day of Lady Bowley; and as Lady Bowley had been born on New Year's day (which the local newspapers considered an especial pointing of the finger of Providence to number One, as Lady Bowley's destined figure in Creation,) it was on a New Year's Day that this festivity took place.

Bowley Hall was full of visitors. The red-faced gentleman was there, Mr. Filer was there, the great Alderman Cute was there—Alderman Cute had a sympathetic feeling with great people, and had considerably improved his acquaintance with Sir Joseph Bowley on the strength of his attentive letter: indeed had become quite a friend of the family since then—and many guests were there, wandering about, poor phantom, drearily, and looking for its guide.

There was to be a great dinner in the Great Hall. At which Sir Joseph Bowley, in his celebrated character of Friend and Father of the Poor, was to make his great speech.—Certain plum puddings were to be eaten by his Friends and Children in another Hall first; and at a given signal, Friends, and Children flocking in among their Friends and Fathers, were to form a family assemblage, with not one manly eye therein unmoistened by emotion.

But there was more than this to happen.—Even more than this. Sir Joseph Bowley, Baronet and Member of Parliament, was to play a match at skittles—real skittles—with his tenants.

"Which quite reminds one," said Alderman Cute, "of the days of old King Hal, bluff King Hal. Ah. Fine character!"

"Very," said Mr. Filer, dryly. "For marrying women and murdering 'em. Considerably more than the average number of wives by the bye."

"You'll marry the beautiful ladies, and not murder 'em eh?" said Alderman Cute to the heir of Bowley, aged twelve. "Sweet boy! We shall have this little gentleman in Parliament now," said the Alderman, holding him by the shoulder, and looking as reflective as he could, "before we know where we are. We shall hear of his success at the poll; his speeches in the house; his overtures from Governments; his brilliant achievements of all kinds, ah! we shall make our little orations about him in the common council, I'll be bound; before we have time to look about us!"

"Oh, the difference of shoes and stockings!" Trotty thought. But his heart yearned toward the child, for the love of those same shoeless and stockingless boys, predestined (by the Alderman) to turn out bad, who might have been the children of poor Meg.

"Richard," moaned Trotty, roaming among the company, to and fro; "where is he? I can't find Richard! Where is Richard?"

Not likely to be there, if still alive! But Trotty's grief and solitude confused him; and he still went wandering among the gallant company; looking for his guide, and saying. "Where is Richard? Show me Richard!"

He was wandering thus, when he encountered Mr. Fish, the confidential Secretary: in great agitation.

"Bless my heart and soul!" cried Mr. Fish, "Where's Alderman Cute? Has anybody seen the Alderman?"

Seen the Alderman? Oh dear! Who could ever help seeing the Alderman? He was so considerate, so affable; he bore so much in mind the natural desire of folks to see him; that if he had a fault, it was the be-

ing constantly On View. And wherever the great people were, there, to be sure, attracted by the kindred sympathy between great souls, was Cute.

Several voices cried that he was in the circle round Sir Joseph. Mr. Fish made way there; found him; and took him secretly into a window near at hand. Trotty joined them. Not of his own accord. He felt that his steps were led in that direction.

"My dear Alderman Cute," said Mr. Fish. "A little more this way. The most dreadful circumstance has occurred. I have this moment received the intelligence. I think it will be best not to acquaint Sir Joseph with it till the day is over. You understand Sir Joseph, and will give me your opinion. The most frightful and deplorable event!"

"Fish!" returned the Alderman. "Fish! My good fellow, what is the matter? Nothing revolutionary, I hope! No—attempted interference with the magistrates?"

"Deedles, the banker," gasped the Secretary. "Deedles, Brothers—who was to have been here to-day—high in office in the Goldsmith's company—"

"Not stopped!" exclaimed the Alderman. "It can't be!"

"Shot himself."

"Good God!"

"Put a double-barrelled pistol to his mouth, in his own counting-house," said Mr. Fish, "and blew his brains out. No motive.—Princely circumstances!"

"Circumstances!" exclaimed the Alderman. "A man of noble fortune. One of the the most respectable of men. Suicide, Mr. Fish! By his own hand!"

"This very morning" returned Mr. Fish.

"Oh the brain, the brain!" exclaimed the pious Alderman, lifting up his hands. "Oh the nerves, the nerves; the mysteries of this machine called Man! Oh the little that unhinges it: poor creatures that we are! Perhaps a dinner, Mr. Fish. Perhaps the conduct of his son, who, I have heard, ran very wild, and was in the habit of drawing bills upon him without the least authority! A most respectable man. One of the most respectable men I ever knew! A lamentable instance.—Mr. Fish. A public calamity. I shall make a point of wearing the deepest mourning. A most respectable man! But there is One above. We must submit, Mr. Fish. We must submit!"

What, Alderman! No word of Putting Down? Remember, Justice, your high moral boast and pride. Come, Alderman! Balance those scales. Throw me into this, the empty one. No Dinner, and Nature's Founts in some poor woman, dried by starving misery and rendered obdurate the claims for which her offspring *has* authority in holy mother Eve. Weigh me the two: you Daniel going to judgment, when your day shall come! Weigh them, in the eyes of suffering thousands, audience (not unmindful) of the grim farce you play! Or supposing that you strayed from your wits—it's not so far to go, but that it might be—and laid hands upon that throat of yours, warning your fellows (if you have a fellow) how they croak their comfortable wickedness to raving heads and stricken hearts. What then?

The words rose up in Trotty's breast, as if they had been spoken by some other voice within him. Alderman Cute pledged himself to Mr. Fish that he would assist him in breaking the melancholy catastrophe to Sir Joseph, when the day was over. Then, before they parted, wringing Mr. Fish's hand in bitterness of soul, he said, "The most respectable of men!" And added that he hardly knew: not even he: why such afflictions were allowed on earth.

"It's almost enough to make one think, if one didn't know better," said Alderman Cute, "that at times some motion of a capsizing nature was going on in things, which affected the general economy of the social fabric. Deedles Brothers!"

The skittle-playing came off with immense success. Sir Joseph knocked the pins about quite skilfully; Master Bowley, took an innings at a shorter distance also; and every body said that now, when a Baronet and the son of a Baronet played at skittles, the country was coming round again, as fast as it could come.

At its proper time, the Banquet was served up. Trotty involuntarily repaired to the Hall with the rest, for he felt himself conducted thither by some stronger impulse than his own free will. The sight was gay in the extreme: the ladies were very handsome; the visitors delighted, cheerful, and good-tempered. When the lower doors were opened, and the people flocked in, in their rustic dresses, the beauty of the spectacle was at its height; but Trotty only murmured more and more, "Where is Richard! He should help and comfort her! I can't see Richard!"

There had been some speeches made; and Lady Bowley's health had been proposed; and Sir Joseph Bowley had returned thanks; and had made his great speech, showing by various pieces of evidence that he was the born Friend and Father, and so forth; and had given as a Toast, his Friends and Children and the Dignity of Labor; when a slight disturbance at the bottom of the hall attracted Toby's notice. After some confusion, noise, and opposition, one man broke through the rest, and stood forward by himself.

Not Richard. No. But one whom he had thought of, and had looked for, many times. In a scantier supply of light, he might have doubted the identity of that worn man, so old, and grey, and bent; but with a blaze of lamps upon his gnarled and knotted head, he knew Will Fern as soon as he stepped forth.

"What is this!" exclaimed Sir Joseph, rising. "Who gave this man admittance?

This is a criminal from prison! Mr. Fish, Sir, *will* you have the goodness—"

"A minute!" said Will Fern. "A minute! My Lady, you was born on this day along with a New Year. Get me a minute's leave to speak."

She made some intercession for him, and Sir Joseph took his seat again, with native dignity.

The ragged visitor—for he was miserably dressed—looked round upon the company, made his homage to them with a humble bow.

"Gentlefolks!" he said. "You've drunk the Laborer. Look at me!"

"Just come from jail," said Mr. Fish.

"Just come from jail," said Will. "And neither for the first time, nor the second, nor the third, nor yet the fourth."

Mr. Filer was heard to remark testily, that four times was over the average; and he ought to be ashamed of himself.

"Gentlefolks!" repeated Will Fern. "Look at me! You see I'm at the worst. Beyond all hurt or harm; beyond your help; for the time when your kind words or kind actions could have done ME good,"—he struck his hand upon his breast, and shook his head, "is gone, with the scent of last year's beans or clover on the air. Let me say a word for these," pointing to the laboring people in the hall; "and, when you're met together, hear the real Truth spoke out at once."

"There's not a man here," said the host, "who would have him for a spokesman."

"Like enough, Sir Joseph. I believe it. Not the less true, perhaps, is what I say.—Perhaps that's a proof on it. Gentlefolks, I've lived many a year in this place. You may see the cottage from the sunk fence over yonder. I've seen the ladies draw it in their books a hundred times. It looks well in a picter, I've heerd say; but there an't weather in picters, and maybe 'tis fitter for that, than for a place to live in. Well! I lived there. How hard—how bitter hard, I lived there, I won't say. Any day in the year, and every day, you can judge for your own selves."

He spoke as he had spoken on the night when Trotty found him in the street. His voice was deeper and more husky, and had a trembling in it now and then; but he never raised it, passionately, and seldom lifted it above the firm stern level of the homely facts he stated.

"'Tis harder than you think for, gentlefolks, to grow up decent: commonly decent: in such a place. That I growed up a man and not a brute, says something for me—as I was then. As I am now, there's nothing can be said for me or done for me. I'm past it.

"I am glad this man has entered," observed Sir Joseph, looking round serenely.—"Don't disturb him. It appears to be Ordained. He is an Example, a living example. I hope and trust, and confidently expect, that it will not be lost upon my Friends here."

"I dragged on," said Fern, after a moment's silence. "Somehow. Neither me nor any other man knows how; but so heavy, that I couldn't put a cheerful face upon it, or make believe that I was anything but what I was. Now, gentlemen—you gentlemen that sits at Sessions—when you see a man with disconcert writ on his face, you says to one another, "he's suspicious. I has my doubts," says you, 'about Will Fern. Watch that fellow!' I don't say gentlemen, it ain't quite nat'ral, but I say 'tis so; and from that hour, whatever Will Fern does, or lets alone—all one—it goes against him."

Alderman Cute stuck his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, and leaning back in his chair and smiling, winked at a neighboring chandelier. As much as to say, "Of course! I told you so. The common cry! Lord bless you, we are up to all this sort of thing—myself and human nature."

"Now, gentlemen," said Will Fern, holding out his hands, and flushing for an instant in his haggard face. "See how your laws are made to trap and hunt us when we're brought to this. I tries to live elsewhere. And I'm a vagabond. To jail with him. I comes back here. I goes a nutting in your woods and breaks—who don't?—a limber branch or two. To jail with him! One of your keepers sees me in the broad day, near my own patch of garden, with a gun. To jail with him? I has a nat'ral angry word with that man, when I'm free again. To jail with him? I cuts a stick. To jail with him! I eats a rotten apple or turnip. To jail with him! It's twenty miles away; and coming back, I begs a trifle on the road. To jail with him! At last, the constable, the keeper—any body—finds me any where, a doing any thing. To jail with him, for he's a vagrant, and a jailbird known; and jail's the only home he's got.'

The Alderman nodded sagaciously, as who should say, "a very good home too!"

"Do I say this to serve MY cause!" cried Fern. "Who can give me back my liberty, who can give me back my good name, who can give me back my innocent nicce? Not all the Lords and Ladies in wide England. But gentlemen, gentlemen, dealing with others like me, begin at the right end. Give us, in mercy, better homes when we are lying in our cradles; give us better food when we're a working for our lives; give us kinder laws to bring us back when we're a going wrong, and don't set Jail, Jail, Jail, afore us, everywhere we turn. There ain't a condescension you can show the Laborer then, that he won't take, as ready and as grateful as a man can be; for he has a patient, peaceful, willing heart. But you must put his rightful spirit in him first; for whether he's a wreck and ruin such as me, or like one of them that stand here now, his spirit is divided from you at this time.—

Bring it back, gentlefolks, bring it back !— Bring it back, afore the day comes when even his Bible changes in his altered mind, and the words seem to him to read, as they have sometimes read in my own eyes—in Jail : " Whither thou goest, I can Not go ; where thou lodgest, I do Not lodge ; thy people are Not my people ; Nor thy God my God.' "

A sudden stir and agitation took place in the Hall. Trotty thought at first, that several had risen to eject the man ; and hence this change in its appearance. But another moment showed him that the room and all the company had vanished from his sight, and that his daughter was again before him, seated at her work. But in a poorer and meaner garret than before : and with no Lilian by her side.

The frame at which she had worked, was put away upon a shelf and covered up. The chair in which she had sat, was turned against the wall. A history was written in these little things, and in Meg's grief-worn face. Oh ! who could fail to read it !

Meg strained her eyes upon her work until it was too dark to see the threads ; and when the night closed in, she lighted her feeble candle and worked on. Still her old father was invisible about her ; looking down upon her ; loving her—how dearly loving her !— and talking to her in a tender voice about the old times, and the Bells. Though he knew, poor Trotty, though he knew she could not hear him.

A great part of the evening had worn away, when a knock came at her door. She opened it. A man was on the threshold. A slouching, moody, drunken sloven : wasted by intemperance and vice : and with his matted hair and unshorn beard in wild disorder : but with some traces on him, too, of having been a man of good proportion and good features in his youth.

He stopped until he had her leave to enter : and she, retiring a pace or two from the open door, silently and sorrowfully looked upon him. Trotty had his wish. He saw Richard.

" May I come in Margaret ?"

" Yes ! Come in. Come in !"

It was well that Trotty knew him before he spoke ; for with any doubt remaining on his mind, the harsh discordant voice would have persuaded him that it was not Richard but some other man.

There were but two chairs in the room. She gave him hers, and stood at some short distance from him, waiting to hear what he had to say.

He sat, however, staring vacantly at the floor : with a lustreless and stupid smile. A spectacle of such deep degradation, of such abject hopelessness, of such a miserable downfall, that she put her hands before her face and turned away, lest he should see how much it moved her.

Roused by the rustling of her dress, or some such trifling sound, he lifted his head, and began to speak as if there had been no pause since he entered.

" Still at work, Margaret ? You work late."

" I generally do."

" And early ?"

" And early."

" So she said. She said you never tired : or never owned that you tired. Not all the time you lived together. Not even when you fainted, between work and fasting. But I told you that the last time I came."

" You did," she answered. " And I implored you to tell me nothing more ; and you made me a solemn promise, Richard, that you never would."

" A solemn promise," he repeated with a drivelling laugh and vacant stare. " A solemn promise. To be sure !" A solemn promise !" Awakening, as it were, after a time ; in the same manner as before : he said with sudden animation.

" How can I help it, Margaret ? What am I to do ? She has been to me again !"

" Again !" cried Meg, clasping her hands. " Oh, does she think of me so often ! Has she been again !"

" Twenty times again," said Richard.— " Margaret, she haunts me. She comes behind me in the street, and thrusts it in my hand. I hear her foot upon the ashes when I'm at my work (ha, ha ! that an't often,) and before I can turn my head, her voice is in my ear, saying, ' Richard, don't look round.— For heaven's love, give her this !' She brings it where I live ; she sends it in letters ; she taps at the window and lays it on the sill.— What *can* I do ? Look at it !"

He held out in his hand a little purse, and chinked the money it enclosed.

" Hide it," said Meg. " Hide it ! When she comes again, tell her, Richard, that I love her in my soul. That I never lie down to sleep, but I bless her, and pray for her. That in my solitary work, I never cease to have her in my thoughts. That she is with me, night and day. That if I died to-morrow, I would remember her with my last breath. But that I cannot look upon it !"

He slowly recalled his hand, and crushing the purse together, said with a kind of drowsy thoughtfulness.

" I told her so. I told her so, as plain as words could speak. I've taken this gift back and left it at her door, a dozen times since then. But when she came at last, and stood before me, face to face, what could I do ?"

" You saw her !" exclaimed Meg. " You saw her ! Oh, Lilian, my sweet girl ! Oh, Lilian, Lilian !"

" I saw her," he went on to say, not answering, but engaged in the same slow pursuit of his own thoughts. " There she stood : trembling : ' How does she loook, Richard ? Does she ever speak of me ? Is she thinner ? My old place at the table : what's in my old place ? And the frame she taught me our old

work on—has she burnt it, Richard !' There she was. I heard her say it."

Meg cheeked her sobs, and with the tears streaming from her eyes, bent over him to listen. Not to lose a breath.

With his arms resting on his knees; and stooping forward in his chair, as if what he said were written on the ground in some half legible characters, which it was his occupation to decipher and connect; he went on.

" Richard, I have fallen very low: and you may guess how much I have suffered in having this sent back, when I can bear to bring it in my hand to you. But you loved her once, even in my memory, dearly. Others stepped in between you; fears and jealousies, and doubts and vanities, estranged you from her; but you did love her, even in my memory !' I suppose I did," he said, interrupting himself for a moment. " I did ! That's neither here nor there. Oh Richard, if you ever did; if you have any memory for what is gone and lost, take it to her once more. Once more ! Tell her how I begged and prayed. Tell her how I laid my head upon your shoulder, where her own head might have lain, and was so humble to you, Richard. Tell her that you looked into my face, and saw the beauty which she used to praise, all gone: all gone; and in its place, a poor, wan, hollow cheek, that she would weep to see. Tell her every thing, and take it back, and she will not refuse again. She will not refuse again. She will not have the heart !"

So he sat musing, and repeating the last words, until he woke again, and rose.

" You won't take it, Margaret ?"

She shook her head, and motioned an entreaty to him to leave her.

" Good night, Margaret."

" Good night."

He turned to look upon her; struck by her sorrow, and perhaps by the pity for himself which trembled in her voice. It was a quick and rapid action; and for the moment some flash of his old bearing kindled in his form.—In the next he went as he had come. Nor did this glimmer of a quenched fire seem to light him to a quicker sense of his debasement.

In any mood, in any grief, in any torture of the mind or body, Meg's work must be done. She sat down to her task, and plied it. Night, midnight. Still she worked.

She had a meagre fire, the night being very cold; and rose at intervals to mend it. The Chimes rang half-past twelve while she was thus engaged; and when they ceased she heard a gentle knocking at the door. Before she could so much as wonder who was there, at that unusual hour, it opened.

Oh Youth and Beauty, happy as ye should be, look at this ! Oh Youth and Beauty, blest and blessing all within your reach, and working out the ends of your Benefiecnt Creator, look at this.

She saw the entering figure; screamed its name; cried " Lilian !"

It was swift, and fell upon its knees before her; clinging to her dress.

" Up, dear ! Up ! Lilian ! My own dearest !"

" Never more, Meg; never more ! Here ! Here ! Close to you, holding to you, feeling your dear breath upon my face !"

" Sweet Lilian ! Darling Lilian ! Child of my heart—no mother's love can be more tender—lay your head upon my breast !"

" Never more, Meg. Never more ! When I first looked into your face, you knelt before me. On my knees before you, let me die.—Let it be here !"

" You have come back. My Treasure !—We will live together, work together, hope together, die together !"

" Ah ! Kiss my lips, Meg; fold your arms about me; press me to your bosom; look kindly on me; but don't raise me. Let it be here. Let me see the last of your dear face upon my knees !"

Oh Youth and Beauty, happy as ye should be, look at this ! Oh Youth and Beauty, working out the ends of your Benefiecnt Creator, look at this !

" Forgive me, Meg ! So dear, so dear !—Forgive me ! I know you do, I see you do, but say so Meg !"

She said so, with her lips on Lilian's cheek. And with her arms twined round—she knew it now—a broken heart.

" His blessing on you, dearest love. Kiss me once more ! He suffered her to sit beside His feet, and dry them with her hair. Oh Meg, what Mercy and Compassion !"

As she died, the Spirit of the child returning, innocent and radiant, touched the old man with its hand, and beckoned him away.

THE FOURTH QUARTER.

Some new remembrance of the ghostly figures in the Bells; some faint impression of the ringing of the Chimes; some giddy consciousness of having seen the swarm of phantoms reproduced and reprodueed until the recollections of them lost itself in the confusion of their numbers; some hurried knowledge, how conveyed to him he knew not, that more years had passed; and Trotty, with the Spirit of the child attending him, stood looking on at mortal company.

Fat company, rosy-cheeked company, comfortable company. They were but two, but they were red enough for ten. They sat before a bright fire, with a small low table between them; and unless the fragrance of

hot tea and muffins lingered longer in that room than in most others, the table had seen service very lately. But all the cups and saucers being clean, and in their proper places in the corner cupboard : and the brass toasting fork hanging in its usual nook, and spreading its four idle fingers out, as if it wanted to be measured for a glove ; there remained no other visible tokens of the meal just finished, than such as purred and washed their whiskers in the person of the basking cat, and glistened in the gracious, not to say the greasy, faces of her patrons.

This cosy couple (married, evidently) had made a fair division of the fire between them, and sat looking at the glowing sparks that dropped into the grate ; now nodding off into a doze ; now waking up again when some hot fragment, larger than the rest, came rattling down, as if the fire were coming with it.

It was in no danger of sudden extinction, however ; for it gleamed not only in the little room, and on the panes of window glass in the door, and on the curtain half drawn across them, but in the little shop beyond. A little shop quite crammed and choked with the abundance of its stock ; a perfectly voracious little shop, with a maw as accommodating and full as any shark's. Cheese, butter, firewood, soap, pickles, matches, bacon, table-beer, cold ham, birch brooms, hearthstones, salt, vinegar, blacking, red-herrings, stationery, lard, mushroom-ketchup, staylaces, loaves of bread, shuttlecocks, eggs, and slate-pencil : every thing was fish that came to the net of this greedy little shop, and all these articles were in its net. How many other kinds of petty merchandize were there, it would be difficult to say ; but balls of packthread, ropes of onions, pounds of candles, cabbage-nets, and brushes, hung in bunches from the ceiling, like extraordinary fruit ; while various odd canisters emitting aromatic smell, established the veracity of the inscription over the outer door, which informed the public that the keeper of this little shop was a licensed dealer in tea, coffee, tobacco, pepper, and snuff.

Glancing at such of these items as were visible in the shining of the blaze, and the less cheerful radiance of two smoky lamps which burnt but dimly in the shop itself, as though its plethora sat heavy on their lungs ; and glancing, then, at one of the two faces by the parlor fire ; Trotty had small difficulty in recognising in the stout old lady, Mrs. Chickenstacker ; always inclined to corpulency, even in the days when he had known her as established in the general line, and having a small balance against him in her books.

The features of her companion were less easy to him. The great broad chin, with creases in it large enough to hide a finger in : the astonished eyes, that seemed to expostulate with themselves for sinking deeper and deeper into the yielding fat of the soft face ;— the nose afflicted with that disordered action of its functions which is generally termed the Snuffles ; the short thick throat and laboring chest, with other beauties of the like description ; though calculated to impress the memory, Trotty could at first allot to nobody he had ever known : and yet he had some recollection of them too. At length, in Mrs. Chickenstalker's partner in the general line, and in the crooked and eccentric line of life, he recognised the former porter of Sir Joseph Bowley ; an apopletic innocent, who had connected himself in Trotty's mind with Mrs. Chickenstalker years ago, by giving him admission to the mansion where he had confessed his obligations to that lady, and drawn on his unlucky head such grave reproach.

Trotty had little interest in a change like this, after the changes he had seen ; but association is very strong sometimes ; and he looked involuntarily behind the parlor door, where the accounts of credit customers were usually kept in the chalk. There was no record of his name. Some names were there, but they were strange to him, and infinitely fewer than of old ; from which he augured that the porter was an advocate of ready money transactions, and on coming into the business had looked pretty sharp after the Chickenstalker defaulters.

So desolate was Trotty, and so mournful for the youth and promise of his blighted child, that it was a sorrow to him, even to have no place in Mrs. Chickenstalker's ledger.

" What sort of a night is it, Anne ?" inquired the former porter of Sir Joseph Bowley, stretching out his legs before the fire, and rubbing as much of them as his short arms could reach : with an air that added, " Here I am if it's bad, and I don't want to go out if it's good."

" Blowing and sleeting hard," returned his wife ; " and threatening snow. Dark. And very cold."

" I'm glad to think we had muffins," said the former porter, in the tone of one who had set his conscience at rest. " It's a sort of night that's meant for muffins. Likewise crumpets. Also Sally Lunns."

The former porter mentioned each successive kind of eatables, as if he were musingly summing up his good actions. After which, he rubbed his fat legs as before, and jerking them at the knees to get the fire upon the yet unroasted parts, laughed as if somebody had tickled him.

" You're in spirits, Tugby, my dear," observed his wife.

The firm was Tugby, late Chickenstalker.

" No," said Tugby. " No. Not particular. I'm a little elewated. The muffins came so pat !"

With that, he chuckled until he was black in the face : and had so much ado to become any other color, that his fat legs took the strangest excursions into the air. Nor were they reduced to any thing like decorum until Mrs. Tugby had thumped him violently on

the back, and shaken him as if he were a great bottle.

"Good gracious, goodness, bless and save the man!" cried in great terror. "What's he d lord-a-mercy Mr. Tugby wiped his eyes Mrs. Tugby, peated that he found himsel oing!" and faintly re-

"Then don't be so agai f a little elewated. soul," said Mrs. Tugby. h, that's a dear good to frighten me to death "if you don't want and fighting."

Mr. Tugby said with your struggling existence was a ue wouldn't, but his whole ment might b ught; in which, if any judg- increasing sh e founded on the cons tly- deepening pu ortness of his breath, an the getting the w ple of his face, he was always

"So it's b orst of it.

ening snow owing, and sleeting, and threat- it, my dear ; and is dark, and very cold: is fire, and ?" said Mr. Tugby, looking at the of his te everting to the cream and marrow

"Ha nporary elevation.

shaki rd weather indeed," returned his wife, g her head.

"Aye, aye! Years," said Mr. Tugby, "are like Christians in that respect. Some of 'em di e hard; some of 'em die easy. This one hasn't many days to run, and is making a fight for it. I like him all the better. There's a customer, my love!"

Attentive to the rattling door, Mrs. Tugby had already risen.

"Now then!" said that lady, passing out into the little shop. "What's wanted? Oh! I beg your pardon, Sir, I'm sure. I didn't think it was you."

She made this apology to a gentleman in black, who, with his wristbands tucked up, and his hat cocked loungingly on one side, and his hands in his pockets, sat down astride on the table-beer barrel, and nodded in return.

"This is a bad business up stairs, Mrs. Tugby," said the gentleman. "The man can't live."

"Not the back-attic can't!" cried Tugby, coming out into the shop to join the conference.

"The back-attic, Mr. Tugby," said the gentleman, "is coming down stairs fast; and will be below the basement very soon."

Looking by turns at Tugby and his wife, he sounded the barrel with his knuckles for the depth of beer, and having found it, played a tune upon the empty part.

"The back-attic, Mr. Tugby," said the gentleman: Tugby having stood in silent consternation for some time: "is Going."

"Then," said Tugby, turning to his wife, "he must Go, you know, before he's Gone."

"I don't think you can move him," said the gentleman, shaking his head. "I wouldn't take the responsibility of saying it could be done myself. You had better leave him where he is. He can't live long."

"It's the only subject," said Tugby, bringing the butter-scale down upon the counter with a crash, by weighing his fist on it, "that we've ever had a word upon; she and me; and look what it comes to! He's going to die here, after all. Going to die in our house!"

"And where should he have died, Tugby!" cried his wife.

"In the workhouse," he returned. "What are workhouses made for?"

"Not for that," said Mrs. Tugby, with great energy. "Not for that. Neither did I marry you for that. Don't think it, Tugby. I won't have it. I won't have it. I won't allow it. I'd be separated first, and never see your face again. When my widow's name stood over that door, as it did for many, many years: this house being known as Mrs. Chickenstalker's far and wide, and never known but to it's honest credit and its good report: when my widow's name stood over that door, Tugby, I knew him as a handsome, steady, manly, independent youth; I knew her as the sweetest-looking, sweetest-tempered girl, eyes ever saw; I knew her father (poor old creetur, he fell down from the steeple walking in his sleep, and killed himself,) for the simplest, hardest-working, childest-hearted man, that ever drew the breath of life; and when I turn them out of house and home, may angels turn me out of Heaven.—As they would! And serve me right!"

Her old face, which had been a plump and dimpled one before the changes which had come to pass, seemed to shine out of her as she said these words; and when she dried her eyes, and shook her head and her handkerchief at Tugby, with an expression of firmness which it was quite clear was not to be easily resisted, Trotty said, "Bless her! Bless her!"

Then he listened, with a panting heart, for what should follow. Knowing nothing yet, but that they spoke of Meg.

If Tugby had been a little elevated in the parlor, he more than balanced that account by being not a little depressed in the shop, where he now stood staring at his wife, without attempting a reply; secretly conveying, however—either in a fit of abstraction or as a precautionary measure—all the money from the till into his own pockets as he looked at her.

The gentleman upon the table-beer cask, who appeared to be some authorized medical attendant upon the poor, was far too well accustomed, evidently, to little differences of opinion between man and wife, to interpose any remark in this instance. He sat softly whistling, and turning little drops of beer out of the tap on the ground, until there was a perfect calm: when he raised his head, and said to Mrs. Tugby, late Chickenstalker,

"There's something interesting about the woman, even now. How did she come to marry him?"

"Why that," said Mrs. Tugby, taking a seat near to him, "is not the least cruel part of her story, Sir. You see they kept company, she and Richard, many years ago. When they were a young and beautiful couple, eve-

rything was settled, and they were to have been married on a New Year's Day. But, somehow, Richard got it into his head, through what the gentlemen told him, that he might do better, and that he'd soon repent it, and that she wasn't good enough for him, and that a young man of spirit had no business to be married. And the gentlemen frightened her, and made her melancholy, and timid of his deserting her, and of her children coming to the gallows, and of its being wicked to be man and wife, and a good deal more of it.—And in short, they lingered and lingered, and their trust in one another was broken, and so at last was the match. But the fault was his. She would have married him, Sir, joyfully.—I've seen her heart swell, many times afterwards, when he passed her in a proud and careless way; and never did a woman grieve more truly for a man, than she for Richard when he first went wrong.'

"Oh! he went wrong, did he?" said the gentleman, pulling out the vent-peg of the table-beer, and trying to peep down into the barrel through the hole.

"Well, Sir, I don't know that he rightly understands himself, you see. I think his mind was troubled by their having broke with one another; and that but for being ashamed before the gentlemen, and perhaps for being uncertain, too, how she might take it, he'd have gone through any suffering or trial to have had Meg's promise and Meg's hand again. That's my belief. He never said so; more's the pity! He took to drinking, idling, bad companions: all the fine resources that were to be so much better for him than the home he might have had. He lost his looks, his character, his health, his strength, his friends, his work: everything!"

"He didn't lose everything, Mrs. Tugby," returned the gentleman, "because he gained a wife; and I want to know how he gained her."

"I'm coming to it, Sir, in a moment. This went on for years and years; he sinking lower and lower; she enduring, poor thing, miseries enough to wear her life away. At last, he was so cast down, and east out, that no one would employ or notice him; and doors were shut against him, go where he would.—Applying from place to place, and door to door; and coming for the hundredth time to one gentleman, who had often and often tried him, (he was a good workman to the very end); that gentleman, who knew his history, said, 'I believe you are incorrigible; there is only one person in the world who has a chance of reclaiming you; ask me to trust you no more, until she tries to do it.' Something like that, in his anger and vexation."

"Ah!" said the gentleman. "Well?"

"Well sir, he went to her, and kneeled to her; said it was so; said it ever had been; and made a prayer to her to save him."

"And s[illegible]he—Don't distress yourself, Mrs. Tugby."

"She can[illegible]ere. 'What he was once to me,' about living l[illegible]ried in a grave; side by side she said, 'is b[illegible] to him. But I have thought with what I was [illegible]l make the trial. In the of this; and I wi[illegible] for the love of the lighthope of saving him, [illegible]ember her) who was to hearted girl (you rem[illegible] New Year's Day; and have been married on a[illegible]ard.' And she said for the love of her Rich[illegible] Lilian, and Lilian he had come to her from [illegible]ver could forget had trusted to him, and she ne[illegible]nd when they tha[illegible] So they were married: [illegible]hem. I hoped can[illegible]home here, and I saw t[illegible] them when that such prophecies as partet[illegible] fulfil themthey were young, may not often[illegible] I wouldn't selves as they did in this case, or[illegible] of Gold."

be the makers of them for a Mine[illegible]

The gentleman got off the [illegible]ask, and stretched himself: observing,

"I suppose he used her ill, as soon[illegible] as they were married?"

"I don't think he ever did that," said[illegible] Mrs. Tugby, shaking her head, and wiping[illegible] her eyes. "He went on better for a short time[illegible]e; but his old habits were too old and strong to[illegible]e got rid of; he soon fell back a little; and was falling fast back, when his illness came so strong upon him. I think he has always felt for her. I am sure he has. I've seen him, in his crying fits and tremblings, try to kiss her hand; and I have heard him call her 'Meg,' and say it was her nineteenth birthday.—There he has been lying now, these weeks and months. Between him and her baby, she has not been able to do her work; and by not being able to be regular, she has lost it, even if she could have done it. How they have lived, I hardly know!"

"*I* know," muttered Mr. Tugby; looking at the till, and round the shop, and at his wife; and rolling his head with immense intelligence, "Like Fighting Cocks!"

He was interrupted by a cry—a sound of lamentation—from the upper story of the house. The gentleman moved hurriedly to the door.

"My friend," he said, looking back, "you needn't discuss whether he shall be removed or not. He has spared you that trouble, I believe."

"Saying so, he ran up stairs, followed by Mrs. Tugby; while Mr. Tugby panted and grumbled after them at leisure; being rendered more than commonly short-winded by the weight of the till, in which there had been an inconvenient quantity of copper. Trotty, with the child beside him, floated up the staircase like mere air.

"Follow her! Follow her! Follow her!" He heard the ghostly voices in the Bells repeat their words as he ascended. "Learn it from the creature dearest to your heart!"

It was over. It was over. And this was she, her father's pride and joy. This haggard, wretched woman, weeping by the bed, if it

deserved that name, and pressing to her breast, and hanging down her head upon, an infant. Who can tell how spare, how sickly, and how poor an infant? Who can tell how dear!

"Thank God!" cried Trotty, holding up his folded hands. "Oh, God be thanked! She loves her child."

The gentleman, not otherwise hard-hearted, or indifferent to such scenes, than that he saw them every day, and knew that they were figures of no moment in the Filer sums—mere scratches in the working of those calculations—laid his hand upon the heart that beat no more, and listened for the breath, and said, "His pain is over. It's better as it is." Mrs. Tugby tried to comfort her with kindness. Mr. Tugby tried philosophy.

"Come, come!" he said, with his hands in his pockets, "you must'nt give way, you know. That won't do. You must fight up. What would have become of me, if *I* had given way when I was porter; and we had as many as six runaway carriage-doubles at our door in one night! But I fell back upon my strength of mind, and didn't open it!"

Again Trotty heard the voices, saying, "Follow her!" He turned toward his guide, and saw it rising from him, passing through the air. "Follow her!" it said. And vanished.

He hovered round her; sat down at her feet; looked up into her face for one trance of her old self; listened for one note of her old pleasant voice. He flitted round the child: so wan, so prematurely old, so dreadful in its gravity, so plaintive in its feeble, mournful, miserable wail. He almost worshipped it.—He clung to it as her only safeguard; as the last unbroken link that bound her to endurance. He set his father's hope and trust on the frail baby; watched her every look upon it as she held it in her arms; and cried a thousand times: "She loves it! God be thanked, she loves it!"

He saw the woman tend her in the night; return to her when her grudging husband was asleep, and all was still; encourage her, shed tears with her, set nourishment before her.—He saw the day come, and the night again; the day, the night; the time go by; the house of death relieved of death: the room left to herself and to the child; he heard it moan and cry; he saw it harrass her, and tire her out, and when she slumbered in exhaustion, drag her back to consciousness, and hold her with its little hands upon the rack; but she was constant to it, gentle with it, patient with it. Patient! Was its loving mother in her inmost heart and soul, and had its Being knitted up with hers as when she carried it unborn.

All this time she was in want; languishing away, in dire and pining want. With the baby in her arms, she wandered here and there, in quest of occupation; and with its thin face lying in her lap, and looking up in hers, did any work for any wretched sum: a day and night of labor for as many farthings as there were figures on the dial. If she had quarrelled with it: if she had neglected her; if she had looked upon it with a moments's hate; if, in the frenzy of an instant, she had struck it! No. His comfort was, She loved it always.

She told no one of her extremity, and wandered abroad in the day lest she should be questioned by her only friend: for any help she received from her hands, occasioned fresh disputes between the good woman and her husband; it was new bitterness to be the daily cause of strife and discord, where she owed so much.

She loved it still. She loved it more and more. But a change fell on the aspect of her love. One night.

She was singing faintly to it in its sleep, and walking to and fro to hush it, when her door was softly opened, and a man looked in.

"For the last time," he said.

"William Fern!"

"For the last time."

He listened like a man pursued: and spoke in whispers.

"Margaret, my race is nearly run. I couldn't finish it, without a parting word with you. Without one grateful word."

"What have you done?" she asked: regarding him with terror.

He looked at her, but gave no answer.

After a short silence, he made a gesture with his hand, as if he set her question by; as if he brushed it aside; and said,

"It's long ago, Margaret, now: but that night is as fresh in my memory as ever 'twas. We little thought, then," he added, looking round, "that we should ever meet like this.—Your child, Margaret? Let me have it in my arms. Let me hold your child."

He put his hat upon the floor, and took it, and he trembled as he took it, from head to foot.

"Is it a girl?"

"Yes."

He put his hand before its little face.

"See how weak I'm grown, Margaret, when I want the courage to look at it! Let it be a moment. I won't hurt her. It's long ago, but—What's her name?

"Margaret," she answered, quickly.

"I'm glad of that," he said. "I'm glad of that."

He seemed to breath more freely; and after pausing for an instant, took away his hand, and looked upon the infant's face. But covered it again immediately.

"Margaret!" he said; and gave her back the child. "It's Lilian's!"

"Lilian's!"

"I held the same face in my arms when Lilian's mother died and left her."

"When Lilian's mother died and left her!" she repeated, wildly.

"How shrill you speak! Why do you fix your gaze upon me so? Margaret!"

She sunk down in a chair, and pressed the infant to her breast, and wept over it. Sometimes she released it from her embrace, to look

anxiously in its face: then strained her to his bosom again. At those times: when she gazed upon it: then it was that something fierce and terrible began to mingle with her love. Then it was that her old father quailed.

"Follow her!" was sounded through the house. "Learn it, from the creature dearest to your heart!"

"Margaret," said Fern, bending over her, and kissing her upon the brow: "I thank you for the last time. Good night. Good bye.—Put your hand in mine, and tell me you'll forget me from this hour, and try to think the end of me was here."

"What have you done?" she asked again.

"There'll be a Fire to-night," he said, removing from her. "There'll be Fires this winter-time, to light the dark nights East, West, North and South. When you see the distant sky red, they'll be blazing. When you see the distant sky red, think of me no more; or if you do, think what a Hell was lighted up inside of me, and think you see its Flames reflected in the clouds. Good night. Good bye."

She called to him; but he was gone. She sat down stupefied, until her infant roused her to a sense of hunger, cold, and darkness. She paced the floor with it the livelong night, hushing it and soothing it. She said at intervals, "like Lilian, when her mother died and left her." Why was her steps so quick, her eye so wild, her love so fierce and terrible, whenever she repeated those words?

"But it is Love," said Trotty. "It is Love. She'll never cease to love it. My poor Meg."

She dressed the child next morning with unusual care—ah vain expenditure of care upon such squalid robes; and once more tried to find some means of life. It was the last day of the Old Year. She tried till night, and never broke her fast. She tried in vain.

She mingled with an abject crowd, who tarried in the snow, until it pleased some officer appointed to dispense the public charity, (the lawful charity; not that, once preached upon a Mount), to call them in, and say to this one, "go to such a place," to that one. "come next week;" to make a foot-ball of another wretch, and pass him here and there, from hand to hand, from house to house, until he wearied and laid down to die; or started up and robbed, and so became a higher sort of criminal, whose claims allowed of no delay.—She loved her child, and wished to have it lying on her breast. And that was quite enough.

It was night: a bleak, dark, cutting night: when, pressing the child close to her for warmth, she arrived outside the house she called her home. She was so faint and giddy, that she saw no one standing in the door-way until she was close upon it, and about to enter. Then she recognized the master of the house, who had so disposed himself—with his person it was not difficult—as to fill up the whole entry.

"Oh," he said, softly. "You have come back?"

She looked at the child and shook her head.

"Don't think you have lived here long enough without paying any rent? Don't you think that, without any money, you've been a pretty constant customer at this shop, now?" said Mr. Tugby.

She repeated the same mute appeal.

"Suppose you try and deal somewhere else," he said. And suppose you provide yourself with another lodging. Come—Don't you think you could manage it?"

She said, in a low voice, that it was very late. To-morrow.

"Now I see what you want," said Tugby; "and what you mean. You know there are two parties in this house about you, and you delight in setting 'em by the ears. I don't want any quarrels; I'm speaking softly to avoid a quarrel; but if you don't go away, I'll speak out loud, and you shall cause words high enough to please you. But you shan't come in. That I am determined."

She put her hair back with her hand, and looked in a sudden manner at the sky, and the dark lowering distance.

"This is the last night of an Old Year; and I won't carry ill-blood and quarrellings and disturbances into a New One, to please you nor anybody else," said Tugby, who was quite a retail Friend and Father. "I wonder you an't ashamed of yourself to carry such practices into a New Year. If you haven't any business in the world, but to be always giving way, and always making disturbances between man and wife, you'd be better out of it. Go along with you."

"Follow her! To desperation!"

Again the old man heard the voices. Looking up, he saw the figures hovering in the air, and pointing where she went, down the dark street.

"She loves it!" he exclaimed, in agonised entreaty for her. "Chimes! She loves it still!"

"Follow her!" The shadows swept upon the track she had taken, like a cloud.

He joined in the pursuit; he kept close to her; he looked into her face. He saw the same fierce and terrible expression mingling with her love, and kindling in her eyes. He heard her say "Like Lilian! To be changed like Lilian!" and her speed redoubled.

Oh, for something to awaken her. For any sight, or sound, or scent, to call up tender recollections in a brain on fire! For any gentle image of the Past, to rise before her!

"I was her father! I was her father!" cried the old man, stretching out his hands to the dark shadows flying on above. "Have mercy on her, and on me! Where does she go? Turn her back! I was her father!"

But they only pointed to her, as she hurried on; and said, "To desperation! Learn it from the creature dearest to your heart."

A hundred voices echoed it. The air was

made of breath expended in those words. He seemed to take them in, at every gasp he drew. They were everywhere, and not to be escaped. And still she hurried on; the same light in her eyes, the same words in her mouth; "Like Lilian! To be changed like Lilian!"

All at once she stopped.

"Now, turn her back!" exclaimed the old man, tearing his white hair. "My child!—Meg! Turn her back—Great Father, turn her back!"

In her own scanty shawl, she wrapped the baby warm. With her fevered hands she smoothed its limbs, composed its face, arranged its mean attire. In her wasted arms she folded it, as though she never would resign it more. And with her dry lips, kissed it in a final pang, and last long agony of Love.

Putting its tiny hand up to her neck, and holding it there, within her dress; next to her distracted heart: she set its sleeping face against her: closely, steadily, against her, and sped onward to the river.

To the rolling River, swift and dim, where Winter Night sat brooding like the last dark thoughts of many who had sought a refuge there before her. Where scattered lights upon the banks gleamed sullen, red, and dull, as torches that were burning there, to show the way to Death. Where no abode of living people cast its shadow, on the deep, impenetrable, melancholy shade.

To the River! To that portal of Eternity, her desperate footsteps tended with the swiftness of its rapid waters running to the sea. He tried to touch her as she passed him, going down to its dark level; but the wild distempered form, the fierce and terrible love, the desperation that had left all human check or hold behind, swept by him like the wind.

He followed her. She paused a moment on the brink, before the dreadful plunge. He fell down on his knees, and in a shriek addressed the figures in the Bells now hovering above them.

"I have learnt it," cried the old man.—"From the creature dearest to my heart. Oh, save her, save her!"

He could wind his fingers in her dress; could hold it! As the words escaped his lips he felt his sense of touch return, and knew that he detained her.

The figures looked down steadfastly upon him.

"I have learnt it," cried the old man. "Oh, have mercy on me in this hour, if, in my love for her, so young and good, I slandered Nature in the breasts of mothers rendered desperate! Pity my presumption, wickedness, and ignorance, and save her."

He felt his hold relaxing. They were silent still.

"Have mercy on her!" he exclaimed, "as one in whom this dreadful crime has sprung from Love perverted; from the strongest, deepest Love we fallen creatures know!—Think what her misery must have been, when such seed bears such fruit! Heaven meant her to be good. There is no loving mother on the earth who might not come to this, if such a life had gone before. Oh, have mercy on my child, who, even at this pass, means mercy to her own, and dies herself, and perils her Immortal Soul, to save it!"

She was in his arms: He held her now.—His strength was like a giant's.

"I see the spirit of the Chimes among you!" cried the old man, singling out the child, and speaking in some inspiration, which their looks conveyed to him. "I know that our inheritance is held in store for us by Time. I know there is a Sea of Time to rise one day, before which all who wrong us or oppress us will be swept away like leaves. I see it, on the flow! I know that we must trust and hope, and neither doubt ourselves, nor doubt the Good in one another. I have learnt it from the creature dearest to my heart. I clasp her in my arms again. Oh Spirits, merciful and good, I am grateful!"

He might have said more. but the Bells; the old familiar Bells; his own dear, constant, steady friends, the Chimes; began to ring the joy-peals for a New Year, so lustly, so merily, so happily, so gaily. that he leapt upon his feet. and broke the spell that bound him.

"And whatever you do, father," said Meg, "don't eat tripe again, without asking some doctor whether it's likely to agree with you; for how you *have* been going on, Good gracious!"

She was working with her needle, at the little table by the fire; dressing her simple gown with ribbons for her wedding. So quietly happy, so blooming and youthful, so full of beautiful promise, that he uttered a great cry as if it were an Angel in his house; then flew to clasp her in his arms.

But he caught his feet in the newspaper, which had fallen on the hearth; and somebody came rushing in between them.

"No!" cried the voice of this same somebody; a generous and jolly voice it was!—"Not even you. Not even you. The first kiss of Meg in the New Year is mine! I have been waiting outside the house, this hour, to hear the Bells and claim it. Meg, my precious prize, a happy year! A life of happy years, my darling wife!"

And Richard smothered her with kisses.

You never in all your life saw any thing like Trotty after this. I don't care where you have lived or what you have seen; you never in your life saw anything at all approaching him! He sat down in his chair and beat his knees and cried; he sat down in his chair and beat his knees and laughed; he sat down in his chair and beat his knees and laughed and cried together; he got out of his chair and hugged Meg; he got out of his chair and hugged Richard; he got out of his chair and hugged them both at once; he kept running up to Meg, nnd squeezing her fresh face be-

tween his hands and kissing it, going from her backwards not to lose sight of it, and running up again like a figure in a magic lantern: and whatever he did, he was constantly sitting himself down in his chair, and never stopping in it for one single moment; being—that's the truth—beside himself with joy.

"And to-morrow's your wedding day, my Pet!" cried Trotty. "Your real, happy wedding-day!"

"To-day!" cried Richard, shaking hands with him. "To-day. The chimes are ringing in the New Year. Hear them!"

They WERE ringing! Bless their sturdy hearts, they WERE! Great Bells as they were; melodious, deep-mouthed noble Bells; cast in no common metal; made by no common founder; when had they ever chimed like that, before!

"But to-day, my Pet," said Trotty. "You and Richard had some words to-day."

"Because he's such a bad fellow, father," said Meg. "Ain't you Richard? such a headstrong, violent man! He'd have made no more of speaking his mind to that great Alderman, and putting *him* down I don't know where, than he would of—"

"—Kissing Meg," suggested Richard. Doing it too!

"No. Not a bit more." said Meg. "But I wouldn't let him, father. Where would have been the use!"

"Richard, my boy!" cried Trotty. "You was turned up Trumps originally; and Trumps you must be till you die! But you were crying by the fire to-night, my Pet, when I came from home!—Why did you cry by the fire?"

"I was thinking of the years we've passed together, father. Only that. And thinking you might miss me, and be lonely."

Trotty was backing off to that extraordinary chair again, when the child, who been awakened by the noise, came running in half dressed.

"Why, here she is!" cried Trotty, catching her up. "Here's little Lilian! Ha ha ha! Here we are and here we go! Oh, here we are and here we go again! And here we are and here we go! And Uncle Will too!" Stopping in his trot to greet him heartily. "Oh, Uncle Will, the vision that I've had to night, through lodging you! Oh, Uncle Will, the obligations that you've laid me under, by you're coming, my good friend!"

Before Will Fern could make the least reply a band of music burst into the room, attended by a flock of neighbors, screaming "A Happy New Year, Meg!" "A Happy Wedding!" "Many of 'em!" fragmentary good wishes of that sort. The Drum (who was a private friend of Trotty's) then stepped forward and said:

"Trotty Veck, my boy! It's got about, that your daughter is going to be married to-morrow. There an't a soul that knows you that don't wish you well, or that knows her and don't wish her well. Or that knows you both, and don't wish you both all the happiness the New Year can bring. And here we are, to play it in and dance it in, accordingly."

Which was received with a general shout. The Drum was rather drunk, by-the-by; but never mind.

"What a happiness it is, I'm sure," said Trotty, "to be so esteemed! How kind and neighborly you are! Is all along of my dear daughter. She deserves it!"

They were ready for a dance in half a second (Meg and Richard at the top); and the Drum was on the very brink of leathering away with all his power; when a combination of prodigious sounds was heard outside, and a good-humored comely woman of some fifty years of age, or thereabouts, came running in, attended by a man bearing a stone pitcher of terrific size, and closely followed by the marrow-bones and cleavers, and the bells: not *the* Bells, but a portable collection, on a frame.

Trotty said "Its Mrs. Chickenstalker!" And sat down and beat his knees again.

"Married, and not tell me, Meg!" cried the good woman. "Never! I couldn't rest on the last night of the Old Year without coming to wish you joy. I couldn't have done it, Meg. Not if I had been bedridden. So here I am; and as it's New Year's Eve, and the Eve of your wedding too, my dear, I had a little flip made, and brought it with me."

Mrs. Chickenstalker's notion of a little flip, did honor to her character. The pitcher steamed and smoked and reeked like a volcano; and the man who had carried it, was fain'.

"Mrs. Tugby!" said Trotty who had been going round and round her, in an ecstacy. "I *should* say, Chickenstalker—Bless your heart and soul! A happy New Year, and many of 'em! Mrs. Tugby," said Trotty when he had saluted her; "I *should* say Chickenstalker—This is William Fern and Lilian."

The worthy dame, to his surprise, turned very pale and very red.

"Not Lilian Fern whose mother died in Dorsetshire!" said she.

Her uncle answered "Yes," and meeting hastily, they exchanged some hurried words together; of which the upshot was, that Mrs. Chickenstalker shook him by both hands; saluted Trotty on his cheek again, of her own free will; and took the child to her capacious breast.

"Will Fern!" said Trotty, pulling on his right-hand muffler. "Not the friend that you was hoping to find?"

"Aye!" returned Will, putting a hand on each of Trotty's shoulders. "And like to prove a'most as good a friend, if that can be, as one I found."

"Oh!" said Trotty. "Please to play up there.—Will you have the goodness!"

To the music of the band, the bells, the marrow-bones and cleavers, all at once; and while the Chimes were yet in lusty operation out of doors; Trotty, making Meg and Richard second couple, led off Mrs. Chickenstalker down the dance, and danced it in a step unknown before or since; founded on his own peculiar trot.

Had Trotty dreamed? Or are his joys and sorrows, and the actors in them, but a dream; himself a dream; the teller of this tale a dreamer, waking but now? If it be so, oh Listener, dear to him in all his visions, try to bear in mind the stern realities from which these shadows come; and in your sphere—none is too wide, and none too limited for such an end—endeavor to correct, improve, and soften them. So may the New Year be a Happy one to You, Happy to many more whose Happiness depends on You! So may each Year be happier than the last, and not the meanest of our brethren or sisterhood debarred their rightful share, in what our Great Creator formed them to enjoy.

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